

Sovereign Grace

PAST AND PRESENT

Sovereign Grace

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Collected Sermons and Writings

Edited by Ian Potts

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:21

www.graceandtruthonline.com

Produced and Published by
Grace and Truth Online Publications
Honiton, Devon,
England

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First Published 2006

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ISBN 978-1-84728-097-8

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Printed by Lulu Press Inc.

www.graceandtruthonline.com

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all those
whom God sends forth to preach the
Gospel of Free and Sovereign Grace; those
despised and rejected by men but
nevertheless blessed by God
to the souls of His people.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks and appreciation firstly to all those preachers and writers who have borne and continue to bear a faithful witness to the grace of God which brings salvation, as exemplified by those whose writings appear on these pages. We are thankful for the encouragement provided by those present day preachers included in this volume and their support regarding its publication. But greatest thanks go to the Sovereign Lord who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ from the beginning, who established His church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, and who has continued to build His church and feed the saints through the ministry of those servants whom He has called and sent forth to preach the everlasting Gospel down through the ages even unto this very day.

May many be given ears to hear.

May God receive all the glory.

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Christian Hymns

*Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding,
Ransomed souls, the tidings swell;
'Tis a deep that knows no sounding;
Who its breadth or length can tell?
On its glories
Let my soul for ever dwell.*

*What from Christ that soul can sever,
Bound by everlasting bands?
Once in Him, in Him for ever,
Thus the eternal covenant stands:
None shall pluck thee
From the Strength of Israel's hands.*

*Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus,
Long ere time its race begun;
To His Name eternal praises;
O what wonders He hath done!
One with Jesus,
By eternal union one.*

*On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich and free;
Say, while lost in holy wonder,
'Why, O Lord, such love to me?'
Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally.*

John Kent
(1766-1843)

Preface

*"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."
Hebrews 13:8*

THIS work comprises sermons and articles by preachers of God's Gospel of Free and Sovereign Grace.

Some of these writers lived and preached several hundred years ago. Some are here today, faithfully proclaiming the message which God has given them to preach - of God's grace towards sinners.

The message preached hasn't changed, for the Gospel - and the One it concerns - hasn't changed. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

It is the publisher's hope that in collecting these works of past and present writers together in one volume many will be introduced to the glorious truths of God's salvation by grace, and others will be built up in their faith as they are pointed towards Christ and the riches to be found in His Gospel. Perhaps, also, some will be introduced to writers new to them, and be inspired to read more of their works. To this end details are provided about each preacher and an appendix is included providing information of further publications by them.

Possibly the hardest part of producing a book such as this is choosing just what to include and what to leave out. Time and space do not permit us to include all those whom we would like, and who deserve, to be included, but perhaps a future volume, if the Lord wills, will permit us to redress the balance. As the writer to the Hebrews pens, *"And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of*

weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens...

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 11:32-34, 12:1-2

We trust that what is contained herein will prove a blessing and encouragement to those of this day and generation whom the Lord has given eyes to see and ears to hear.

May the Lord bless His word.

In Christ Our Saviour,

Ian Potts
Spring 2006

Introduction

SOVEREIGN GRACE

Introduction

Sovereign Grace

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 5:21

THE chapters which follow set forth the work of God in the salvation of sinners. Salvation is entirely by God's *grace*, for it is the "*grace of God which bringeth salvation*". This salvation is the work of God who reigns and is sovereign over all things and hence His grace is sovereignly and freely bestowed upon whom He wills. For this reason those who love and preach the Gospel of Christ will often speak of '*Free and Sovereign Grace*'.

Throughout this book the reader will find Sovereign Grace proclaimed in all its richness, by writers both past and present, all witnesses to the work of Christ in saving sinners. What mercy and grace there is to be found in Christ's Gospel, and how wonderful that God has not ceased to send forth preachers of that Gospel throughout the ages, even up to this very day. As long as God still has a sinner in this world whom He intends to call to salvation in Christ by His Gospel, He will send forth a preacher with a message of God's grace!

We can read of grace, *sovereign grace*, in Romans 5 and verse 21 where the Apostle Paul writes:-

"That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Romans 5:21

Let us take a few moments to consider just what is being taught about grace and its reign in this verse.

Grace Reigns...

This verse sets before us, in stark contrast, two reigns - two rules, two dominions, two powers - and the effects of their reign: the one unto death and the other unto eternal life.

The contrast could not be more vivid. The consequences could not be more opposed. Their importance cannot be overstated.

Yes, one reign is unto death, but the other is unto life - *eternal* life.

The first is the reign of sin. What a reign this has over men, and how devastating the consequence – death! How far reaching are the effects of sin, how vast is the kingdom over which sin has reigned, how many are its citizens! As we read in *Romans 5:12*:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"

Yes, all have sinned. There is not one of us who has escaped the reign and the dominion of sin. It entered the world by one man, Adam, when he turned from God his Maker in disobedience and rebellion, and has been passed down to all his posterity ever since. We are all born with the same sinful, rebellious, selfish, wilful and disobedient nature into which Adam fell and by which the dreadful consequence of sin entered the world - death: *"and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"*. We can no more escape the consequence of sin - death - than we can escape or ignore the cause - our sin - and its permeating effects upon all we do and say.

Sin reigns, and mankind finds himself captive to this reign. Not only do we find ourselves captive to a decaying and death-filled world, not only do we see the effects of death in our bodies as we age, and suffer illness, weariness, pain, tiredness, sorrow and

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misery as the days of our lives pass by towards their inevitable conclusion, but we also find ourselves captive to a spiritual death. We find ourselves unable and unwilling to approach God. We have no desire for Him. Sin leads us in another direction. The true communion which man, in Adam, had with his Maker was shattered when he turned his back upon God. The LORD God once walked with Adam in the garden, but when sin entered the world God cast Adam out from His presence and a great gulf was fixed between man and God. That gulf was caused by sin and by its result – death.

When Adam chose to turn his back upon the Tree of Life which was in the midst of the garden and eat instead from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil - by the eating of which he desired to become as a god (Genesis 3:5) - he chose a terrible pathway unto death. By choosing to put himself under another reign from God's, by choosing to place himself under another dominion mankind became a captive to it. Man in his lust for power desired to reign himself, but in his folly, his own sin took reign over him and he fell captive to it. Sin's lusts, desires, motives, intentions and resolves all drive man in a certain direction – away from God; away from the only One in whom is life; away from Jesus Christ, who to know is life eternal; away from God and into death, for *"sin hath reigned unto death"*.

What a reign sin has over us. How captive we are under it. But how captivated we are *by it!* Not only has sin reigned over us but we have lovingly embraced its reign! Not only are we unable to turn from sin to God, but we are also unwilling. We choose to go this way. *"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."* Romans 3:10-11. Not one of us can claim innocence for like our father Adam we have willingly embraced the fall, we have said of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *"We will not have this man to reign over us"*, and in our pride and lust for power we have sought to place ourselves upon the throne. We *will* reign, won't we? Don't our natural hearts speak that way?

But in such foolish desire our sin takes hold of us and keeps us captive. Sin reigns... unto death.

But praise God that *Romans 5:21* doesn't end with just this one reign! Praise God that there is another reign whose power is so much greater and whose results are so gloriously different! Praise God that this verse has an "even so" in the middle!

*"...even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."
Romans 5:21*

Even so. Even so despite the reign of sin. Despite its power and its awful consequences. Even so, though mankind has willingly embraced sin. Even so, though mankind willingly sinned and brought death upon himself. Even so, though mankind has chosen this reign of sin and deserves nothing better.

"Even so". Even so, might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, though God would be just to leave man to himself; though God could justly destroy His creation and the rebellious creatures who turned against Him, nevertheless, *even so*, God has chosen to be *gracious*. He is a God who delights in showing mercy. A God who is longsuffering. A God who is love. A God who *saves*. A God who graciously sent His Son to save His people from their sins.

For there is a reign greater than that of sin: the reign of grace. What a contrast we see in *Romans 5:21*. Sin reigned unto death, but grace reigns unto *eternal life*.

The reign of sin was a reign of man's rebellion and disobedience towards his God, which brought in death. But the reign of grace is that of God showing His unmerited favour towards man, in spite of his rebellion, in order to freely give him eternal life in Jesus Christ. The one is of man and the other is of God. The one brings death but

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the other brings life. The former was earned, merited by man's actions, but the latter is unearned, unmerited, it is a free gift from God to man for no other reason than God's mercy and loving-kindness to those whom He chose to have mercy upon. The one is chosen by man through his free will but the other is granted freely by God through His Sovereignty. The one abounds under the law which demands of man and condemns his offences, but the other abounds much more being freely given to repentant sinners and forgiving their offences. Oh, what a contrast we see in these two reigns!

We see here that however great the reign of sin might be, the reign of grace is greater! However powerful a force sin might be, it is nothing compared to grace. However strong a grip sin might have upon man, it can not stand before the invincible power of God's grace in saving sinners. For we read that *"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"* (Romans 5:20) and that although through the offence of one (Adam) many are dead, *"much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many"* (Romans 5:15) and *"...if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ"* Romans 5:17.

The reign, the power, of sin, however great is nothing compared to the power of God's grace. When God sets his grace upon a sinner nothing stands in its way. When grace reigns all other dominion is cast aside. *"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."* Romans 6:14.

In fact the only way that man *can* be delivered from the reign of sin over him is *by God's grace*. There is no other way. Sin is within man, it rules him, it motivates him, *it reigns over him*. Only by an act of God's grace in delivering man from his sin, in taking that sin away, in blotting it out so that sin is no more, can man be free of its dominion.

No reformation of character or manners can achieve such a deliverance. No works or effort that man can make to live more uprightly can deliver him from the absolute tyranny of sin under which he finds himself. The very best deeds of mankind, the most noble exploits, the most charitable actions he can bring himself to do are still tainted by that sin which he finds within himself. He is ruled by it. *"For even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"*. That's right, even our righteousnesses. Our best deeds are marred by sin.

Some would turn to the law of God in an attempt to subdue sin and live a life pleasing to God. They think that if they can attain to its requirements they will find favour with God. But they couldn't be more wrong because when sinful man puts himself under that law, far from subduing sin the law inflames it! Far from it leading man to life it simply shows man the vileness of his own heart, it stirs up sin within and so it condemns him. As we read *"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound."* Romans 5:20. Not subdue, notice, but *abound*. That is why God gave the law, to show man his sin. That the offence might abound, that man might be condemned and that he might be led to flee unto that one Deliverer from sin and death, even Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. The law might set forth a standard of righteousness which God expects of man and demands of man, but experimentally when man puts himself under that law, the knowledge he acquires, in experience, is not one of righteousness but of sin. *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* Romans 3:20. This experience of sin actually abounding under the law is what Paul knew and wrote about in Romans 7: *"For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."*

There is nothing wrong with God's law. The problem lies with the sin within us and the effect of that law upon sin. The law *"is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin,*

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working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." Romans 7:12-13. Yes, as Romans 5:20 shows, when the law entered the offence abounded. The law provided no deliverance from sin – it made it worse, in order to show us our sin.

"...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"
Romans 5:20

But praise God that there *is* a deliverance from sin. There is another reign, a greater reign: the reign of grace! And how wonderful that where sin abounds - in those shown their sinfulness by God through the application of His law demonstrating to them their sin and inability to deliver themselves from it and its reign - that *grace much more abounds!* There is no sin too great, no sinner too sinful, for grace to overcome - for where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!

Yes, grace reigns – and what a reign! What a power grace is. How great is its kingdom, even the kingdom of heaven. How many are its citizens! But grace and its reign can no more be considered apart from the One who grants them any more than sin and its reign can be considered apart from the one by whom they entered the world. Sin entered by one man - Adam, but the grace of God comes by one Man - even Jesus Christ the Lord. It is this fact that makes grace so glorious and its reign so triumphant. The first man is earthy and brought in sin and death, but the Second Man, the Last Adam, is heavenly - a quickening spirit - and He brought in righteousness and everlasting life. Christ, the Son of God, is both man and God, both human and divine. As God He is sovereign over all, He is the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. Hence His grace reigns for it is the grace of a king, the grace of a sovereign. It is *Sovereign Grace* and as a king Christ gives it to whom He will. *"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."* Romans 9:15. Oh! To be a recipient of such grace. Oh! To be under its reign!

Yes, grace reigns, but it does so...

...Through Righteousness

Grace reigns through *righteousness*. Grace does not reign in isolation. God's mercy towards man is not at the expense of His justice. No, grace reigns *through* righteousness and God's grace is seen in His righteousness, in His justice. Without righteousness, without justice, there could be no reign of grace for the reign of sin must be overcome. Sin must be dealt with in order for God to be just and the justifier of the ungodly. Grace reigns, yes, but it reigns *through righteousness*.

Righteousness and the revelation of God's righteousness are at the very heart of the Gospel. They are what give the Gospel its power. Hence Paul writes *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation..."* Romans 1:16. Why? *"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith..."* Yes, it is the revelation of God's righteousness in the Gospel which gives it its power. Righteousness is that through which God judges the sin of His people in Christ their Saviour and delivers them from its reign and its power. It is through righteousness, by the revelation of God's justice (righteousness) in Christ's redemption that God justifies His people freely by grace.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:24-26

In the Gospel God has revealed His righteousness by judging and destroying sin and its reign over God's people in their Substitute, Jesus Christ, as He suffered and died in their place in order to deliver them from sin, death and condemnation and make them

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righteous before God in Him. Hence, God justified His people "*freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*".

God did this in His Son, Christ Jesus. Only one Man could die in the place of fallen sinners to redeem them from the reign of sin, and that man was Jesus Christ. Only He could deliver His people from sin because only He was *without sin*. Christ was perfect, righteous and holy. As God who took upon Himself human nature in perfect union with His divine person, as One who was made in all points like unto us, yet without sin, as the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ was the perfect sacrifice acceptable unto God in the place of sinners. God declared His righteousness by judging sin in His own Son upon the cross, in the One who was "*made to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*" 2 Corinthians 5:21.

Christ knew no sin. For more than thirty years He lived and walked in this world as a man born under the law and He lived in perfection. He never sinned, He never disobeyed God the Father, He never disbelieved the Father, He never ceased to trust the Father, He never ceased to worship God with all His heart, mind and soul, He never sinned - He *knew no sin*. Christ was made under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law. The law tested Him in all points, the full rigour of God's law and justice tested Him to the limit and found nothing in Him to condemn. He was perfect. Having magnified that law and made it honourable Christ then willingly submitted Himself to death upon the cross in the place of His people. Though perfect, though innocent, though without a single fault or cause of condemnation, Christ submitted Himself to the will of His Father and gave Himself up to be taken by the hands of wicked men and nailed to a cross to suffer and die in the place of transgressors.

But what happened when Jesus Christ was nailed to that cross and lifted up to die, what happened when the light of the sun was darkened at the ninth hour was a mystery which was hid from the natural eye. What happened during those hours of darkness as Christ suffered in the place of His people was a tremendous

transaction between God the Father and His Son which no natural man could comprehend. This was no ordinary death. No ordinary suffering. When Christ suffered upon the tree it wasn't the natural pain and suffering which slew Him, but the supernatural outpouring of the wrath of God upon Him and what He had become vicariously in the place of His people.

At the cross Christ and His people were united together in death. As Eve was taken out of Adam's side while he slept, so in Christ's death, His bride - His church - were united to Him and brought forth from His side washed in the precious blood of Christ which justified them and cleansed them from their sins. At the cross Christ became one with His bride, united to her, being made what she was – sin. Her sin became His. Her transgressions became His as He bore them in His own body on the tree. And in response the wrath of God the Father poured down from the vaults of heaven upon Christ the sacrifice to judge sin in Him, to consume it, to destroy it, to blot it out. As Christ endured the cross, for the joy that was set before Him - as He looked by faith to His Father in hope of the glorious resurrection in righteousness with His people - He endured the full penalty of God's righteousness, God's unflinching justice, against all the sin and transgressions of His people. He *endured* it. He endured the hours of torment, the hours of unspeakable suffering. Why? *"For the joy that was set before Him"* Hebrews 12:2. At the last, Christ would see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. *Isaiah 53:11.*

Through death Christ justified His people, freely by grace. For grace is not cheap. It comes at a price. Grace reigns, God justifies His people freely *to them* by grace, but it comes at a *cost to Him*. It comes through righteousness. Christ gave His life for His own. *That* was the cost. But why did He do this? Because He loved them. As we read:-

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Romans 5:8-9

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Yes, Christ *"loved the church, and gave himself for it"* Ephesians 5:25. When Christ died for those He loves He placed Himself under the full justice of God. In so doing the righteousness of God was revealed in the Gospel and God judged the sin of His people according to His own righteousness. Not just according to the righteousness of the law, but according to the very righteousness of God Himself, to justify to life not just for this world, but for the next, for all eternity; to reconcile a people to God, to bring them unto Himself. *"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference"* Romans 3:21-22. It was this way, and this way only that God could justify His people in blotting out their sins and delivering them from the reign of sin. It was this way that the reign of sin was conquered and the reign of grace could triumph. Grace reigns, yes. But it is *through righteousness*.

At the cross God justified His people, freely by grace. His love was set upon a people who didn't deserve it, a rebellious people, sold under sin, a people under the reign of sin and death. Yet at the cross God manifested His righteousness through the faith of Jesus Christ in order to destroy sin and its reign and deliver that people. God showed grace to a people who sought Him not, and that grace came at such a price – it cost the Saviour. He gave Himself for His own (*Galatians 2:20*). Grace is God's free gift to His people, but it came at a great price to Him. It came through righteousness exacted upon the Saviour as He stood in the place of His people, united to them in order to bring them through judgment unto everlasting life, carried through by His faith in the Father's promise. At the cross God's mercy and truth met together. At the cross righteousness and peace kissed each other. What a meeting place! What a transaction. What a reconciliation between God and man was made when Christ laid down His life that His people might live, when Christ was made sin that His people might be made the righteousness of God in Him, that they might have peace with God!

"Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Psalm 85:10.

Through the obedience of Christ, the obedience of faith, in giving Himself for His people, they are justified in Him, delivered from all condemnation, washed from every sin by Christ's blood, justified freely by His grace. God in righteousness judged the sins of all His people in the Saviour, blotting them out through the shed blood, and, not only that, but He judged sin itself, that sinful nature His people inherited from Adam, by destroying it in Christ's body on the tree, totally consuming it under His fiery wrath and indignation and taking it out of sight, so making that people perfect in Christ. In this way God could be just and the justifier of all those who believe in Jesus. In this way He could show His people mercy and grant forgiveness. In this way He could save His people from their sins by His grace. In this way He could deliver them from sin itself, *Romans 6:6*. In this way grace reigns - *through righteousness*. It is a victorious reign, a triumphant reign, a reign which overcomes all others, even that of sin and death which Christ conquered through *His* death as he took sin away and, having done so, rose again on the third day with everlasting life, victorious over all His foes. Nothing, not even death, could stand in the way of grace and its reign by Jesus Christ!

Yes, grace reigns, and it reigns through righteousness...

...unto Eternal Life by Jesus Christ our Lord

Grace has an end in view, a triumphant end – even eternal life. Whilst sin brought in misery and death, grace brings *eternal life* in Jesus Christ. What a glorious thing this is, what a hope is set before the believer, what an end is in view – eternal life. Everlasting life. Life without end. Life free from death, free from misery, free from sorrow, free from suffering, and free from the reign of sin. Yes, *eternal life*.

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And how is this life brought in? By Jesus Christ our Lord. Grace reigns unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, because He *is* eternal life! As John testifies of Christ, the Word of God, the Word of life in *1 John 1:2*: "*For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us*". To know Christ, is to know life, to have Christ is to have life, for Christ is eternal life. This is what grace brings – everlasting life in Christ Jesus.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."
1 John 5:12-13.

To have eternal life is to have Christ. To have Christ is to be in Christ. If we are in Christ we are made the righteousness of God in Him (*2 Corinthians 5:21*) for we are justified by grace in Him, and if justified then *justified unto life* (*Romans 5:18*). And if all this be true of us then we are under a new reign, the *reign of grace*, having been delivered from the reign of sin and death. Oh what a deliverance! What amazing grace that brings it. But at what a price! Grace reigns through righteousness. To save His people Christ died in their place, He endured the cross, despising the shame (*Hebrews 12:2*). Why? "*For the joy set before him*". What joy is this? To be glorified in the salvation of sinners. To be one with His people, His bride, united together in righteousness, in everlasting life, in eternal life around the throne of God. What joy! For grace reigns "*through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*"!

Who are those who have eternal life? John tells us: "*He that hath the Son hath life*". And who has the Son? Those "*that believe on the name of the Son of God*" *1 John 5:13*. Such are those who are "*justified freely by his grace*" *Romans 3:24*, those who "*believeth in Jesus*" *Romans 3:26*.

SOVEREIGN GRACE – PAST AND PRESENT

And just who *are* those who believe in Jesus? All those whom God chose in Christ before the foundation of the world to be saved by Him (*Ephesians 1:3-12*). All those upon whom God set His electing love, all the "*election of grace*" *Romans 11:5*.

Adam through his disobedience brought sin, death and condemnation to all his posterity, but Christ, the Last Adam, through His obedience brought righteousness and justification of life to all *His posterity, the election of grace, Romans 5:18!* For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: "*That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*" *Romans 5:21*

Now, let us ask ourselves the question: which reign are *we* under? The reign of sin, or the reign of grace? Which do we love - sin or grace? What motivates us? What rules our life? What governs our thoughts and actions? Where are we heading?

Do we know grace and its reign over us? Has it been bestowed upon us? Are we recipients of it? Not *claimants* of mercy but *recipients*? Have we cried out to God for mercy, for grace, having been shown by God the Holy Spirit our desperate need of it, being full of sin and death, being held captive by nature under another reign? Do we know the reign of grace in our hearts? Does it reign over all our life, from start to finish? Do we know the *SOVEREIGN KING* who grants it? Are we citizens of His kingdom? Do we know Jesus Christ as Lord?

Can we say from our hearts with Paul "*even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*"...?

Oh, to be able to join with Paul in saying "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*" *Galatians 2:20*.

INTRODUCTION

May God be pleased to use the chapters of this book to set the reader's gaze upon the Saviour and upon the grace which reigns by Jesus Christ. Oh! That we may be found under its reign, "*accepted in the beloved*" as those who have life, because they have the Son.

May God bless His word to His glory,

Amen.

Ian Potts

Part One

SOVEREIGN GRACE - FROM THE PAST

Chapter One

WILLIAM TIPTAFT
(1803-1864)

WILLIAM TIPTAFT

William Tiptaft (1773-1853) was a minister of the gospel who began his ministry in the Church of England before seceding from the Established Church in the 1830s along with his great friend J.C. Philpot. Tiptaft was then greatly used by God as a preacher amongst those Particular Baptists who became known as "Gospel Standard Strict Baptists" because of their agreement with those doctrines set forth in the "Gospel Standard" magazine.

A SERMON

SALVATION BY GRACE

"By the grace of God I am what I am."

1 Corinthians 15:10

*A sermon preached at the High Chapel, Helmsley Blackmoor, Yorkshire,
On Lord's Day Evening, October 14th 1855.*

*"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to
Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the
glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In
whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,
according to the riches of His grace." Ephesians 1:5-7*

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2

WHAT a solemn consideration it is that we all have never-dying souls! A little time will sweep us all into the grave, and where will our souls be? We are fit to die, or we are not; all that die without the grace of God in their hearts are sure to be in hell. Is my soul quickened? am I born again? has my soul longed to know and feel the cleansing blood of Jesus? are my sins pardoned? am I justified freely by God's grace? what is my real state before God? What a solemn subject is death with eternity in view! Who amongst you all here present have real and blessed evidences that your souls are quickened, and that you are not dead in trespasses and sins, that you have been led to seek Christ sorrowing, and Christ has been found, and you can express how precious He is to your souls, and how much you love Him? You that are careless about your souls, with no real desires for mercy and pardon through the blood of Christ, if you live and die as you are, where will your souls be in a thousand years, in a million years, and for ever and ever? If you die destitute of grace you will hear, when standing before the judgment seat, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" and those blessed with grace will hear, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

The apostle Paul in this chapter contends earnestly for the resurrection of Christ, which some had been denying. He mentions many witnesses, and that the apostles saw Him, and so did he; and he tells them, if Christ be not risen, that their faith was vain, and his preaching vain also. But he was not meet to be called an apostle, because he persecuted the church of God; yet he says, "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He here alludes to the power of grace in enabling him to preach: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Paul knew without Christ he could do nothing; he knew what God's ministers that preach the glorious gospel also know, that they have this "treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of" them. All ministers sent by

God to preach His gospel are only instruments in His hands, and would wish to ascribe all the glory to His Name. If a minister has no true knowledge of himself as a sinner, by the Spirit's teaching, and cannot say anything about the Lord's gracious dealings with his soul, he is unfit for the pulpit. If he die in that state, where will his soul be? And if the hearers have no true experience, how can it be described? How can the minister enter into particulars about a sound repentance and genuine faith as the fruits of the Spirit if they are destitute of such blessings? How certain it is they must be in hell if they die in this awful condition. As ministers are what they are by the grace of God, so are the hearers what they are by the grace of God. Where there is no work of grace, there is no true religion; when the fire tries every man's work of what sort it is, how all religion must be burnt up, like wood, hay and stubble, but the blessed things in experience which have been bought as the gold in the fire, and have been dived for as the precious pearls. Oh! what an unspeakable mercy to be amongst those who shall be able to stand when the great day of God's wrath is come. "By the grace of God I am what I am." At my first ordination, in March, 1826, how ignorant I was of the glorious gospel! I do trust my soul was quickened in January, 1827, and I have had marks of the fear of God ever since. When I was first in trouble about my soul, how little did I know about salvation by grace, of promises applied, and of election, predestination, and the final perseverance of the saints!

I do not wish to cast contempt on any here on account of their ignorance and darkness, for I know that they cannot quicken their own souls nor open their blind eyes. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." How few can say that God hath revealed such blessed realities by His Spirit to them! How this portion of Scripture testifies against thousands of mere professors! They can tell what they are doing for God, but they cannot tell what God is doing for them, in teaching them what they are by nature and what they are by grace.

The little I know I have been brought to know gradually. Though quickened, I trust, in January, 1827, I was not brought to know and declare the doctrines of grace as set forth in the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 17th Articles of the Church of England till the autumn of 1829, and did not know a full deliverance of soul till January, 1843; I could not enter till then into the blessed portions of Scripture setting forth the sweet liberty of the gospel; I did not know what it was to have my cup run over, nor to have a feast of fat things, nor the promises applied with dew and unction to my soul; but when I was completely blest, I could then read the 103rd and 116th Psalms, and understand the blessed experience contained therein. I had joy and peace in believing; my eyes flowed fast with tears, and my soul was full of the love of God. The blessing seemed too great to be real: "I could rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of my faith, even the salvation of my soul." I thought I should have died, and was quite willing, till three days afterwards these words came with great power: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." Then I knew I was not to die, but that I was to live and preach the gospel of peace. The Lord's day after I had this manifestation of God's lovingkindness to my soul, that beautiful hymn of Hart's was sung:

*"How high a privilege 'tis to know
Our sins are all forgiven;
To bear about this pledge below,
This special grant of heaven!"*

I could never understand that hymn till then, about the special grant of heaven in having my sins pardoned. I have had the testimony tried since, and all my dark paths, as well as the brighter; but, through the grace of God, I continue to this day wishing to be led and taught aright by the Lord.

*"And ofttimes when the tempter sly
Affirms it fancied, forged, or vain,
Jesus appears, disproves the lie,
And kindly makes it o'er again."*

WILLIAM TIPTAFT

True faith is sure to be tried. An untried faith is a strong evidence against those who are satisfied with it; for the Lord trieth the righteous, and many are their afflictions, but the Lord delivers them out of them all. Satan, the world, and an evil heart of unbelief will be opposed to real faith.

*"Corruptions make the mourners shun
Presumption's dang'rous snare;
Force us to trust to Christ alone,
And fly to God by prayer."*

You here present, who are satisfied with your religion, have you bought it in the fire? Can you speak of a sound repentance wrought by grace and a living union with Christ? Is Christ precious to your souls? Have you fellowship with Him in His sufferings? Is He revealed in your hearts the hope of glory? How many dissenters, as well as members of the Church of England, receive the Lord's Supper who bear no marks of being even babes in Christ, and are altogether ignorant of the Divine realities of the gospel! When any are quickened by the Spirit of God, and are real mourners in Zion, and mean what they say, when they receive the Lord's Supper in the Church of England, "We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable; have mercy upon us, most merciful Father;" we hope there is life in their souls. I do not wish to despise the least work of grace; if a man is brought to stand by the side of the publican, crying for mercy, and is alarmed about dying in his sins, and being in hell for ever, such a religion will make him pray, sigh, and groan; and he cannot hide it long; he will wish that he had never been born; he begins to spend his Lord's days in a different manner; wants to leave off his evil practices, and to forsake his old companions; and he will pray in secret places; through shame he may do many things with a guilty conscience, but the fear of God in his heart will cause a struggle, till grace enables him in time to make a full confession of the change, which he hopes is wrought by God.

When those who are first awakened cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" they begin to work, and are in favour for a time of a free-will profession. They cleave to Arminian preachers, and think that they shall never be in communion with those who hold what they then considered high and dangerous doctrines; but after a while they become dissatisfied with the free-will preaching; a sense of their own vileness and helplessness makes them approve of Hannah's confession (1 Sam. ii. 1-11); by degrees the Lord brings them to know that grace must save them, and from their need of Christ they wish to hear Christ preached; and if He is not known, they believe He must be known.

In reading Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners", and such books, they are by degrees confirmed in the glorious doctrines of grace, which they now begin to see more fully in the Bible. I could hold salvation by grace, and the final perseverance of the saints, before I could hold the doctrine of election.

"By the grace of God we are what we are." You here present, who wish to be thought real Christians, what are you made to believe and do by the grace of God? How do you expect to be saved? by works or by grace? It must be either in one way or the other. Paul says, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace; and if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work. What, then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

Grace sets forth the eternal love, favour and kindness of God towards His people, chosen in Christ, unmerited and undeserved; and all blessings for their souls and bodies in time and through eternity flow in that channel.

What a fulness of blessings there is in grace for all the dear children of God! And there is nothing on their part to draw God's

love forth. He loved them because He did love them - nothing before or after calling made them the objects of God's love. Paul says to Timothy, "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." If Paul and Timothy had grace and salvation given to them before the world began, so had all here present, who are to be in heaven. By nature we are dead in trespasses and sins, and can do nothing in any way to save our souls. Christ said of us Gentiles, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." How Christ shows that He must bring them! Paul told the Colossians that God "had delivered them from the power of darkness." If we are delivered, did not God deliver us? "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Nevertheless, fruits will be produced where there is grace; for the Apostle says, "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." And again, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Here we have the blessed effects of grace set forth, and how the Lord's people are redeemed and made peculiar by the purifying hand of God, and so manifest their faith by their fruits; and yet how the Apostle shows that salvation is by grace: "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

SOVEREIGN GRACE – PAST AND PRESENT

From necessity we are brought to contend for salvation by grace. How sure I am, if I go to heaven, grace must save me; and how sure I am that those here present, who will be in heaven, must also be saved by grace. However highly some of you may think of free-will preachers, they cannot tell you what to do to bring about a reconciliation between God and your own souls; and if you die without being reconciled to God, your souls will be in hell.

*"Blessed are they whose guilt is gone,
Whose sins are washed away with blood,
Whose hope is fix'd on Christ alone,
Whom Christ has reconciled to God.*

*"This pearl of price no works can claim;
He that finds this is rich indeed;
This pure white stone contains a name,
Which none but who receives can read."*

Vile, guilty and helpless sinners are very glad to read so much in favour of free and sovereign grace in the Word of God: "Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." We observe that the Lord gave testimony to the word of His grace; and Paul says to the elders at Ephesus, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified;" and Peter says, "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

You, my friends, who are taught rightly by the Spirit of God, and know in some measure what hell-deserving wretches you are, are glad to hear ministers preach a full and free pardon through the blood and righteousness of Christ. You cannot hear too much in favour of free grace; having such deceitful and desperately wicked hearts, surrounded with such allurements and temptations, together with Satan's wiles and snares, you are glad to hear about restraining grace, as well as saving grace:

WILLIAM TIPTAFT

*"O, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee."*

It is pleasing for ministers to find any marks of godly simplicity and godly sincerity, which manifest the babes in grace as mourners in Zion and true seekers. How by degrees such fall in love with a free-grace gospel! Ministers then are esteemed who exalt the Saviour and lay the sinner low; their hearts and ears are circumcised, and they like to hear much about the mercy of God in pardoning the vilest sinners; and how Christ died to justify the ungodly; and of the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works; and how blessed they are whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; and they like to hear about the best robe and the wedding garment; and they desire to "win Christ, and to be found in Him, not having [their] own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"; they know if their souls are not washed in Christ's blood, and clothed in His righteousness, there will be no heaven for them.

The most important matter with us is, what are we? By the grace of God have we been stopped in our blind zeal as Pharisees, or have we been plucked as brands out of the fire, as profligates? Can we hope that the grace of God hath quickened us? Are we in the narrow path to life? How dwelleth the love of God in us? Can we hope that by grace we have broken hearts and contrite spirits? Can we tell what God has done for our souls? Are we anxious to say with David, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul"? The Scriptures do not give any encouragement to those professing religion who have no soul trouble; they are out of the secret; they fear not God, nor will He show unto them His covenant for their comfort and encouragement. "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If you are not amongst those who are calling upon God to bless their souls, or among those who are calling upon their

souls to bless God, I would by no means deceive you. Such are strangers to vital godliness, whether they profess religion or not. If they profess, they have the form without the power - a name to live whilst dead in sin; for if your souls were really quickened, you would surely pray and cry for mercy, and would earnestly ask God to bless your souls. There is a great difference between a babe in grace and a father in Christ; but both are safe as they stand in the glorious covenant of God, ordered in all things and sure.

The church of God is a glorious building: "Ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"; and every stone will be brought, and the dust shall be remembered; and the headstone, shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace, unto it;" "The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." And how often has God said to His dear people in all their troubles and afflictions, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and "as thy days" thy strength shall be; and the Lord pours down upon His people "the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Paul did not preach a yea and nay gospel; but, as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay; "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea; for all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us." Paul taught how all the promises belonged to the dear children, and that they should have them, and that God would be their God, and they should be His people. So not one of Christ's sheep can be lost: "He gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish"; "Their sins and iniquities He will remember no more." There may be many false preachers to oppose the truth: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure; having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." What a mercy if we are blest with evidences and proofs that we are amongst the favoured few who shall endure unto the end.

Adulterers, drunkards, covetous, and such characters, cannot say how grace has turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and that they are "partakers of the

heavenly calling"; but some who are seekers may hope that they have a sound repentance, as there is a great change in many respects: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Paul said to those who had been so ungodly, "Such were some of you; but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." When you are fully convinced what a great change there must be in a man when the kingdom of grace is set up in his heart, and that there is something great in having saving faith, you will begin to contend for the power of religion, and you will agree with the apostle, that "it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace."

Those amongst you who know the most of Divine realities were once very ignorant, and those who are now seeking and anxiously desiring the pardon of their sins sealed in their conscience will, after a while, have a new song put into their mouths, so that they may praise and bless God. How few are really concerned about their souls, and are begging of God to give them evidences that their religion will stand when a time of great trial comes! We are glad to find religion the most important matter with those who profess to be true disciples of Christ, who are more anxious to die well than to get through the world well. We are glad to find any wounded in their consciences, and begin to know the plague of their hearts; and that begin to confess that they should not care what reproaches, losses, trials and difficulties they might have to encounter if they were sure they were blest with saving faith, and shall not be "of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the soul." Such lovers of the truth look upon those as the excellent of the earth, though despised and persecuted by the world, to whom the Lord has manifested His pardoning love, and are enabled by grace to bring forth fruits as evidences of their faith, "so that wisdom is justified of her children."

My friends, what a vast difference there is between free-grace preaching and free-will preaching. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; if you owed Moses ten

thousand talents of gold, and could pay all but one farthing, Moses would send you to hell for that farthing: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

What a fulness there is in Christ for needy sinners! Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

The children of God are saved with an everlasting salvation; they are complete in Christ, are accepted in Him, are blest with all spiritual blessings; have mansions of glory, and an inheritance undefiled; they have God for their Father, Christ for their Elder Brother, and the blessed Spirit for their Comforter; all their sins and iniquities are pardoned; they are justified freely by God's grace, and by precious faith they can at times rejoice in Jesus, and at times they sink very low to doubt the reality of all their enjoyments.

Oh, how blessed to be enabled to say experimentally, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Peter speaks of "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," and says, "This is the true grace of God, wherein ye stand." Ministers can never speak too highly of Christ, nor can they say too much in favour of grace; nor can they fully describe or know how vile, sinful, and depraved is the heart of man.

Alas! how few are asking how a sinner is to be saved from a feeling sense of their own vileness and guilt; being full of fears that they shall die in their sins, and be in hell for ever and ever; and alas! how very few ministers can tell their hearers how a sinner is to be saved from their own personal experience. It is a very great mercy to know what it is to be a sinner saved by grace. Paul says, "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is

preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses"; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What a blessed knowledge it is - "the knowledge of salvation through the remission of sins"! A grain of saving faith is worth more than a thousand worlds.

My friends, you that are blessed with saving faith will surely have it tried; some with the temptations and snares of prosperity; some with the cares and galling yoke of adversity; some with their families, and some with their friends. There are trials of various kinds for all the children of God, whether ministers or hearers, whether babes, young men, or fathers in Christ; there is so much within and without opposed to vital godliness; and through much tribulation we must go to glory. Sin in ourselves and sin in those connected with us is sure to bring trouble. No cross, no crown. Afflictions, crosses, sorrows, reproaches, and persecutions will attend all the true followers of the Lamb. I have blessed God for afflictions as well as consolations, knowing in faithfulness God had afflicted me, and that all His children must feel His rod before they see His face in glory. I know that when I am favoured in my soul all things are right; there is no fretting about the past nor murmuring about the future. We can say, Thy will be done, O Lord.

*"Blest with this faith, then let us raise
Our hearts in love, our voice in praise;
All things to us must work for good,
For whom the Lamb has shed His blood.*

*"Trials may press of every sort;
They may be sore, they must be short;
We now believe, but soon shall view
The greatest glories God can show."*

In conclusion, I ask, my friends, what has Christ done for us, and what do we know of Christ in His blessed characters? And what has the Spirit wrought in us? When did we first begin to know the

humbling power of grace? And are fruits brought forth as evidences thereof? And are we ascribing the fruits to the influence of grace, as the Apostle did when he speaks of having laboured more abundantly than they all? "Yet not I," says he, "but the grace of God which was with me"; knowing what Christ says is true, "Without Me ye can do nothing," and yet knowing something of what Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"; knowing also that you cannot believe of yourselves, and that true faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and is called "the faith of God's elect."

We must die, prepared or not prepared, when our time comes. As death leaves us, judgment must find us; no repentance, no salvation. What a great mercy to be enabled to thank God for the victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ! I would not for the world rest my soul upon any religion short of this, being washed in Christ's blood and clothed in His righteousness. If that be not my religion for a dying hour, my soul must be lost; and you here present who are expecting to go to heaven in any other way but through Christ, you will be dreadfully disappointed. Salvation is all of grace; "Christ is All, and in all." You, my friends, who are "called to be saints," and know the earnest breathings of a soul after Divine realities, and have not sought in vain, you are highly favoured; you love Christ and His true disciples, and can pray for the prosperity of Zion, and can sympathise with those who suffer adversity and are in distress. You can help the poor and needy cheerfully according to your means; you can pray to be made spiritually minded, and be kept so; and you can really desire to be delivered from the evil practices and customs of this ungodly world, knowing the plague and evils of your own hearts.

You can truly say, my friends, that "you would choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." You feel thankful to be amongst the outcast, despised, and persecuted for Christ's sake, "whose praise is not of men, but of God."

You are anxious to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; you are favoured to know the influence of grace in your daily walk and conversation; and under God's purifying hand you are made fruitful branches of the living Vine. Though you know what it is to be cold and lifeless in Divine things, you, my friends, love the truth and like to hear the Spirit's work preached. You know, when God delivers you out of trials and afflictions, answers your prayers, and comforts and encourages you with fresh blessings, or brings to your remembrance past mercies, how your hearts are affected with a sense of His lovingkindness and goodness.

You, my friends, set up Ebenezers, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." You do not forget the hills Mizar and Hermon. Christ you love and can speak most highly of as the Friend of sinners, and "His Name is as ointment poured forth"; and you believe, if God intended to destroy you, He would not have shown you what He has, nor would you have been favoured with such blessed testimonies of His lovingkindness: "if God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth", "and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

How God loves His people and takes pleasure in them! How He listens to their sighs and groans, and puts their tears into His bottle! Those so favoured and blessed are precious in God's sight. They can never be lost nor perish; for when the blessed work of grace is begun in their souls, "He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." If those who receive such blessings and mercies, vile and worthless as they know themselves to be, did not speak well of the riches of God's grace, the very stones would cry out. You are constrained to say, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together"; "We sought the Lord, and He heard us, and delivered us from all our fears." Some of you may mourn and sigh,

SOVEREIGN GRACE – PAST AND PRESENT

because you have not such blessed proofs of your interest in the covenant of grace. The Lord regards the lambs as well as the sheep; the mourners in Zion as well as those who are singing on the heights of Zion. "The Lord will bless them that fear Him, both small and great." I am glad to hear of those who have such earnest desires to know the pardon of their sins, and to enjoy the Lord's presence. When the deliverance comes, they will say, "Thou hast dealt bountifully with me; for Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling." We are what we are by the grace of God, whether mourning or rejoicing, whether in bonds or in liberty; and the Lord knows our state; there is no deceiving Him. "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy, for Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities; Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; Thou hast set my feet in a large room."

Those who are real saints are made so by the grace of God; and they are brought to know that all the blessings, mercies and favours, temporal and spiritual, come to them through Christ, unmerited and undeserved in every respect on their part. "What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards us? For the Lord will keep the feet of His saints"; and "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." And may grace have all the praise!

*"Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise"*

"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." Amen.

A SERMON

HE SHALL SAVE HIS PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS

*A Sermon preached on 25th December 1829 at the Great Church,
Abingdon (St Helen's) by William Tiptaft*

*"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for
he shall save his people from their sins."*

Matthew 1:21

I STAND before you this evening either as a servant of Christ or as a servant of the devil. I must be one or the other, for he that is not with Christ is against him (Matt. xii. 30); and, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 16). Paul says: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8). Now if I preach not the Gospel which Paul preached, a curse hangs over my head. I am sure everyone present, whose heart is not as hard as stone, will tremble to think in what an awful situation we ministers are placed. Isaiah saith: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20); and we are commanded not to add to, nor to diminish ought from the Word of God (Deut. iv. 2). We, then, as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, must be faithful. I call upon you this evening to compare with the Word of God whatever I may say; I beseech you to do it; and I will be careful to advance nothing but what I fully believe, and can clearly prove to be according to the Word of God, and all who have been taught of God will acknowledge and confess.

Before I proceed farther I earnestly entreat all present who have faith in Christ to lift up their hearts to God, to ask his blessing upon the truths about to be declared, that many who are dead in trespasses and sins may be aroused, awakened, and converted; that the feeble-minded may be comforted; that the wavering may be established; that those that are "strong in the Lord" (Eph. vi. 10) may have their faith strengthened; and that my discourse may be so free from error that the Spirit of truth may powerfully bear testimony to it.

Our minds are lost in wonder and admiration when we consider that Jesus Christ should come to sojourn in this world, that he should be born of a Virgin, should take upon himself the form of a servant, be so despised and rejected of men as not to have a place to lay his head, and at last suffer a most ignominious death upon the cross. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16). That he should come exactly in the same

manner that he did was clearly foretold by the prophets a great many years before, and has been evidently fulfilled; as Isaiah saith, "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. vii. 14); and at the time expected a Virgin having conceived by the Holy Ghost, brought forth a Son, and they called his name Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21).

Let us, in the first place, inquire who are meant by his people that he will save. And, secondly, how they are saved from their sins.

Now, before I say more on this important subject, I beg to remind you that except ye receive the kingdom of God as a little child, ye shall not enter therein (Mark x. 15). If you understand this text of Scripture, you will know that as long as you bring your carnal reason and human learning to judge of spiritual things, they will profit you nothing. Except the Lord give you a teachable and childlike spirit, the preaching of the cross must be foolishness to you (1 Cor. i. 18); for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14). And Paul saith: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain" (1 Cor. iii. 18-20).

No man can learn and know the spiritual meaning of the Bible to the saving of his soul, except he be taught of God. This "offensive" truth Christ told the Jews; but whenever he said anything which he knew would hurt the pride of their hearts, he used to say: "It is written in the law, or in the prophets"; then they were not able to answer him a word, for they professed to believe them; as he said in this instance: "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John vi. 45). We ministers

adopt the same most excellent plan, for when we advance truths which excite the enmity of carnal minds, we appeal to the Bible for the truth of what we say; and as you profess to believe it, you must justify us.

We are first to inquire who are "his people" that he will save. We all by nature imagine that Christ died for everyone in the world, but he died only for those whom God chose in him before the foundation of the world. But we must know that what God teaches by his holy Spirit is true doctrine, and not what man thinks. The Word of God is our standard and our guide, and whoever speaks not according to that Word, believe him not, for there is no light in him. Now Isaiah, where he is speaking so plainly of Christ, saith: "He shall see his seed"; "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many"; "and he bare the sin of many" (Isa. liii. 10, 11, 12). The prophet, therefore, very clearly shows that Christ came to save a peculiar people; and Christ saith: "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John x. 11). And in the same chapter he says to some of the Jews: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you" (John x. 26). This very plainly shows that he did not give his life for them. Paul saith: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. i. 4, 5). And again: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 25-27). And the same Apostle said: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9).

These words are written in the Bible. Nor has God given these texts only. Very many others besides those which I have advanced I could bring forward; for you must know that this doctrine is not mine, but God's. Nay we, as members of the Church of England, all profess to believe it, for the XVIIth Article of our Church fully explains it: "Predestination unto life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid), he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour." His people, therefore, in the text, are those whom he hath chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

We, in the second place, come to consider how Christ will save his people from their sins.

All by nature are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1; 1 Tim. v. 6; 1 John v. 12; Rom. viii. 6), with hearts at enmity against God, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. xvii. 9); and not one in this state will ever seek God; for, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Psa. xiv. 2, 3). And Christ saith to his disciples: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16); and he told them: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John vi. 44). He also saith: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John xii. 32). Therefore, none can go to Christ but those who are chosen in him, and are drawn. There is nothing that man can do that will recommend him to God; for all that man does till he has faith is nothing but sin. Paul, who was one of the strictest Pharisees before his conversion, saith: "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus

iii. 3-5). Paul told the saints at Ephesus that God had "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. i. 5); and Timothy, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace" (2 Tim. i. 9). If you believe the Scriptures, you must believe that you can do nothing to recommend yourself to God's favour; for if you have not faith, which is the gift of God, you cannot please him; for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8), and "in my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18). "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" (Job xiv. 4). Those that are "dead in trespasses and sins" must be first quickened by the Spirit before the Lord will receive anything from them. "You hath he quickened," saith Paul, "who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1). This very important doctrine is clearly stated in the XIIIth Article of our Church: "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ neither do they make men meet to receive grace; or, (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity." This Article expressly says that without faith we cannot please God. We know that faith is the gift of God. If we read over the works of the flesh we shall not find faith among them, for it is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Faith is a precious gift; but what way has the Lord appointed to confer it upon his chosen people? By the preaching of the Gospel; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17). Go ye and "preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 15, 16). The plan which the Lord hath appointed to gather his people is by sending ministers to preach his Gospel; and some of his chosen people may be persecutors of the true Church, as Paul was; or hardened sinners, like the thief, who even reviled Christ, whilst himself in agony.

The true ministers of the Gospel humble the pride of man, and make him as nothing; they show him the wickedness and deceitfulness of his own heart, and bring his life and conduct to a comparison with the pure and holy law of God. They inquire

deeply into his hope of salvation, and see what foundation he is building upon. "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isa. ii. 11). When men who are endeavouring to obtain salvation by their works, who are very charitable to the poor, very regular in attending church and sacrament, and seem very rich in what they think good works, and whose religion is such as the world highly approves and commends, hear the Gospel preached, they find that Christ is not the rock upon which they are building; and all their good works and all their pride are levelled to the ground at one stroke. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 3). Now charity is love, which is the gift of God.

The true ministers of Christ bring men to the law; now this condemns them, and shows them to be under the curse: He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all (James ii. 10). As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them (Gal. iii. 10). If, then, a man offend against the law of God in one point, either in word, thought, or deed, he is under the curse. Now it is certain that no man can keep the law of God without offence, "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. ii. 21). "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. iii. 24). Thus the law of God writes death in the consciences of those who are "ordained to eternal life" (Acts xiii. 48). They see their sins standing in array before them; they endeavour, through ignorance, to amend their lives; they labour in vain; their hearts are broken by God; for the preparations of the heart are from the Lord (Prov. xvi. 1). They can find no rest nor consolation, and are almost in despair. Harassed and tormented by Satan, they know not what to do, and cry out, with the gaoler at Philippi, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30.) If they have been Pharisees, their eyes are open to see the pride and hypocrisy of their religion, and they confess that all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa. lxiv. 6). If they have been

notorious sinners, they think that the Lord never came to seek such vile wretches as they are. Thus troubled and distressed, they hear the Gospel, which is "glad tidings of good things" (Rom. x. 15) to those who feel themselves lost sinners. They hear Christ set forth in all his fulness and in all his glory; they hear that the more vile they are in their own sight, the more precious will Christ be to them; they hear that if they go to Christ naked, he will clothe them; if they go unto him hungry, he will feed them; and if they go unto him thirsty, he will give them of the living waters, so that they shall not thirst again. They are unwilling to go to Christ, because they have nothing to offer him; they hear with joy that the Lord will accept nothing from men but the sacrifices of broken and contrite hearts. Thus the Lord generally calls his people. He takes from them everything in which they trusted for salvation, and then they are obliged to fly to the refuge set before them in the Gospel; they believe in Christ, and he is made unto them "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). This is very humbling doctrine to the pride of man, that Christ is to be everything and man to be nothing, yea, worse than nothing, for he will never do anything but sin. Whether we be converted or not, our flesh will never do anything good. "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18). They who are chosen in Christ have his Spirit to dwell in them. This Spirit of Christ dwelling in a man makes him a "new creature", so that old things pass away, and all things become new (2 Cor. v. 17). Now, observe, we can do nothing to obtain this Spirit, for all we do, or ever shall do, in the flesh, is sin, as the Xth Article of our Church clearly states: "The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith, and calling upon God". We are cautioned by Solomon not to give "the sacrifice of fools, for they consider not that they do evil" (Eccles. v.1). We cannot turn to God of ourselves; we cannot repent of ourselves, for Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance (Acts v. 31; 2 Tim. ii. 25); and thus the Scriptures, as well as the Xth and XIIIth Articles of our Church, plainly show us all to be under the curse, without the slightest power of delivering ourselves. We ministers of the Gospel must not deceive you; all who have not the Spirit of Christ are in this state,

whether they know it or not, whether they believe it or not. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. ii. 8-10); and Paul saith: "There is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5). God hath loved his people with an everlasting love, and therefore with lovingkindness will he draw them (Jer. xxxi. 3). As long as a man believes that he can do anything of himself to prepare his heart to receive grace or merit salvation, I cannot give him any present scriptural hope of being saved. If the heart be not prepared of God to receive it "without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1), he will never have it. Whilst man thinks any good dwells in his human nature, no good ever will dwell in it; for till a man is taught of God to see himself a lost and undone sinner, his body will never be the temple of the Spirit of Christ; and if he have not Christ's Spirit, he is none of his. All must be humbled to receive salvation as a free gift, or they will never have it: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein" (Mark x. 15). It is God that maketh us to differ; and having Christ's Spirit given to us, with the mind we serve the law of God, though with the flesh the law of sin (Rom. vii. 25). And Paul saith: "By the grace of God I am what I am". "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. xv. 10). It is my belief, and Scripture warrants me in saying so, that no man will ever go to heaven who is not taught of God to rest so entirely on Christ for salvation as to say: "By the grace of God, I am what I am". This is humbling to the pride of man, but salvation is of grace, and grace alone.

I will now address myself to those of this congregation who are ignorant of Christ as the true way of salvation, who have never been taught of God the truths of the Gospel, whose hearts are at enmity against God, and who hate the true doctrines of the Gospel. God grant that the warnings I am about to give you may be instrumental in converting some present who "are ordained to eternal life". I am

thoroughly convinced that you, in your present state, hate to hear the Gospel. Your minds rise in rebellion against God's sovereignty, and you disbelieve his Word of truth. You cannot understand it for it is foolishness to you (1 Cor. ii. 14); and whilst you remain in your present state, you will fight against Christ and his true Church; and if the Lord should not convert you, you will hate him and his Gospel to the day of your death. Now I well know that you would rather hear any other doctrine than the true Gospel. The "truth as it is in Jesus" must offend you. You love to have ministers to feed your pride and flatter your vanity, by preaching to you reformation instead of regeneration; free will instead of free grace; the righteousness of man instead of the imputed righteousness of Christ. You do not like to hear the law preached faithfully, for that condemns you; you do not like to hear the Gospel preached faithfully, for that offends you; but you like to have the law and the Gospel mixed, which spoils both, and only makes men rest contentedly in a fatal security. You cannot be saved by your own righteousness, for "then Christ is dead in vain". So you must be saved by either Christ's righteousness, or your own righteousness and Christ's mixed. Consider whether your pride is great enough to make you think that your own righteousnesses, which are "as filthy rags" (Isa. lxiv. 6), will be required to adorn the wedding garment prepared by Christ himself. You may be ready to say to me that Christ told the young man who asked him, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" - "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 16, 17). Here Christ brought him to the law, that he might be condemned. And so I say to you: "If you will enter into life, keep the commandments", and then you will have fulfilled the law as well as Christ; but remember, if you offend in one point you are guilty of all, and are under the curse. Therefore, bring yourselves to this test, and, like the young man, you will be convinced that you cannot gain heaven in that way; for the law condemns every man; and Christ saith: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6). Do you believe in Christ? Are you sure that you do? Perhaps you think that you believe, because you have never doubted. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John

v. 10). What witness have you? "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Psa. xxv. 14). What secret of the Lord do you know? Christ saith: "I know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John x. 14). Do you know Christ? Paul saith: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. iii. 12). What persecution have you suffered? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14). You cannot say that you have passed from death unto life, because you do not believe that man is dead in sins. Do you love the brethren? Do you love Jesus Christ? Are you willing to endure much persecution for him? Would you die for him? Do you love the blessed truths of the Gospel? Do you find the doctrine of predestination and election in Christ to be "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort", as the XVIIth Article saith it is? Do you like to hear of election and free grace, or do you like to hear ministers lower God by making him man's equal, so that man may make conditions with him in this manner - that man is to do all the good he can, by attending church and the sacrament, giving alms, being just in his dealings, and leading a good moral life; and that God, on his part, must grant heaven on such terms? This is the vain religion of millions (a mere mercenary bargain for heaven), who serve God from a slavish fear of hell, as a hard task-master. This is what man calls a reasonable religion, and what thousands of strict professors will advocate.

I tell you plainly again, to the praise and glory of God, that he chose in Christ before the world began, those whom he intended to deliver from curse and damnation. God so loved them that Christ died for them; but not one will come to Christ of his own free will, and yet all shall come; for Christ saith: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). They were ordained to do good works; the Lord calls them and sanctifies them, and prepares them for the mansions already prepared for them in heaven; and not one will be lost.

This doctrine is not mine, but God's; if you will read Romans viii. and ix., Ephesians i. - iii., and John x. and xvii., you will

acknowledge the truths are there, if you cannot believe and love them; and compare the Xth, XIth, XIIth, XIIIth and XVIIth Articles of our Church with them and the doctrines which I have delivered this evening, and you will be obliged to say that you, as Churchmen, profess to believe them. Satan will help you to explain them away, if it were possible. But if ye will not hear Paul, hear Solomon: "The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Prov. xvi. 4). Some, who know these truths to be there, but cannot love them, may be ready to say that ministers ought to guard them. God has not told me to do so, and if he did not think proper to guard his own pure Word, he does not want vain man to guard it for him. Satan loves to have it guarded, for he well knows that Gospel-guarders never did and never will disturb his kingdom. We know that Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for keeping back part of the price. What, then, may we ministers expect if we keep back part of his blessed Gospel? Many present will say, that the true doctrines of the Gospel are foolish, unreasonable, and absurd; therefore you, whosoever you may be, bear a strong testimony to the truth of them; for "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness". When Paul and Silas preached the Gospel to the Thessalonians, they cried out: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts xvii. 6). But the Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed" (Acts xvii. 11, 12). Alas! you think yourselves "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"; and know not that you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. iii. 17).

Now I will speak a few words to you, my brethren, who know Jesus. You can bear testimony to the truth of what I have said. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John iv. 19). The doctrines which the natural man hates, you love to hear; they are the comfort and delight of your souls; and when you hear self-righteous doctrines, you are grieved, and pity the preacher and his hearers. You can say with the Reformers: "That we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine" (XIth Article); for you well know that in your flesh nothing but sin dwells; you say with David to God:

"All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron. xxix. 14). And if the Lord required even a single good thought of you, of yourselves, you certainly would be damned. You know that you were blind, and the Lord hath opened your eyes to see your lost state by nature, that you might be brought to Christ, and be found in him, not having your own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. iii. 9). You acknowledge that if the Lord had not chosen you, you would never have chosen him, and you would still have been fighting with the world and the devil against Christ. You once hated to hear of election, as natural men must do. You know when Christ preached it, it always gave offence. In Luke, when he preached election, they endeavoured to cast him down headlong from the brow of a hill. When he preached it again, many of his disciples went back, and "walked no more with him" (John vi. 65, 66). When he clearly stated it again, the Jews said: "He hath a devil, and is mad" (John x. 20). Paul, who boldly declared the truth as it is in Jesus, caused his hearers to say of him: "Away with such a fellow from the earth; it is not fit that he should live" (Acts xxii. 22); and, "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law" (Acts xviii. 13). They considered him a fool, and counted him "as the filth of the earth, and the off-scouring of all things" (1 Cor. iv. 10, 13). And if ministers preached as faithfully now as Paul did, would natural men like to hear them? Nature is not changed, the Gospel is not changed, and Christ is not changed. Therefore, when the Gospel is faithfully preached now, all who are not taught of God to receive it, of whatever sect or denomination they may be, will speak against and condemn it, if it be the same which Paul preached. As God said to Jeremiah: "Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, and the birds round about are against her" (Jer. xii. 9). Yes, everyone is against the true Church of Christ who are not of it, as Christ saith: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Matt. x. 22); and they said to Paul, as "concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts xxviii. 22). Shall we grieve, my brethren, at this? No. Christ saith, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. v.12). The Scriptures abound with

words of consolation to the persecuted; for a Christian without persecution is as great a contradiction as a fire without heat. The stronger your faith is, the more you will be hated. You, my brethren, who have the Spirit of God bearing witness with your spirit that you are the children of God (Rom. viii. 16), may you never be ashamed of Christ dwelling in you; for if you have not his Spirit, you are none of his; and if you have his Spirit, your salvation is as certain as if you were in heaven. But the fruits of your faith will as evidently appear and be known as a tree is known by its fruit. If your faith does not influence your lives, and work by love, it is dead, and will profit you nothing. You are only Judases and hypocrites. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John ii. 3, 4). You serve God as sons, not as a task-master, like slaves. Love makes you rich in good works in Christ. Love constrains you to be holy; your joy and happiness must be great; your sins are pardoned; your righteousness and sanctification are in Christ; the work has been done for you, and Christ hath told you so when he said, with his expiring breath, "It is finished!" (John xix. 30). Though you must be vile and worthless in the world's esteem, you are precious in God's sight, and "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" (Zech. ii. 8). No one can injure you without God's permission and all things shall work together for your good (Rom. viii. 28). May the world bring no other charge against you than they did against Daniel, which was his religion. If you will reign with Christ, you must first suffer with him. You must bear the cross before you can wear the crown; but this life will soon pass away, and then you shall receive those blessed mansions which were prepared for you before the foundation of the world, and enjoy unutterable pleasures at God's right hand for evermore.

Chapter Two

TOBIAS CRISP
(1600 – 1642)

TOBIAS CRISP

Tobias Crisp (1600-1642), was born in London, educated at Cambridge and Oxford, and became rector at Brinkworth, Wiltshire in 1627. He became a well loved preacher of the free grace of God in salvation, and many would travel from far and wide to hear him preach. A collection of his sermons goes under the title "Christ Alone Exalted" which says much about his emphasis in preaching.

CHRIST'S
PRE-EMINENCE

SERMON V FROM
"CHRIST ALONE EXALTED"

By Tobias Crisp

With notes by Dr. John Gill

"That in all things he might have the pre-eminence"
Colossians 1:18

THIS admirable, sweet, and comfortable apostle of the Gentiles, makes it the master-piece of his apostleship, to woo and win people unto Christ: "We are the ambassadors of Christ, beseeching you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God": as in all the rest of his epistles, so especially in this, and more especially in this 1st chapter, he shews an excellent faculty he hath this way, in this business of wooing people to come to Christ: he observes what most effectually takes with people to beguile their spirits, as he speaks himself, with a kind of craft to catch their affections; especially, if you observe from the 15th verse of this chapter, and so on, you shall find, the apostle meets with every thing that is most enamouring and taking with the people. The world is mightily taken with beauty, with completeness, of person; Oh! saith one, let me have a beautiful person, it is no matter how poor: if beauty be so taking, then, saith the apostle, I will present a rare piece indeed to you, in presenting Christ; for such is the beauty of Christ, that there is no beauty like his; he (saith he) is "The image of the invisible God"; that is one commendation of his. But, will some say, so is every man as well as Christ; what rareness is there in Christ in this regard? It is true, man is after the image of God, but where the apostle calls him "The image of the invisible God," he speaks in an eminent manner; therefore, you shall find him expressing himself more fully, in setting forth the rare beauty of Christ, in Heb. i. 3, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." He is the image of God to the life, as I may say; he is so like him, you cannot know one from the other: he hath the perfections of God, that there can be nothing more like than he is unto the Father, expressing the brightness of his glory. But there are some, though they find beauty, yet that alone will not take; besides that, some men look for lineage, what stock a person is of: is he come of a good house, of a noble and royal blood? Blood is a great matter, especially with high spirits. Well, if this will take, then there is no stock like of Christ; he is of the greatest house in the world; "The firstborn"

*He is the *first parent*, or bringer forth of every creature into being, as the word will bear to be rendered.

(saith the apostle) of every creature": he comes of that great house, of God himself.

And so doth the creature too, you will say; what rarity is there in Christ above the creatures? they all come of God.

I answer; But, beloved, the creatures are of, and in the house of God, as the apostle speaks of Moses, in Heb. iii. 5, "As servants in the house"; Christ as a Son; Christ is not only of royal house, but he is born of that royal house; he is the natural Son of the Father, "This is my beloved Son"; so that he is of the very blood-royal; (as I may so say with reverence) and he is not a younger brother in this house neither, for he is the firstbegotten of the house; that is a great matter among persons to marry the heir of a family; so he is. Nay, more than that, he is the only-begotten of the house; there is never another in all the family; and that is a great encouragement, he is "the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth," saith the apostle, John ii. 14. So that if men go all the world over, to find a match in the noblest house, they will never meet with such a one as this of the Son of God. Thus he commends him. But yet some are ready to say, "Suppose he be of a noble house, he may be in disgrace, and he may live privately, and have no authority, nor be able to do any great matters." If this will do, then the apostle commends Christ as the rarest, in respect of his power and authority; "All things were made by him, and for him;" that is, all things in the world are at his command and beck; they bow unto him, they stoop before him; "At his name every knee shall bow, both of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth"; every thing goes through his hands.

Yea, but it may be, will some say, he is in disgrace in court that is a blur upon him.

I answer, No, he is not so great in the country, but he is as great in the court too; for, as he hath the whole world under his power, so he hath the great king at his back; he commands in heaven, as he doth upon earth; there is nothing he can ask of the Father, but it is

answered; he never has a nay; if any come to be suitor to him to put up a petition, he is sure to speed.

But, for all this, he may be but a poor man, though he have never so great power in court and country; if he be poor, I shall live but poorly with him; if he were rich, and had abundance of wealth, then there were some hope, some encouragement to take such an one.

I answer, Christ is not greater in court and country, than he is rich in treasure; so you shall find in the 19th verse, "It pleased the Father, that in him all fulness should dwell." All fulness; all the treasures of wisdom are hid in him; he hath the whole world to dispose of; therefore silver and gold are not to be compared unto him.

Yea, but yet there is one thing more; though he hath riches, yet he may prove a niggard, close-fisted, he may keep all to himself; the party that hath him may be poor enough, for want of contribution.

But, beloved, he is not more rich himself, than he is liberal to contribute of his treasure, to make those that are his, sharers to the uttermost of all that he hath. Therefore, in chap. ii. 10, (for he follows this subject all along,) the apostle tells us, not only, in verse 9, "That in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily," but "You are complete in him who is the head of the body." The head, you know, is not a niggard: what fulness the head hath, it communicates to every part: Christ is a head, and a head of fulness, the fulness of the Godhead. And, as the head is not sparing, but disperseth, and scattereth all that is in it, so that every member shall have a share; and not a share merely to keep life and soul together, as we say, but a share to make a man complete: so, if any persons in the world would devise what they could desire in such a one to match themselves unto, you shall find that a creature cannot frame those perfections, in its fancy, which it would enjoy; I say, men cannot frame any perfections, to come so near the real perfections of Christ, as a shadow comes near the substance. You have a proverb, that "Bachelors' wives, and maids' children, must be rare creatures"; that is, their fancy will devise what kind of one they will have, and

what kinds of perfections they desire. Let the fancy devise what kind of perfection it can, to please sense, Christ shall really out-strip, in perfection, all these fancies, more than a substance doth out-strip a shadow.

Now, the apostle, having delivered himself thus fully by way of wooing unto Christ, he comes to close in the words of the text; and so declares the end and purpose for which he sets out Christ in so many excellencies as he did; the end of this was, "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence"; that he may be taken for the most excellent thing in the world; that all things may be rejected, rather than he; and he set above every thing in the world. So then, the point in brief is this, in regard of the rare excellencies, and perfections, and usefulness of Christ, which are incomparable, he ought to have the pre-eminence in all things. In handling of which, we shall consider,

First, What the pre-eminence is, which Christ ought to have.

Secondly, Why he should have the pre-eminence in all these; And then a word or two of application.

First, What is this pre-eminence that Christ should have. I will not insist upon the word pre-eminence: you all know, to give a person or thing the pre-eminence, is no more than this, to set up such a person or thing above all others, and especially for those uses and purposes we have occasion of them for: I say, to choose such a person before any other, as a person who can better, and more certainly bring to pass what we desire, than any else can. So that in brief, to give Christ the pre-eminence, is, to set up Christ above all things in the world; to choose Christ, rather than any thing, for every use and purpose to make of him: I say, above and before any thing whatsoever, as apprehending him infinitely more able and sufficient unto such purposes than any thing else is.

But more particularly, that we might the better see what the pre-eminence is, that Christ ought to have; you must know, that there is

an infallible pattern drawn out unto us, according unto which we are to write our copy. In general, therefore, the pre-eminence we are to give unto Christ, is, the pre-eminence that the Father hath given unto him before us, and revealed unto us, that we may, in our way, give the same to him; therefore, we must consider a while what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ. You shall find, that the Father in many things infinitely sets up Christ above all things in the world: he chose Christ before all things in the world. For instance: first, the Father gives Christ the pre-eminence of his affections, his love and his delight. There, is nothing in the world, the Father loves and delights in, as he doth in his Son. All the delight the creatures have, from the Father, are but beams from the sun of righteousness, in the eyes of God. That Christ hath more abundance of the Father's love, than any creature in the world hath, I will give you but one passage or two, for the clearing of it. Look into Prov. viii. 30, 31. By the way, you must note, first, that wisdom, spoken of in this chapter, is generally understood by all, to be Christ alone; and that which is indeed affirmed of wisdom, can be affirmed of none but Christ. Among other particulars, note these two, to manifest it is Christ, and that he hath that choice affection of the Father: "I was set up (saith Wisdom here) from everlasting." I was set up from everlasting: none was everlasting but the Father to set him up; none could be everlasting but the Sun to be set up. All creatures had their beginning and being in time. Now, observe the affection of the Father in this; I was set up from everlasting; it doth properly set forth the nature of pre-eminence. Wisdom speaks of many things; God did lay the foundations of the earth, made the sea, and several creatures; but I was set up from everlasting; as much as if he should say, these have their place in the world, but my place is above them, in the affection of God. And, that this setting up is meant of God's affection to Christ above any creature in the world, mark what he speaks in verse 30, "Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: I was daily his delight in the habitable parts of the earth; I was by him as one brought up with him"; the meaning is, Christ is here considered as the darling of the Father. All the creatures in the world are brought up by God, in a large sense; but he was brought up with him, that is to say, he was the

very fondling of him. When Abraham had an Isaac, Isaac must be brought up with Abraham, and Ishmael must be sent abroad; Ishmael shall have a portion, but shall not be brought up with him. This shews the difference of affection to one before the other. Bringing up with him as an argument of affection; "I was brought up with him, I was daily his delight": He made the creatures, but Christ was his only delight; that is, he could not look upon any creature in the world, and delight in it, but this delight he had in his Son, did swallow up the delight he had in any creature. In brief, the love and delight of the Father hath such a pre-eminence in the Son, that the truth is, there is no creature in the world doth actually participate of one jot of the love of the Father, but by the Son, and for the Son's sake; as the Son becomes the channel, or rather the spring, that receives from the ocean of God's love. That love the creature participates of, it participates of it by Christ; you know, when we partake of sweet streams that run in rivers and channels, we are beholden to the spring for the stream; and what the spring receives, that it conveys to the channel from the ocean. The heart of God, as I may so speak, is the ocean, the first (1 John iv. 19) rise of all love to the creature; Christ is the spring that first receives from him, and then through him is all love diffused to the creature.

You know, that by nature we are children of wrath, subjects of the hatred and displeasure of God, being at enmity with God; how do we partake of God again? "God is in Christ, [saith the text,] reconciling the world unto himself": so that this uniting again to the Father, in the participating of the love of the Father, comes again in Christ; "You that sometimes were afar off, hath he made nigh by the blood of Christ": afar off, in respect of the affection of God, in regard of our sinful nature; but made nigh, that is, reduced again into the affection of God by the blood of Christ*.

*This must be understood, as the Doctor explains it, of the open participation and enjoyment of the love of God, and not of the secret love of God, and the cause and origin of it; which is his own sovereign will, and not the blood of Christ.

Here is the pre-eminence of Christ above the creature, he hath infinitely more of affection; he is the spring and fountain of that affection that the creature partakes of. Now, then, we are to give this pre-eminence unto Christ, that reveals this unto us, that so we may see the pattern according to which we are to walk, and do likewise. We should, so make Christ the choicest in our affection; we can never place love and affection more orderly, than by placing affection according to the pattern God sets; so far as we affect according to God, and imitate him in affecting, so far are our affections placed aright: to put the cart before the horse; to affect things of lower degree, above things that are higher; to give pre-eminence to things that should come behind, and to bring that behind that should have pre-eminence, is the disorder of man's affection; it swerves from the pattern and example of God himself. So then, Christ hath the pre-eminence over all persons with us; when he is really promoted and exalted above all creatures in the world in our affection: "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" saith Asaph; "I desire nothing in the earth in comparison of thee." Here is the pre-eminence of affection given unto Christ, when there is nothing in the world in the affection comparable unto him. You shall see the like in the Canticles, v. 9, 10, the church discoursing about her beloved, the strangers ask her, "What is thy beloved, more than another beloved?" she answers, "My beloved is the chief of ten thousands." Here is the pre-eminence ascribed. When the people of Israel heard David say, he would go to war, they fell upon him with "Thou art more worth than ten thousand of us." Here was the pre-eminence given to the King. So, I say, when in affection Christ is promoted as the chief among ten thousands; nay, let all things in the world be set with Christ, they are trash to him; then, I say, is given real pre-eminence unto Christ, when, in affection; in regard of the excellencies of Christ, he is set above every thing in the world.

Secondly, The Father gives Christ this pre-eminence besides; namely, in a far more enlarged and multiplied proportion of gifts and parts above all creatures. Christ is the Benjamin of his Father, whose mess is more than five times as much as all the rest of the brethren. The apostle, Phil. ii. 9, tells us, "That God hath highly

exalted him, and given him a name above every name"; and in Heb. i. 9, he hath anointed his Christ, "He hath anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." You shall find, that God promotes Christ even above angels; Heb. i. and ii. insists mainly upon this point, in how many respects God exalts Christ above angels; "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" But, I say, principally in respect of parts and gifts, you shall find that that which God bestows upon Christ, is far more than he bestows upon any creature. In John iii. 34, it is said, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him"; we receive drop by drop of that we have; we have it but scanty, to that which Christ hath; he hath received the Spirit not by measure. The truth is, Christ receives a proportionable gift as head; now a head not only requires to have what should supply itself of spirit; but such a proportion as is sufficient to supply all the parts, from the head to the foot; therefore, it must needs have more than the several parts themselves; we need no more than for our own sustenance. Christ is our head, and therefore as a head must have the pre-eminence; that is, a larger proportion of gifts than others; for others are but to find for themselves, but he is to maintain himself, and to maintain the whole body too. Thus should we give Christ the pre-eminence, to which the Father hath exalted him above creatures, giving unto him more than unto creatures; nay, giving unto creatures all they have by him; I say, so should we give him the pre-eminence likewise. Whither should a creature go for water, but unto the spring? whither should the creature go for strength, but unto the fountain of strength? Is it not a derogation unto Christ, that all fulness should be in him alone, and we forsake this fountain of fulness to go unto broken cisterns that will hold no water? Mark it well, as often as ever you run to any creature in any necessity or exigence, either before you go to Christ, or instead of going to Christ; so often you rob Christ of that pre-eminence that God hath given unto him, and you should give unto him. If any creature in the world seem in your fancy to have a helpfulness, a likelihood of strength, and of supply; and this likelihood of supply seems more likely than one from Jesus Christ; so far is the pre-eminence of Christ brought down, and the creature hath gotten a pre-eminence above him. Look to it, beloved,

while you run to the creature, to the world, for this, and that, and the other thing, and think it must come this way, or it will never come, Christ is wholly neglected of you: and you that are of a more spiritual strain, that when you are under any trial, run to any grace, or temper of spirit in you, or any qualifications, or any performances you can tender; and look after them, as the thing that most likely will furnish you with what you want, while you look faintly and coldly upon Christ, and the freeness of that grace that Christ brings along with himself; so long you deny unto Christ the pre-eminence of those parts and gifts God hath given unto him above other things. If God hath given unto any creatures more than unto Christ, you might rather have sought unto them than unto Christ; you might more properly look and wish for supply in them than in Christ; but if Christ hath more than any creature in the world; nay, if Christ be made the sole and only fountain of supply, whether for the spirits or the outward man; then must he have this pre-eminence to be sought unto rather than any thing in the world, for the furnishing of you, and supplying you with that, that must come from this fountain.

Thirdly, The Father gives Christ this pre-eminence to be the foundation to bear up all things: the apostle tells us, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11; and in Heb. i. 2, speaking of Christ, "As the brightness of the Father," he saith also, "That he doth uphold all things by the word of his power": God then gives, to Christ this pre-eminence to be the foundation. The creature therefore robs Christ of his pre-eminence, when Christ must not be the foundation to bear up all things, but other foundations shall be laid; as if there were a firmer or securer bottom to bear up than Christ himself. In Isa. xxviii. 16, you shall see what pre-eminence the Father gives unto Christ as the foundation; "Behold, [saith he,] I lay in Sion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation." St. Peter hath an addition hereunto, in I Peter ii. 4,5, An "elect, precious" stone, a living stone, unto whom coming, ye as lively stones "are built up a spiritual house". Mark what pre-

eminence he hath given to Christ, to be such a kind of foundation to uphold all things.

To give a touch of these things: first, he is a stone, the firmest bottom in the world, for the security of that which is laid upon it from sinking: give Christ this pre-eminence too. Beloved, look unto him, and consider him as a stone, an immoveable rock; such a rock as you may sit down with this confidence; that though heaven and earth shake and come together, whatsoever is laid upon him shall never totter.

He is a "tried stone," saith the text; that is, more than barely a stone. You know what pre-eminence those medicines have, that have *probatum est* over-written; that is an approved medicine, and, upon trial, found to be good. You know what pre-eminence that armour of proof hath, when a musket is discharged upon it, and the bullet pierceth it not; this is of pre-eminence above others. Christ is "a tried stone"; there is a *probatum est* written over the head of this stone; he was tried by the Father, he is tried by believers, he is tried by his enemies; and a *probatum est* is written over his head, that he is a stone with a witness. (Heb. x. 14. Zech. iv. 7.) tried by the Father, first, in his secret council; he found that nothing in the world could stand under that business which was to be done; he was tried by him on earth; "he made the iniquities of us all to meet on him," Isa. liii. 6, and yet they could not make his back to break; here he was tried, he made him a butt for all his wrath, the whole quiver of his envenomed arrows; yet he stood to it: he was tried by believers; they have put him to it to the utmost: he is tried by his very enemies, who find him a grindstone to grind them to powder; bulwark of security for all such whom they oppose.

He is not only a tried stone, but "a precious tried stone," saith the apostle, that is more: he gives him this pre-eminence, to be a precious stone. You know, when the Holy Ghost sets forth the glory of the church in the Revelations, under the name and title of such and such precious stones, of which the foundation, the gates, and the walls were made, it is set forth in way of excellency, that they

are precious stones; here, I say, is pre-eminence, that Christ is a precious stone, as well as a tried stone; precious to God, nothing so delectable as what he doth; precious to believers, precious in respect of beauty (no beauty like his); precious in respect of his value; nothing of worth comparable to him; "the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul, thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil," come not near in value to the ransom of the soul; but Christ hath ransomed it, and is raised from the grave. All the creatures in the world, gathered up together, could never make up a sum to buy out the soul: therefore he is precious, precious in value and worth: all receipts in the world spend out their virtue, and are dry things, to the virtue and excellency of Christ: such is the virtue that is found in Christ, that let him but come and lay his mouth to the foot, where the thorn is, he draws out the thorn; nay, he lays his mouth to the plague-sore (Num. xxi. 8,9, John iii. 14,15.) of the soul, and he sucks out the venom; it is true, he drinks his own bane; for the present, it costs him his life: but he sucks out the poison (1 Cor. xv. 56.) from the person that makes use of him. There are many precious stones, they say, that are of admirable virtue, but yet none is compared unto Christ. He is "a sure foundation," saith the prophet, that is more; not only precious, but sure; so sure, that lay what load you can lay upon the back of Christ, he stoops not; and, therefore, he was excellently typified by those brazen pillars in Solomon's temple; they were made of brass, on purpose to shew their strength, whereon the whole weight of the porch of the temple lay, Christ hath this pre-eminence given unto him of the Father, that although an infinite weight were to be imposed upon him, yet he should go away with all. And in this regard, Sampson was a type of him, who; being barred up in the city among the Philistines, takes the gates of the city, and carries them up into a mountain, and there lays them: he is so "sure a foundation", that lay the load of all the sins you ever committed; lay the load of all the sins of all the people that shall be saved by him, yet he stoops not; these break him not, he will carry them away as easily as Samson the gates: add to that, the load of all your duties and performances, and businesses in the world; lay all upon Christ, he will do all for you. But, must not we do them? ye will say. Yea, he will do them for you, and in you: first, he will do

them for you, namely, in fulfilling righteousness in his own person, which he presents to his Father, as that righteousness whereby believers shall be justified before the Father. As he doth all *for* them, so he doth all righteousness *in* them. Your duties are as the duty you do to a deceased friend; you think it is the last duty you shall do for him, to carry him to the grave; though you may have bearers, you shall go under the corpse, but the bearers shall have all the weight upon their shoulders, so that you go easy, in respect of the assistance of the bearers: all the duties we have to do, may seem weighty; this is a hard saying, and that is a hard saying, who can obey it? But, know, that the Lord Christ is such a pillar, such a bearer, to take all the weight of duties upon his back, that he carries the burthen; and so carries it, that you shall go but as the friend of the corpse, the burthen shall be off from your shoulders. In all duties God calls for of any person, the strength of Christ is made perfect in the weakness of him that is to do them. Christ takes not men simply from doing, but he takes away the heaviness and the task. We look upon duties as a yoke and burthen; but mark what Christ saith, "Take my yoke, for it is easy; and my burthen, for it is light." How can this be, that it should be a yoke, and yet easy; a burthen, and yet light? It is a yoke and burthen in itself, to any person that carries all himself, without Christ; but easy and light when Christ bears the weight of it. Again, add to this, He is so *sure a foundation*, that, besides duties; lay all your burthens upon him, his back is broad enough to sustain all; the burthen of your spirits, the burthen of your outward man, all the burthens of the church in general, while she is under the greatest calamities: Christ, I say, is *a sure foundation* to bear all these; to bear the burthen of all the cares of all the people of God; "Cast your care upon him, for he cares for you," saith the apostle. Finally, he is *a sure foundation*; commit all your comforts unto Christ, he will uphold all your comforts, he will renew them and enlarge them.

Besides, he is an elect stone, singled out by God himself, for this very office, in respect of his excellency and usefulness, to have the pre-eminence. And as he is elected unto it; this imports, it is God's own act that Christ should have such a pre-eminence, to be the

foundation. Besides, as it is the act of God, so there is a certainty that God himself must be drawn dry, before Christ shall, or be left any jot unable to do that which is imposed upon him: look, therefore, what God himself, in heaven, is able to do, as he is God: all this is Christ made able to do, by him that sends him about this employment: so that he must be spent, before Christ shall be dry. If a father hath a child, that he prizeth as his own life, a slave in the gallies, he will send the ransom of his son to the gallies; he will spend all that ever he hath, rather than his son shall not be redeemed. There is no wise man sends a servant about any employment in the world, but he furnishes him thoroughly to dispatch that business about which he sends him: it is a vain thing for a master to send a servant for five pounds worth of anything, and not give him so much money. Doth God send Christ into the world to redeem sinners, to sustain the burthen of sins, and not furnish him to do the work he sends him about? He might as well have kept him at home, if he did not furnish him thoroughly, that he might dispatch it.

Finally, He hath such a pre-eminence, as to be a living-stone, and such a living-stone, as makes all stones living that come near him. Here is the pre-eminence Christ hath; of the loadstone, you observe, all iron or steel that comes near it, it draws all to it, and communicates, of its own virtue, to the iron it draws: this is: most like to Christ; Christ is such a loadstone, that he draws many after him; and, as he draws them after him, so he communicates his own virtue to them: so that now, as he is a living-stone, he communicates life to them, though they were dead in sin: and not only so, but he communicates a power to them, to make other things lively. You have an observation, when once a knife is touched with a loadstone, it will draw another: it is most certain Christ hath this virtue to draw souls to himself, and when he draws them, they partaking of life from him, he gives unto them to be instruments of life unto others– "When thou art converted (saith Christ to Peter), strengthen thy brethren." Now, seeing Christ hath all this pre-eminence given unto him by the Father, to be such a foundation to bear up all things, let us give him this pre-eminence to lay all upon him, and

not upon any thing else whatsoever; and so far as we do lay all upon "this stone, this tried stone, this precious corner stone, this sure foundation, this elect corner stone, this living stone"; so far as we will venture all upon him, we so far give him the pre-eminence: but, if he will be setting buttresses to the house that is built upon a rock, what is this but a disparagement to the foundation? If the foundation be firm and good, wherefore then served buttresses? It is apparent the house will sink, when it cannot stand alone without them: so far as you set up any props unto Christ the foundation, that is to bear up all by himself, so far you disparage Christ; so far you bring him down, and give him not the pre-eminence. I see the time steals away. There are many particulars, wherein I should show you how you may give the pre-eminence unto Christ. But I must hasten.

Consider, briefly, Why should Christ have the pre-eminence? Why should not other things sit cheek-by-jole with him?*

*Side by side, or in equality with him.

I answer, Because it is the good will and pleasure of the Father he should have the pre-eminence. What is the reason Joseph must be the chief man in Egypt? Pharaoh will have it so. What is the reason that Mordecai must be led through the city with pomp and triumph, and Haman lead the horse, when Mordecai was counted a slave to Haman? Why, King Ahasuerus will have it so. And, if God will have it so, it must be so: if there were no other reason, but God the Father's will, we, that are subjects, should yield to the Father his own will, and give that honour to him, whom he will honour: "What shall be done to the man whom the King will honour? Thus shalt thou do to him, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown-royal which is set upon his head; and let this apparel, and horse, be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal, whom the king delighteth to honour and bring him on horseback through the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom

the king will honour," Esther, vi. 8, 9. As much as to say, Those the king honours, the people must honour with him: so, if God the Father will honour the Son with a pre-eminence upon earth, his will must be a law to us; we must honour him with that pre-eminence, because he will have it so.

Secondly, Christ must have the pre-eminence above all other things in the world, as he is born unto it; he is heir of all things. You know, it is the right of the heir to have the inheritance, or, a double portion above his brethren; Christ, therefore, being the heir of the world, the first begotten of the Father; nay, the only Son; it starts with nature, he should have the pre-eminence above a younger brother.

Thirdly, Christ hath bought this pre-eminence; he hath paid for it to the uttermost value of it. He that buyeth a lordship, it is fit he should be lord of the manor; it is not fit any inferior tenant should be above him, as long as he hath purchased and given a price for it: Christ hath purchased this pre-eminence, and he paid the Father the uttermost farthing; "He beheld the travail of his soul, and was satisfied" with it; and therefore he ought to have it.

Fourthly, Christ ought to have the pre-eminence of all things, in that he alone is able to manage this pre-eminence. You know there are many favourites in states sometimes, that have the doing of all businesses of state, in respect of the favour of the prince; but the state comes to ruin, and they also, if they be not able to manage the state. If any creature in the world should have the pre-eminence given to him to manage all affairs in the world, but Christ himself; certainly, it would prove to the world, as the poet feigned it did by the son of Phoebus, that went about to drive the chariot of the sun: Phoebus could manage the same in order; but Phaeton, a novice, a stripling, an ignorant fellow, comes in; he steps up to rule the sun, and the whole world is set on fire: I say, it would be so at least with the world, if any creature should have the pre-eminence to manage the affairs of it. Look to the wisest man in the world, and most able to manage the affairs of the world; yet he hath so many irons in the

fire, some of them burn for want of looking to; therefore, Christ should have the pre-eminence, because he can go through stich with whatever business he undertakes.

Fifthly, Christ should have the pre-eminence in all things, because he hath best deserved it at our hands: we usually honour those people to whom we are most bound; according to the kindness received, so is our exalting of the person. Now, what creature in the world comes near to Christ in loving kindness and desert at our hands? Where had we been, had not Christ slept in between us and the Father to make peace with the Father for us? Oh! what a fearful account should we have come unto at the great tribunal of the Lord, had not Christ before hand cancelled all that God could charge us withal, and blotted out our transgressions, and presented us without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing in the sight of God; "In him [you] live, and move, and have [your] being"; by him you have access to the throne of grace, through a new and living way; all you have, and all that you are, all that you hope for hereafter, come only from this fountain, this Christ, who hath purchased all of the Father for you. If any creature in the world can do these things for you, let the creature be exalted above him; but if he leave all the creatures of the world behind, and out-strip them, good reason there is, according to his desert, he should have the pre-eminence. The apostle, considering the infinite desert of Christ to be exalted by men, breaks out into this vehement expression, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed with a great curse", 1 Cor. xvi. 22, so deserves (John xxi. 17.) this Christ at the hands of man.

Now for application of it: is it Christ's due to have the pre-eminence? then bring down every thing that exalts itself above Christ; rear and set up the thrown-down and dejected Christ in you; you that have exalted the world, and made it your god, bring down this idol, grind it to the dust, set up the Lord Christ; if you will have any thing in the world, let Christ hear of it. When men would have any thing of a king, they never go to the scullion in the kitchen; but to the favourite, by whom the king hath declared he will deliver

things. When the people came to Pharaoh, he sends them to Joseph, as, Joseph said, he would do; so, I say to you, would you have any thing of God, go to Christ, go by Christ to him. If you come in any other name in the world, if God answers you in that you would have, he answers you with a curse; "This is my beloved Son, hear him"; as he will direct you, so you shall speed: if Christ say, your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven; if Christ will make a deed of gift to you; of liberty from bondage, of grace, or of glory; if Christ hath once past the deed, the Father will underwrite to it and subscribe it: "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed": for "of his fulness we do receive grace for grace." In John xvii. 2, it is said, "The Father hath given to him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life." As you will have these things, go to Christ; if you go any where else in the world, but to Christ, you shall go without; they are to be had no where else. God hath given him the pre-eminence; he must rule all, he must determine, and the Father will yield; "The Father hath given all judgment to the Son, and he himself will judge no man. The government is laid upon his shoulders": therefore you must go where God sends you, if you will speed for any thing of him.

Learn of Christ more, let Christ be the Alpha and Omega; in all things, begin in Christ, end in Christ; do all by Christ, get all by Christ.

But must not we serve in duty, will you say?

I answer, ye must serve in duty and obedience, but look not that that duty should bring any thing; it is Christ brings every thing you get; you get nothing by duties: assure yourselves, while you look to get by that you do, you will but get a knock; because of so much sinfulness in the duty; but if you will have any good, you must get it by Christ: your duties you perform, are that wherein you are to walk in the world, and before the world, that you may be profitable to men; but as for getting any thing, assure yourselves, while your labour to get by duties, you provoke God, as much as lies in you, to

punish you for such presumption, if not for the filthiness of the things you perform.

And as you must bring every thing down that exalts itself above Christ; so you must set Christ above every thing; know, this will be "the great condemnation, that light," that is Christ, "is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light": they love to run to other things, and to forsake the light; this will be the condemnation. So far as Christ is slighted, and other things promoted above him, so far you take away the great end for which Christ was sent into the world, which was, "That he might have the pre-eminence in all things."

CHRIST THE CHIEFEST
AND FIRST MERCY

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

SERMON XLIV FROM
"CHRIST ALONE EXALTED"

By Tobias Crisp

*"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall
he not with him also freely give us all things?"*

Romans 8:32

THE apostle having in the foregoing discourse excellently amplified the large spiritual privileges of Christ's members, conveyed by his Spirit into them, in the closing up of this sweet subject, endeavours to establish and settle the reeling hearts of weak believers, that they might have the more joy in believing, by sundry clear convincing arguments. The first is in the preceding verse, taken from the security which God's presence and side-taking with them gives, in respect of his being infinitely too hard for whatever may oppose them. The second argument is in my text; where consider, (1.) The *argutum*. (2.) The *argumentum*; that is, the thing he would make good and clear, and the argument he useth for that purpose. The thing he would clear is, the certainty of future supply of whatever is needful, in the last clause. The argument to prove this is a *majori*, namely, a far greater mercy than all that which is to follow already bestowed in the former clause; which is a determining argument indeed; it is like this: he that hath given a man a field, how can he deny him a bush in it to stop a gap? Only there is an infinite disproportion between the things in this, and the apostle's argument. The sum of the argument is, that Christ, the Son of God, is the dearest thing in his Father's eye; if ever he would have stuck at any thing, or been loath to part with it, here he would have stopped and made a stand, when he was to make the soul of his Son an offering for sin; all things else being inconsiderable with God in comparison of him, who was daily his delight, his beloved in whom he was well pleased. But now having broke through this iron gate, (as I may say) or so undauntedly waded through such a bottomless deep as this, all other passages must needs prove but shallows to him, where he need not put off any thing to get over. In delivering up of his Son for sinners, he was fain to put off all he could possibly put off, and strip himself as naked as could be; in all other passages of mercy, God walks dry-shod, (as I may say) only here he wades. An admirable argument it is to silence the strongest objections of the most subtilized spirit, prompted with the most acute sophistry of hell; for the devil suggests tormenting wit enough to rack the afflicted soul.

That which we will observe out of this golden sentence of scripture, is, 1. That God bestows Christ himself, the chiefest of all his mercies, first unto sinful men. 2. That all other mercies necessarily follow. In handling the first, I shall endeavor to make clear unto you, (1.) That Christ himself is the chiefest of all God's mercies bestowed on sinners. (2.) How he is said to be the first of them. (3.) The end, or reason, why he bestows him first: all which will make excellent way for a profitable and comfortable application of the point in hand, whereby I hope our labour shall not be vain in the Lord.

First. To make it clear unto you, that Christ himself, bestowed on sinners, is the chiefest of all God's mercies to them; the strength of the apostle's arguments lies in this; this will appear fully, if you consider, (1.) Christ given, as he stands in relation to God the Father, who bestows him. (2.) The value of the gift; what Christ is that is bestowed. (3.) The usefulness of this gift to those to whom he is given. (4.) The manner how he is bestowed on sinners.

1. I say, Christ bestowed will appear to be, by far, the chiefest of all mercies, if you consider Christ given as he stands in relation to the Father giving him. Mercies, you know, are greater, or less, as the giver is more or less interested and endeared in what he gives; the nearer and dearer any thing is to the giver, the greater price is put on the gift in his parting therewith: as you know, a kingdom being of nearer and dearer concernment to a king, than a cast of his countenance, or such like, the giving of the one is a greater gift than the cast of the other; and, if he have nothing dearer than it, the gift thereof must be the chiefest of gifts from him: this illustration will give some light to our purpose; Christ given to sinners, is the nearest and dearest thing to the Father; he is his Son, his begotten Son, his only begotten Son, in whom he is well pleased. Thus he stands in relation to him, 1. As the second person, being equally God with himself. 2. As he is God and man in one person, the mediator of the covenant: "To which of the angels said he at any time, thou art my Son?" Heb, i. 5. So also is he the nearest and dearest to the Father of all things beside; no creature so like God as

he: the apostle calls him the "Brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3. no creature advancing God as he, none compassing his great ends as he, so pure and conformable to his mind as he; he is the first-born of many brethren, the heir of all things, the co-worker with God in the framing and managing of all things, to whom God gave all power both in heaven and in earth.

Now, what can be found so near, so dear to God, as this Christ? All other things of God, are of far inferior rank to him, whether thrones, dominions, or angels, they are not daily his delight as the Son is. In parting therefore, with this his Son, and not sparing him, but delivering him up, he parted with the nearest and dearest thing he had, and therefore, he must needs be the chiefest of all his mercies to men; not only the chiefest he hath bestowed, but the chiefest he could, having no better thing to bestow.

2. Christ given will appear to be the chiefest of mercies, if you consider the value and worth of Christ himself. Mercies are not only rated according to their esteem, but also their value and greatness of worth. Affection or fancy may make mean things of high esteem, but where there is real worth, as well as high esteem, in gifts bestowed, this adds much to the greatness of them: now, for Christ, he hath more real worth than all the world besides; and this is plain, because when weighed in the balance with divine justice, it was found too light to counterpoise it; all together could not make up the full sum or value that should satisfy that: no man, nor all creatures, could make an agreement for man; it must cost more to redeem a soul: but Christ could and did pay the utmost farthing. He is a mass of treasure big enough; the travail of his soul did satisfy; therefore the church might well call him, "The chiefest among ten thousand"; and St. Peter calls his blood "precious blood": in that, therefore, Christ alone, and nothing else, amounted to such an infinite value, he may well go for the chiefest of God's mercies bestowed on sinners.

3. If you consider the usefulness of Christ, to those on whom he is bestowed. Nothing in the world, nay, all the world could be so

useful to sinners as he is. Without him, men should have lost their souls; "And what profit is there in gaining the whole world", and losing them? Mercy is valued as it stands a man in stead, and serves his turn: things of value may in some cases be useless, when things of little value may be precious; as bread to the hungry will do more good than a mouthful of gold for that purpose: that indeed is the chiefest mercy, that will do a man most good; now, what is so useful, or can do a man that good, that Christ can? What, but he, can reconcile God to man, ingratiate man with God, pay all his debts to him, make all things work together for good, heal all the agonies, torments, and horrors of spirit, suck out the suffocating venom of corruptions, vanquish sin, death, and hell, raise the mouldered carcase from corruption to incorruption, and invest it with a state of eternal glory, in the highest heavens; wiping all tears from the eyes, and filling with fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore at his right-hand, in that kingdom which shall never fade? There is nothing, except Christ, but is dry to many purposes, and leaves men destitute; he only can abundantly satisfy, and filleth all in all; therefore he is the chiefest of all mercies.

4. Christ is the chiefest of mercies, in regard of the manner of bestowing him. Not any of all God's mercies strained him, (if I may so speak by an anthropopathy) as the making Christ so useful a mercy as he is, or cost Christ so dear. Other mercies God gives, and there is no more ado but giving and taking; but, before Christ could be such a mercy as he is, the Father must bruise him, and take pleasure in it: give him the bitter cup of his indignation, and be inexorable to his strong cries; nay, withdraw himself, and forsake him in his sorest conflicts. Christ also must endure an examination of his divine glory, and bear an eclipse of that excellent majesty; he must strip himself of all repute and esteem in the world, be despised and rejected of men, and become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; be mocked, scourged, crucified, and slain by miscreants; yea, wrestle with the wrath of his Father, even as much as all the sins of his people deserved: "The Lord must lay on him the iniquity of us all," and proportion his wrath thereunto, that "by his stripes we might be healed." All this, and a great deal more there

must be, before this mercy in Christ could be ripe and fit for our use: so that here is not only Christ given, but prepared in such a manner for our good as that it is hard to say, whether the substance, or the circumstances, contain the greater mercy. It is certain, that no other mercies cost the Father of Christ himself so dear. All which particulars put together, shew how far this mercy, in giving Christ thus, exceeds all other mercies, and by far the chiefest.

Come we now to consider, how Christ is said to be the first of all mercies God bestows on sinners. That he is so, is plain in the text; having (to wit already) "Not spared him, how shall he not give all things?" Intimating, that other things remain to be given, when he is given.

1. Christ is the first, "As all things were made for him," as the apostle tells us, Col. i. 16. that is, for his sake, as well as use; so that all creatures are beholden to Christ for their being: had it not been for him, nothing had been made. God's love is primarily fixed on Christ, and secondarily on the creature; as through Christ he takes content therein, and gives content to him thereby; especially his love to man originally runs through Christ, not only to create him such as he is, above all other creatures, but also from all eternity to elect him to eternal glory. The apostle tells us, that "we are elected in Christ, all Christ's delights being with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 30, 31. And Christ himself being daily the delight of the Father, it pleased the Father for the satisfying of Christ's desire, to make the sons of men his delight also. Thus you may understand that voice from heaven, Matt. iii. 17. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; that is, I am well pleased with men, for to them I conceive the word "well pleased" is to be referred; his well-pleas'dness to his Son being sufficiently expressed in the word "well-beloved": God would never have cared for man, especially as a sinful wretch, but in and for his Son. Thus Christ is the first mercy bestowed on man, as he is the first, nay, sole moving cause to stir bowels in God to him. But, 2. and principally, Christ is the first mercy, (not in respect of common, but spiritual mercies) and not only as a mover to other mercies, but as God doth actually convey

Christ himself first, before he conveys any mercy: he gives sinners a full interest and propriety in him, before he shews any special love to them; he makes Christ himself first thine and mine, before he pours out, or sheds abroad his love in the heart, or communicates any sanctifying grace, comfort, or spiritual privileges whatsoever; this you see fully cleared by the prophet Isaiah (xlii. 6, 7.) who brings in the Lord speaking thus to Christ, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison." First he gives Christ, then afterwards he opens the blind eyes by him; and he doth not first loose the prisoners, and then give Christ; but first gives him and then loosens them by him. The same expression, this prophet useth, chap. xlix. 8. St. Peter, speaking of Christ as he is mentioned, Psal. cxviii. tells us, that "coming to him as unto a living stone, we also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," I Pet. ii. 4, 5. Men come first to Christ, then grow up and do acceptable service by him: learn this well, for it is of great use, as you shall hear anon: only let us first consider the last thing propounded, Why God gives Christ first before other mercies?

1. That we may be more fully assured and satisfied, that he will not withhold succeeding mercies; this is the main reason why the apostle mentions it in this place. God knows how apt we are, upon every surmise, or at least slip, and his withdrawing awhile, to be full of jealousies and sad doubts, that now "He will be gracious no more, and hath shut up his loving-kindness for ever in displeasure," as Asaph pitifully complains in his doubting humour. For this cause God at first leaves a pledge, or hostage in our hands, that looking thereon it may check our suspicions, and put us in mind, that whatever thing it is we suspect he will not grant, we may see we have in possession from him already, that which is of far greater value than what we now pursue. He deals as able men do with suspicious creditors, who leave pawns of far greater value than what they owe, which may pay all that is behind, that so poor souls may be at rest.

2. Christ himself is the first mercy, (I mean still when God effectually calls a sinner) because, Christ is the soul to animate, or the principle of all spiritual life and motion, and therefore he must be first given, or else there can be no such life; as a dead body must first have a soul infused into it before it can live: when God had formed Adam's body, "He breathed into him the breath of life, (that is, a soul) and then he became a living soul," or person. You know, when a soul is separated from a body, the body is a lifeless carcase: now, that Christ is this soul or principle of spiritual life, is most plain, in that he calls himself "the life," John xiv. 6. and tells us, chap. vi. 33. "that he gives life to the world," and chap. x. 10. "I am come (saith he) that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly": and Paul saith, "I now live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Hence it is that Christ is called the head of the body, because all the animal, sensitive spirits, which actuate the whole body with sense and motion, flow thence as from a fountain; intimating Christ to be the spring of all spiritual understanding and activity: for the same cause he is called the root, which is to the tree as the soul to the body, and the foundation on which the house rests for support and stability, and therefore is first laid before men attempt to raise any building. All this evinceth the silliness of imagining that there can be any work of grace in a heart, before Christ himself be given or received, who brings all that is, or can be, along with himself, and finds nothing but a dead carcase as unto spiritual activity when he comes. For this, Christ is also called the everlasting Father, for that "we are begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ"; now you know there must be a father present to beget, before there can be a son begotten.

3. Again, Christ must be first given, because he is the prince, or prime author and principle worker of peace; so the word prince signifies; "He is our peace," saith the apostle, Eph. ii. 14, which caused the choir of angels at his incarnation, and coming to dwell among men to proclaim, "Peace on earth, and good-will towards men." Now you know, that as grace from God is peace with him; he first must be reconciled before he will shew kindness; therefore the apostle tells us, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto

himself not imputing their trespasses," v. 19. first reconciled, then he forgives sin; and this order he observes in Christ; he must therefore first come and settle a peace, before there can be hoped any fruit or manifestation of his gracious love.

Use 1. If Christ be the chiefest of all God's mercies, then let Christ himself be chiefest in your pursuit. Men usually aim at the best of things, as near as they can reach; the best wives, servants, grounds; if any thing be better than other, that is meat for their mouths; he that contents himself with the refuse of things, it is because he can go no higher. Christ, as you have heard, is the chiefest and best of all God's mercies, therefore single him out from other things, and press hard after him. The prophet Isaiah Iv. 2, 3. hath a notable expostulation to this purpose; "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently to me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself with fatness." All other things are not bread, in comparison of Christ; they are lean, dry things to him, who is oily fatness: O you that "cumber yourselves about many things," like Martha, that waste and tire yourselves, that set thoughts and cares on tender hooks, to compass a little muck, or spot of earth, you labour for that which satisfies not; (say, are you satisfied?) Mary hath chosen the better part in sticking close to Christ. Paul saw so much pre-eminence in Christ, that, as learned as he was, he "desired to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified"; nay, he desires to be dissolved to "be with him"; and so would you, if so be you could but taste, that is, believe, how good the Lord is. None but Christ, none but Christ, wouldst thou then say as the martyr at the stake; "How much better is thy love than wine! silver and gold are not to be compared with him," say they that have found him. He is the treasure hid in the field, the jewel above price: wilt thou then sweat and melt thy grease in following a vein of clay, when a mine of the richest gold, and of diamonds, is in thine eye? Wilt thou glean after a churl that hath raked his field, when thou mayest be allowed to carry whole sheaves, nay, shocks, away at once? Wilt thou glean for fitches, when thou mayest glean pure wheat? Wilt thou cast thyself on a lousy beggar, when the king will

take pleasure in thy beauty? Shall the treacherous world have all thy kisses and embraces, whilst Christ stands at the door and knocks? Oh, come to thyself, poor soul, (the Lord in mercy awaken thee, nay, quicken thee; that thou mayest) and think what a game is in chase; savoury meat indeed, such as thy soul will be satisfied with, when thou hast tasted; and lose not this present advantage to hunt after butter-flies like silly children, which though when enjoyed are poor nothings, yet take their wings and fly away.

Use 2. If Christ be the first of all mercies, then they begin at the wrong end, that think to wind any graces from God first, and then seek after Christ: therefore no marvel if they make nothing of their work, but turn and toss, and make many a stop and broken end: whoever will go smoothly on, and make good riddance, must begin at the right end, and get Christ himself, before ever they expect to be a jot better than corrupt nature makes them: who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Beloved, you may pump at your own hearts until you break them, before you can fetch up a drop of grace, (so dry are they) unless Christ himself be first poured in; as you will first pour in a bucket of water into a dry pump, before you will essay to draw up water: many poor souls lie hacking and hewing with their own blunt and dull spirits, to grub up their tough corruptions; they plow with a wooden coulter and share, to turn up the clods of their fallow hearts; or rather put a dead horse to tear them up, whilst they toil in their own strength: you must first get your spirits keened by Christ; when men begin to plough up their hearts, they plough upon rocks, and therefore Christ must come first and soften them, before you can so much as enter; it pities me to see how many poor souls are ignorant in this spiritual husbandry, therefore toil to no purpose. Is it not madness to begin to rear a roof first, and hope that then the foundation will be laid sure: I mean to erect a structure of grace, and then go downward to lay Christ the foundation? Alas! poor creatures, how will they get up, unless they lay Christ the foundation first, and by him go upward? He brings faith itself along with him; men do not get faith first, then Christ, but he brings itself. The apostle tells us expressly,

that he is the author as well as finisher of our faith, by whom we believe; and again he tells us, that "faith is the operation of God."

You say, how can a man apply Christ without faith?

I answer, he cannot; but yet faith comes not before Christ, but he comes and brings it, and delivers it to the soul, whereby it takes him. I cannot illustrate this better than by Jeremiah's getting out of the dungeon. Ebedmelech (a type of Christ) comes from the king to Jeremiah being sunk into the mire of the dungeon, and brings cords and soft rags with him; these he lets down into the dungeon to him, and bids him put the rags under his arm-holes, fastening them to the cords: which he did, holding the cords fast: then Ebedmelech herewith drew him forth. Now the cords came not before Ebedmelech, neither did he draw himself to Ebedmelech with them; but he brought them, and drew him up by them unto himself. Ebedmelech represents Christ, the cords and rags faith, Jeremiah the convert or saved sinner, the dungeon the deep pit of sinfulness and misery in which he sticks; Christ brings faith, and gives one end to a sinner to hold fast by, and keeps the other end in his own hand, and so draws the sinner towards him, who comes by the hold-fast of the cord immediately; but originally, and principally, by the strength of Christ's own arm. In brief, you must conceive Christ graciously present whenever faith is: now, if faith itself, the radical grace, come not before Christ, much less other graces that spring from it. The apostle tells us, from Christ, that "we are sanctified by faith," and that "faith purifies the heart." Do not therefore, put the cart before the horse, nor foolishly think to draw the horse with the cart. Some may say, we thought that we must first be humbled, changed, renewed, and then come to Christ: I confess too many go backward in this manner, and catch many a fall and bruise: I would we had not some blind leaders of such blind, who are both like to fall into the ditch; have I not cleared the contrary way to you by manifest scripture? I come not to you in my own name about this business.

You will say, until there be some such good beginning, I shall stink in Christ's nostrils with my filth and rottenness.

But, you must know, that Christ comes and justifies the ungodly; he doth not find them godly, or stay till they be, before he justifies them; but takes them as they are, ungodly, and justifies them then. As the father of the prodigal stays not until his latter lousy son had shifted himself, and washed off his filth, but sees him afar off, falls on his neck, and kisses him, then calls for the best robe, and covers his nakedness: a notable parable, whereby Christ sets himself forth to poor sinners. Christ is not so squeamish as men are, nor doth he affect as men do, who look for comeliness or loveliness to stir their affections. Ah! do not then stumble at straws, and make bug-bears to fright thyself from coming to Christ; they are none of his setting up. If ever you partake of any spiritual mercies, whether of grace or comfort, you must begin with Christ himself.

What is it to take Christ first? some may say.

I answer, when God opens the heart, as he did the heart of Lydia, while Paul preached the gospel (and as it may be he doth of some now) to come to thyself, and sadly to think that thy present way is not right, that there will be bitterness in the end of it; and, therefore, thy heart is fully resolved to turn over a new leaf, let it cost what it will; when thy heart thus checks and spurs at once, then, without any more ado, take Christ with all that he is, and hath, for thine own; though thy hands be never so foul, stay not the wiping of them, but take him as thou art: he will wash and make thee clean himself. Do not stumble at this, it is not too good to be true: it is ratified in heaven, and proclaimed in the gospel; "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live: I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine," Ezek. xvi. 6–8.

I say, as before, when thy heart is opened, then close thus with Christ, that so after-thoughts of returning from backslidings may have life and power from him, and be backed by him: then are they like to prosper, else they will prove but faint vanities, or like the early dew, and become but a flashing spiritual qualm: but having, at the first dash, committed yourself and change to Christ's

management, he will go through stitch with it, and make good riddance indeed; for the "pleasure of the Lord," on thy heart and life, "shall prosper in his hands." And therefore, it is a foul slanderous calumny, cast by ignorant, if not malicious hearts, on this sweet gospel, to say it makes void the law, and opens a gap to licentiousness. For nothing establisheth the law like it, or binds souls to good behaviour, as it doth; as you may easily see by the little hint I gave you even now. If you go this way, to begin with Christ himself, you may plow with his heifer, and so untie many a riddle, that will else puzzle your brains; by this means you shall have a strong and impregnable hold to retreat unto upon every occasion of danger; you shall carry a spring of *aqua vitae* about you always, against faintings; you shall have a wise counsellor to direct you, or a north star in your eye, by which you may steer your course; a mighty champion, not only to order, but also to fight your battles, whilst you may "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." By this means you shall never repent of your leaving Egypt, though you come to straits; for this angel of the covenant, going before you, shall level your way, and make it smooth, shall scatter and tread down the mighty that come against you, shall still and quiet the jealous risings of your heart, and so feed you with present earnest and first fruits, as shall draw you on with a longing, until you attain the full possession, both of grace and glory. "You have run well," saith Paul to the Galatians, speaking of the times when they embraced Christ first without works. There is no such progress in holiness, as where Christ enters and sets a soul at work, who oils the wheels, who fills the sails with a full and prosperous gale.

Chapter Three

WILLIAM HUNTINGTON
(1745-1813)

WILLIAM HUNTINGTON

William Huntington (1745-1813) was a well known London minister at the end of the 18th century, commanding a congregation of between one and two thousand people at Providence Chapel, Tichfield Street. Huntington's ministry winnowed the work of the Great Revival and established its continuing influence into the 19th century. Of humble, uneducated, origins Huntington was no "Doctor of Divinity" so he often suffixed his name with S.S. to describe himself as a "Sinner Saved".

THE BREATH OF THE LORD
AND THE
SIEVE OF VANITY

By William Huntington
(1745-1813)

"And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err" Isaiah 30:28.

THIS prophet, in the preceding verses, is predicting Jerusalem's destruction, and the abundance of God's grace and spirit upon the little hills of Zion, both among the believing Jews and Gentiles, at that time, verse 25. He next prophesies of the super-abounding light which, in gospel days, should exceed that of the former dispensation; that if the church of God was called the "moon" then, it should now be called the "sun"; and that, if there were children of the day in that state, the light should be as the light of seven days in this, verse 26. He then proceeds to Christ, calling him "the name of the Lord", in allusion to God's charge to Moses, "Offend him not, for my name is in him;" and because the name of the Lord, proclaimed before Moses, "The Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and in truth, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin," was now, in a most wonderful manner, to be verified, to be made known, and to be experienced and enjoyed by all the elect of God. But, as this name of the Lord was sadly provoked for forty years together by the unbelieving Jews in the wilderness, so it would be provoked again by those who refuse to hear his voice, and harden their hearts against him, as in the provocation, when their fathers tempted him, proved him, and saw his works forty years. And so likewise it would be with the unbelieving Gentiles, against whom, as well as against the Jews, he would come burning with anger; and those who set themselves against him should find and feel the burden of his indignation; for his word as a fire shall kindle in them, and at last destroy them; and my text informs you how. "And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err."

In this work I will endeavour to give you my thoughts in the following order:

1. What I understand by the Lord's "breath."
2. Why compared to a "stream."
3. The "neck" which this stream reaches to.
4. The "sieve of vanity" used among the nations; and,

5. The "bridle in the jaws of sinners, which shall make them to err."

The first account that we have of the breath of the Lord is in Gen. ii. 7. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." A living soul was infused into Adam's body, which animated it, actuated it, influenced it, and possessed it; and man was pronounced good; for God made man upright, yea in the image of God created he him. But, alas! Adam sinned, and all that was good left him, and evil found him: life left him, and the sentence of death entered into him: "Sin entered, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all, for all have sinned." But God promises to the house of Israel that he will breathe upon them once more. "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live; for I will put my spirit into you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it." The New Testament will inform us of the going forth of this breath of the Lord among the nations. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And, when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained," John, xx. 22, 23. This is the going forth of the breath of the Lord into the nations; for they were to go into all nations, and to preach the gospel to every creature; and the Spirit of the Lord was to speak in them, and these effects were to follow—some men's sins were to be remitted, and the sins of others were to be retained; those that believe are to be saved, and those that believe not are to be damned. Hence the servants of the Lord are a sweet savour of God in them that are saved, and in them that perish; for Christ by his Spirit speaks in his servants; and hence it is said that "with the rod of his mouth he smites the earth" (and heals it again), "and with the breath of his lips he slays the wicked:" and these things are done by the words which are in the mouth of every minister of the Spirit; "and thus life and death are in the power of the tongue:" for some are quickened by the Spirit, and others are left

twice dead, plucked up by the roots. I come now to treat of the "stream" to which the Lord's breath is compared.

The Holy Spirit's well-known emblems are those of breath, wind, fire, and water; two of which are mentioned in my text; the last of which is that of an overflowing "stream," which carries all before it; for he fits, qualifies, and sends the preacher; directs him where to go, and where not; and furnishes him with matter and manner; and always works with and by the word. Some souls he enters into, and abides with; and "they are saved by the washing of regeneration, and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost:" while those who resist him, and oppose themselves to him, and endeavour to counteract his work, and ridicule and abuse his power, influence, and operations, he leaves dried, blasted, and withered, under the rebukes and reproofs of heaven, which kindle in them, as fit fuel for everlasting burnings. "Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," Isa. xxx. 33. Under the wrath and curse of God the gospel finds such sinners, and under the same it leaves them; when hardness of heart, desperate wickedness, or a fearful looking-for of judgment, is sure to follow, to find out, and, sooner or later, to consume these adversaries. This stream reaches to the midst of the "neck," which is what I come next to describe.

The "neck" is that part of the human body which unites the head and the body together; and to this the scriptures often allude; for instance, Christ is called the "head," as he is the head of influence, from whom all grace flows; and the "covenant head," who represents the whole church; and the church is his body. "Now ye are the body of Christ," saith Paul, "and members in particular:" and again, "the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." But, then, what can the neck be, that unites this glorious head to this mystical body? I think this neck must be the covenant of grace; for God the Father first chose that human nature, which the Word was to assume, from everlasting, and then chose us in him, gave us to him, and made us one with him: and he fixed his

eternal love upon us in him before the world was made. By the tenor of this covenant elected sinners were espoused to Christ from everlasting, and are openly betrothed to him in time. "I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, in mercies, and in loving kindness; yea, I will betroth thee to me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." Thus this secret betrothing to Christ in eternity terminates in openly espousing us to him in time by the gospel, as Paul speaks; "I have espoused you unto a good husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ." Hence it appears that, by the covenant of grace, we were made one with Christ in eternity; but then, where is that which unites us to him in time? Nothing can do this but love, because we are enemies; and enmity separates between the Lord and us. God reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has sent the word of reconciliation to us; and we are entreated by his servants to be reconciled to him. But, as the carnal mind is enmity against him; nothing but his love revealed, made known, and shed abroad in the heart, can remove our enmity: this will make us friends; and this, and only this, can unite us to him; for "love is the bond of all perfectness;" and this is the bond that "binds the soul up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God:" and this love, winning and drawing all our love to him, is the "neck" that unites the covenant head and his body mystical together: and where this is wanting there can be no union; for "he that loveth father or mother better than me is not worthy of me."

Many high encomiums are put upon this neck of the holy spouse. "Thy neck is comely with chains of gold," Song i. 10. The neck is mutual love between Christ and his bride; the chains are the promises of the gospel, the apples of gold in pictures of silver: for, in plain English, all that do not receive the love of the truth, and the truth in the love of it, are given up to believe a lie; for God shall send to them strong delusions.

Again, "Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men," Song iv. 14. This intimates that the many infernal and human attacks that are made at the church, to separate her from her

heavenly head and husband, are all in vain; though, to accomplish this, hath ever been, and ever will be, the schemes, plots, and unholy war, both of devils and reprobates: but, in covenant, God and his truth are both our shield and buckler.

Again, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse: thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck," Song iv. 9. Love is the neck; and this chain, or the spouse's necklace, is the doctrines of the gospel, which, like a chain, hang all together, and depend one on another; in which there is a wonderful harmony, every link bearing its part: and without every link be kept in its proper place, the whole chain is weakened, entangled, and confused, and appears so to every poor, weak believer, both in the scriptures, in the judgment, and in the experience, of the poor soul; and so they feel it to their sorrow, whose minds have been unsettled, their judgments bewildered, and their affections excluded for a while from the Lord Jesus, by the instrumentality of damnable heretics, who have seduced them from Christ, that they might affect them.

Solomon, in his dark sayings, gives his pupils many instructions about the neck. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother; for they shall be an ornament of grace to thine head, and chains about thy neck." The instruction of our father is the tuition of Christ, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace: the law of Sarah, who is the mother of us all, is the law of faith: the best ornament of grace to the head is "God the health of our countenance;" and the best chain to the neck is truth in the love of it.

Again, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck, write them upon the table of thine heart," Prov. iii. 3. Mercy, grace, and truth came by Jesus Christ; and Solomon's counsel is to bind them about our neck; for, if the hearing of these things bring about no union between Christ and the soul, what doth it profit? just nothing: and, if they are not written on the tables of the heart, the new covenant is not revealed to the soul; for to write

the laws of God on the heart and mind, and to remove sin from us, and to remember it no more, is the better covenant: and where this is not done, there can be no experience of this deliverance from sin; and where there is no experience of pardon, there can be no hope of the glory of God in heaven; for it is experience that worketh hope. Thus Christ is the head; and all the elect, Jews and Gentiles, are the body. God in covenant made them one in eternity; and when covenant love is made known to them, they become one spirit in time: love, as the neck, unites them; and, by virtue of this union, the body is influenced by the head, and made fruitful, as a branch is in the vine, or as a wife is to her husband: and the great truths of the gospel are the church's ornamental necklace. But, after all, this is not the neck mentioned in my text.

There is another head, besides Christ. Satan bears this name: "The woman's seed shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This work was done in a figure at Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, for Pharaoh was a type of the devil. "Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation even to the neck," Hab. iii. 13. When God poured on the Egyptians the fierceness of his wrath, he sent evil angels among them; and these influenced Pharaoh, and all his mighty warriors, to pursue Israel; and, when God overthrew them in the Red Sea, he is said to break "the heads of the dragons in the waters," Psalm lxxiv. 13. It is this head that influences and leads on the whole host of persecutors against Christ. "But he shall wound the head of his enemies," Psalm lxviii. 21. And this work he did effectually when he triumphed over principalities and powers upon the cross; and the blessed effects of this hath been, still is, and will be, seen and known, all the world over, in future times, "when he shall wound the heads over many countries."

This head has got a body, in which he reigns and rules; and these are the children of disobedience: and there is a sad covenant betwixt them, called "a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell," Isai. xxviii. 18; the bond of which is "the bond of iniquity," which bond is love to sin, and hatred to God. This is the neck mentioned in

my text, which keeps the devil and his children together; and, as sure as "he that is joined to a harlot is one body," I Cor. vi. 16, so sure those "that go a whoring after devils," Levit. xvii. 7, are one spirit with him. The Holy Ghost runs the parallel betwixt these two heads and bodies. We read of the head Christ, and the head Satan; of a covenant with Christ, and of a covenant with hell; of the church of Christ, and of the synagogue of Satan; of the bond of all perfectness, and of the bond of iniquity; of love to God, and of love to sin; of espousals to Christ, and of whoring with devils; of the mystery of godliness, and the mystery of iniquity; the doctrines of God, and the doctrines of the devils; of Christ the everlasting Father, and of a people who are of their father the devil; of the children of God, and children of the devil; of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of the devils; the table of the Lord, and the table of the devils; of fellowship with the Lord, and of fellowship with devils; of Christ in the heart by faith, and of Satan in the hearts of the disobedient; and, as sure as the love of God in the heart, and a hatred to sin, is the church's neck, that unites her to Christ, so sure love to sin, and hatred to God, is the neck that holds Satan and his whore together; and so it will appear in the great day.

But "the breath of the Lord, like an overflowing stream, reaches to the midst of this neck," and breaks this bond of iniquity, "and hedges up the sinner's way with thorns;" so that, if he pursues after his lovers, he cannot overtake them; the arrows of wrath, the bucklers of justice, and the stings of guilt, pierce him, insomuch that he cannot get on in the old track. "The yoke of his transgressions shall be destroyed, because of the anointing." His agreement with death shall be disannulled, and his covenant with hell shall not stand; for Christ will have a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death, in order to redeem this portion; and therefore he will spoil the house of the strong man armed. It was this breath of the Lord, reaching the heart, and conveying Christ's everlasting love into it, that brought about an eternal separation between Mary Magdalen and her seven devils. This neck, this love to sin, which is the bond of iniquity, is the grand cement which holds all idolaters,

all workmongers, or self admirers, which are idolaters, and all the mystical Babel builders to their sandy foundation; as was the case with Paul, till God discovered it. "Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation to the neck. Selah." Hab. iii. 13. Take notice of that.

When this foundation is discovered, and this neck made bare, it inflicts a wound in the infernal head; it lays open his policy, and crushes his power; it alarms the poor secure mortal, and makes him feel his bonds; and he groans under them, and calls for deliverance; and God, in answer to his cry, opens the prison doors to him that is bound.

I now proceed to describe the "sieve of vanity." This sieve is not the gospel; it is not the ministration of the Spirit, which God ordained for our glory; this is not a vain thing, or vanity; though some men that perish have called it foolishness, when compared to Grecian wisdom: yet the gospel is not a light, trifling, empty thing; for it treats of the most weighty, powerful, solid, and momentous things, that ever were heard of beneath the sun; such as redemption, salvation, the grace of God, and everlasting glory. Besides, the gospel is distinguished from this sieve in the text itself. The gospel is called "the breath of the Lord;" but this sieve is "the sieve of vanity." Whatever it is, it seems to be something which is intended to shake, to winnow, to try, and to exercise, in order to prove what is good grain and what is not; and so to separate the one from the other, or the vile from the precious: and therefore, under the all-wise conduct of God, it is among the all things that work for good to them that love God; and so it is written, "For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth," Amos, ix. 9. It is well known that God's professing church is called a floor, and his children are called corn. "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor; that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you," Isai. xxi. 10. This sieve of vanity appears to be the temptations of Satan: he is the drudge, or slave, that God makes use of to do this black and dusty work in his

floor; and the malicious mind of this evil spirit prompts him to be very fond of it. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke, xxii. 31, 32. In the above passage several useful lessons of instruction may be learnt to our comfort: the first is, the bent of the devil's mind to mischief, and to torment those that he cannot destroy. "Satan hath desired to have you;" take notice of that; "he hath desired," &c.; he hath for some time been desirous of having thee; but I have not suffered him hitherto, whatever I may do. Hence we learn that this poor scavenger cannot perform his enterprise without leave from the Lord of the harvest: it is not what the devil desires, but it is what the Lord determines, that shall be done. We may perceive that the devil wished to go through stich with this business: he did not want to sift Peter like barley, or lentiles; nor like vetches, which require but a little winnowing; but like wheat, which must go into the sieve again and again. But can we suppose that Satan has such an aversion to chaff, that he is so desirous of sifting poor Peter, that he might make him as pure as wheat? No, no. Dust is Satan's meat, and chaff is Satan's fuel; and it is the only part or lot that falls to his share in all the floor. What the devil wished to blow out of Peter's heart was the grace of God, and especially the grace of faith: against this the devil shook his riddle with all his might; and in behalf of this the Lord bent his whole prayer, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." And thus the Lord's end, and Satan's aim, widely differ: the Lord intended to purge Peter from confidence in the flesh, and the devil to winnow him out of all confidence in the Lord: the Lord intended to make Peter more useful by it, and Satan to make him both fruitless and useless. "When thou art converted" (from thy self-confidence, and art made sensible of thine own weakness, and of my strength made perfect in it) "then strengthen thy brethren;" strengthen their faith in me, Simon, that they may be strong in the grace that is in me, and not in their own frames, however lively, or however joyful.

"Though all men be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended," saith poor Simon. Those great words called aloud for this "sieve of vanity;" and poor Peter soon found himself in it: and the devil gave his riddle such a shake, as moved and stirred up every corruption of his heart; enmity, carnal fear, cowardice, shame, rebellion, infidelity, anger; and so filled his heart with blasphemy, that the very oaths and curses ran out of his mouth. But the Holy Spirit will ever glorify Christ, and will testify of him; so that he would not leave Peter; but, as the Spirit of all grace, and that of faith in particular, he kept possession of Peter's heart, and made his faith soon to work again by love, for "he went out, and wept bitterly," cut to the heart with grief for what he had done to his dear Lord and master. However, the faithful and true Witness did not fail Peter in this time of trial; nor did the Lord suffer Peter's faith or love to fail from the Lord: "Lord, thou knowest all things; and thou knowest I love thee," saith Simon.

This "sieve of vanity" always attends "the breath of the Lord;" or the ministry of the Spirit. Soon after God had breathed into Adam the breath of life, this sieve of vanity came upon him and his wife, and sifted out all that was good. And, when God began to breathe on the dry bones of the house of Israel in Babylon, to revive their hopes of a return to their own land, the devil opposed it in the court of Persia one and twenty days, Dan. x. 18. And in the holy land at their return we find this sieve working against Joshua, one of the anointed ones, who at the same time was standing before the Lord of the whole earth.

Yea, the Saviour himself was tried by this sieve of vanity; for, as soon as the Holy Ghost descended upon him like a dove, "then was Jesus led by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." But where the breath of life comes not this sieve is seldom used; for there is no wheat to sift; all is chaff, and chaff needs no sifting. The ministry of the letter, and those seedsmen who sow the doctrines and commandments of men, are never followed "by the fowls of the air;" for the devils do not want to pick such seed out of sinners' hearts, for such seedsmen are the devil's own labourers.

But, if the Lord sends a seedsman to sow precious seed, which is the word of life, then these fowls are all upon the watch, or upon the wing, to pick out the good seed from the mind and memory, in order to make the sinner unfruitful: and this he does by making him inattentive, or by setting some object before him to excite his lasciviousness, or by stirring up his prejudice, or by diverting his mind to worldly things as soon as he comes out of the house of God, till he hath forgotten all that he hath heard. And is it so? Do the breath of life and the sieve of vanity go together? They really do. I have never seen the sieve of vanity in use among the congregations of the dead. There are thousands in a profession in our day, who never knew what the fiery darts of the devil and the devices of Satan mean. The strong man armed keeps possession both of the impostor in the pulpit, and of the hypocrite in the pew; and his goods are in peace. He furnishes the preacher with presumptuous confidence, blind zeal, flowery speech, and to affect a musical delivery, to speak swelling words; and he instructs him in the art of oratory and elocution, in order to reach the feelings of corrupt nature, and to play upon them, till their bowels sound like an harp, the blood will trickle in their veins, the hair moves upon their head, and a few deep sighs put the salt spring in motion, and pump a few drops into the eyes, which being distilled on the floor, and being considered as the quintessence of pious grief, and of all devotion, the work is done, the Spirit hath moved, the presence and power of the Lord have been present—and a refreshing season hath been enjoyed: whereas the devil himself is the author and finisher of all such devotion. Such are the most completely self-deceived, the most secure in their carnal state, the most bitter enemies to the vital power of godliness, and the hardest souls in the world for a gospel minister to work upon. Such are worse, and more secure, than a real Pharisee; for a Pharisee is all for the law, but these are all for what they call gospel: a Pharisee dwells in a dry land, but these are hypocrites in Zion; not seekers of Christ, but foolish virgins; not work-mongers, but wolves in sheep's clothing. O the infernal trade that the devil carries on in our day by such instruments as these! The dissembled humility and meekness that the devil will varnish them with, and the counterfeited rays of an angel of light that he

will spread abroad, through the instrumentality of such crafty and deceitful workers, are such as none can discern, not describe, but those in whom the living God shines, and whom the Lord condescends to teach. Some are carried on by the false flames of blind zeal, and the inward heat of their own spirit, raised and inflamed by noise and motion. "These follow their own spirit, and speak a vision out of their own heart, and have seen nothing," Jer. xxiii. 16; Ezek. xiii. 3. But, at times, conscience, the wrath of God, and disappointments, will so far discourage them, as to render them incapable of performing this branch of magic by fiery and false zeal: then they are obliged to have recourse to that of moving the passions; and there are several books extant to instruct them in this art, and to which they are obliged to have recourse, to enable them to carry on the cheat. Funeral sermons furnish these (instruments without life) with nice rosin for their strings: a few pathetic lies over the deceased work like a charm in the bowels of the survivors. A peculiar tenderness must be observed in mentioning the fair sex; and heavenly expressions must be dropped in lascivious flames. This God calls alluring through the lusts of the flesh, and much wantonness. This art leads captive silly women; but all this is Satan's profit, not his sieve; he doth not desire to sift such as wheat: these are the tares of his own field, and chaff for his own fire; these are ensnared in holes; they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith restore.

It is where the breath of life comes that this sieve is used; and that every poor sensible sinner knows who is convinced of sin by the Spirit of God. When the breath of life enters the soul, and quickens it—when divine sensations, motions, holy longings, desires, and affections, operate—this strong man, his possession, and armour, are soon felt. Not a corruption in the heart, but the devil stirs up to resist the new principle; no species of uncleanness, lasciviousness, or even brutality, that was ever practised in all the world, but what the devil will bring to the mind: no blasphemy, anathema, or imprecation, that was ever uttered, but what he will pronounce in the mental ears of the poor sinner all day and night long: nothing that earth or hell can imagine against God, against Christ, or against

the Holy Spirit, but what he will bring in, and fill the poor sinner's thoughts with: nothing odious, unsightly, unseemly, unbecoming, foul, filthy, obscene, diabolical, damnable, and opposite to true holiness, but what the devil will portray on the mind, and impress on the imagination of the poor, alarmed, awakened, terrified, and affrighted soul. Not a snare of death, nor a pain of hell, nor an evident token of perdition in scripture, in rebels, hypocrites, apostates, traitors, or reprobates, but what is suggested and applied to him. No; nor a terror, horror, fear, expectation or sensation, that ever pierced or influenced the minds of devils, but what Satan, with his art of mingling himself with the faculties of the human soul, will influence the poor sinner with. Not a curse in the book of God; not a threatening, reproof, or rebuke; not a text pregnant with wrath, displeasure, or indignation; not a passage that describes an enemy to Christ, a rival, or an unpardonable sinner, but what is brought home and applied to the poor, honest, and sincere seeker of the Lord; and that in all their fullest sense, and in all their most dreadful meaning that devils can invent, and self-despairing mortals can conceive. If he attempts to confess, pray, or call upon God, he is so confused, hurried, baffled, and confounded, that, so far from knowing what he says, he cannot tell where he is: his thoughts are scattered over the face of the whole earth, or chained down to the meditations of terror, or else employed in the dismal work of fathoming and exploring the boundless and bottomless abyss of hell. If he reads, he can neither think, consider, nor make a judgment of any thing. If in the house of God, and under the word, he can attend to nothing: all his attention is taken up with the oaths and curses and blasphemous revilings of this familiar spirit. If at any time the poor sinner can pay attention to but one word of support or encouragement, that is a refreshing time, a jubilee indeed; and the devil will be sure, if permitted, to make him rue for this ere he gets home, for presuming, or even daring, to entertain a thought that any one word in God's book could ever be sent or meant for such a wretch as he, who was doomed to damnation before the world was made, and who, at the same time, has every evident token of perdition upon him, and all the pledges, earnest, foretastes, and pains of hell in him. All this is but a faint

representation of Satan's sieve; and well may it be compared to a sieve, for chaff from the floor was never blown with more violence than the hurried soul of such a poor sinner; and he is whirled round and round, till all his faculties and senses are so impaired, that he knows not what he is, where he is, nor what he does. All the chaff is sifted up to the very bottom; all his sins are before him; and all their guilt in him: his beauty consumes as a moth, his soul withers like a green herb, and grief drinks up his spirits.

"I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth," Amos ix. 9. No impression, impulse, or sensation, from above; not one word of truth or promise applied; not one grace of the Holy and Blessed Spirit of promise; not one holy longing, or earnest desire; nor one deep sigh, pious groan, or budding hope, shall ever be sifted out of the heart of a poor sensible sinner, that feels his need, sees his lost estate, and is hungering and thirsting after the Lord of life and glory. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," when this sieve of vanity has well winnowed and emptied them of all self-righteousness, lightness, vanity, and self-confidence. "I will command, I will sift:" no sifting, without God's command; not one shake, nor one round-about in this riddle, without a divine order, "I will sift." The devil and his sieve are both in the omnipotent and terrible hand of God; and it is the smoking vengeance of heaven, burning in Satan, that drives him on with his sieve, as bad as the devil's darts drive us. But, after all, it is no more than "a sieve of vanity;" for all this labour and toil of the poor devil is vain, for he cannot destroy, though he aims at it. Moreover, it is called "a sieve of vanity," because the intention of God is to separate vanity and lies from us. The more vain we are, the more sifting we want: no vanity, no sieve. Peter's self-confidence was vain, and David's numbering the people was the same; and both procured this sieve. The incestuous person among the Corinthians gave himself up to vanity, and Paul gave him up to Satan, that he might be sifted, till his vanity departed from him; and as soon as his chaff was gone, he came into the barn floor again. The Lord's forerunner alludes to my

text, and casts a light upon it; only, instead of the "breath of the Lord," he calls this power the "Holy Ghost;" and instead of a "sieve of vanity," he calls it a "fan." "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," Mat. iii. 11, 12. The Holy Ghost and fire come first; and this disturbs Satan in his quiet possession. The Spirit convinces us of sin, and Satan tempts us to despair of the mercy of God; which leads me to consider this fatal bridle in my text.

"And there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err." And here we may inquire what this bridle is which causes men to err. A bridle, in the figurative sense of the word, seems to be the secret power of God put forth and displayed in overruling, restraining, and directing mankind, according to the counsel of his own will; though man, who has this restraint upon him, acts as he thinks, with the bent of his own will, and without control, and is as ignorant of this restraint as a horse or an ass. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, determined to invade the city of Jerusalem, and was come forth with a large army for that intent; and he sent a blasphemous message of railery against the Jews, the king of Judah, and against God himself: the hearing of which sent the pious king to prayer, and he requested the prayers of Isaiah the prophet also; and God sent the king this answer against the railing enemy: "Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest; and he shall fall by the sword in his own land." Here is God's hook in his nose, and his bridle in his lips; just as a man leads a bear, or rides an ass: and back to Nineveh he goes, and into the house of Nisroch his god, where two of his own sons kill him with the sword.

Again. "Bridle" sometimes signifies that awe, reverence, and fear, that God has planted in the hearts of mankind towards the higher powers, Romans xiii. 3, or our superiors, or even aged persons.

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man. Render fear to whom fear is due, and honour to whom honour is due." Of the reverse of this Job complains: "And now am I their song, yea, I am their by-word. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face. Because he hath loosed my cord and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me," Job xxx. 11. Job had dwelt as a king in their army, and had presided over their counsels; and as a great man he was greatly respected. "Young men saw me, and hid themselves; the aged arose, and stood up; princes refrained talking, and nobles held their peace; unto me men gave ear, and kept silence at my counsel." But now God had loosed the cord of his love, which had long visibly embraced him, and all that he had, and had sorely afflicted him; and those who feared him before, seeing him so debased and humbled, cast off all reverence, respect, and even natural affection, and spared not to spit in his face. Times of trial discover the affections of those who love in deed and in truth, from those whose love is dissimulation. But neither of these bridles are meant in my text. God does not say, I will put my bridle in thy lips; but, "There shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err;" which plainly shews that these persons do not receive the Spirit of God, nor the truth of God in the love of it; "because they are given up to strong delusions, that they may believe a lie;" for this bridle shall cause them to err. This bridle is not unbelief, nor is it false doctrine; for it is a bridle that guides a person into false doctrine, or that causes them to err, or to go astray into all manner of errors. And what can this bridle be? Why, it is pride. Pride is the devil's rod, or sceptre, by which he rules. "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride; but the lips of the wise shall preserve them," Prov. xiv. 3. Before ever God gives a man up to believe a lie, or to fall into damnable heresies, which lead to destruction, the devil is sure to get this bridle into his jaws. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall," Prov. xvi. 18. This is the bridle that leads astray. "The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee," Jer. xlix. 16. And again: "Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 21. And to this agrees the apostle: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome

words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strifes, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5. The devil is a wise and cunning adversary, and well knows what is most hateful to God; and there is nothing more hateful to him than pride. It was this very bridle that led the devil from the truth, even to become the father of lies. The Lord says, "He abode not in the truth:" what led him from it? The apostle tells us: "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil," 1 Tim. iii. 6. Pride lifted the devils up into self-admiration, and for which "God charged them with folly," Job, iv. 18. And this bridle is in their jaws to this day: hence they aspire even to imitate God, and want to be worshipped as God. The Saviour himself was tempted by the devil to fall down and worship him. When Satan gets this bridle into the jaws of a sinner, he is sure to make him hold his head up, and to walk with a stiff neck. His heart is swollen, and puffed up like a bladder, until his blasphemy boils up, and runs out of his mouth: hence the warning, "Talk no more so exceeding proudly, let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed," 1 Sam. ii. 3. A professor reined up with this bridle, is the most dangerous man in the world among weak believers: hence God blesses the poor simple soul that casts off all love and respect for him. "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies," Psalm xl. 4. O what a blessing it is to be kept from the foot of pride, which leads to presumptuous sins, and involves men in the great transgression. "O love the Lord, all ye saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer," Psalm xxxi. 23.

Men of this cast, and in this state, act the same restless part that the devil does—always meddling with religion, though always conscious that they have none: and so it is with Satan. Go into what part of the world you may, you shall find Satan carrying on some sort or other of false religion: among the Turks, the Arabs, the

Egyptians, Romans, Russians, Indians: go where you will, you shall find idolatry, superstition, will worship, a form of godliness, altars, temples, sacrifices, soothsaying, or something called devotion; and all against God, and in opposition to him: and hence Satan is styled the god of this world; and a world of worshippers he has got in it.

A man with this bridle in his jaws is just like a bear with a muzzle; he can eat nothing that is good. The best spiritual provision that can be dealt out from a pulpit, the most delicious food or richest fare that was ever set before the household of faith, all passes by his mouth. The man with this bridle in his jaws is never suffered so much as to taste that the Lord is good or gracious.

With this bridle he is reined up so high, and Satan holds him in so tight, that he can stoop to nothing; no, not to divine revelation. There is not one sublime mystery in the kingdom of God, no revelation that God hath ever made of himself, of his wondrous works of creation, providence, grace or redemption, that he can submit to: he is wise above all that is written.

Let the highway to glory be never so clearly cast up, and the stumbling blocks removed—let the standard be erected, and God's banner displayed—let the door of hope be opened, and the path of life made never so plain—it is all in vain: an infernal spirit ruling within perverts every thing; and one check by Satan with this bridle turns him out of the way. This bridle shall be in his jaws, causing him to err; for God (in just judgment), by the instrumentality of Satan, "leads him forth with the workers of iniquity; but peace shall be upon Israel." "He is given up of God to strong delusions, that he may believe a lie, and be damned, for not receiving the truth, but taking pleasure in unrighteousness." And the devil, with this bridle, rides him, curbs him, reins him, and turns him whithersoever he will. "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back," saith the wise man.

He is a wonder to himself, and stands astonished at his own wisdom. Every false ray that the devil (transformed) darts into his

heart or head, every time he looks into the scriptures with his false mirror, what wonders does he behold! All his discoveries are such as have lain hid since the world began, till this wonder of wonders arose, till he arose a prophet in Israel! Every servant of God that he hears, every God-fearing man that he converses with, heightens his astonishment and admiration. What fools, what blind bats, what poor idiots, do-they all appear to be, when compared to himself, and to that perfection of wisdom that dwells in him! Now and then, indeed, there shall be a discovery made; a ray of light darted, a truth brought forth, or such a sound speech dropped, which he cannot condemn, and which, for a moment, may stagger him; but this is but seldom: and, as soon as ever the devil perceives this, he sticks his spurs in his side, and gives him another check with this double bridle; and away goes Jack, kicking up behind, for he must lift up his heels at every thing that savours of Christ.

In all his searches and researches God opposes him. "God resisteth the proud; but he giveth grace to the humble." He searches the scriptures to support his damnable heresies, and to strengthen himself in his wickedness. God resists him, and it appears a sealed book: he rages at it, and storms; perverts it, and brings forth his strong reasons against it: still it galls him, till at last he ridicules it, and rails against it, and despises it "and he that despises the word shall be destroyed." He lies in wait to deceive the humble, teachable, tractable soul, that walks in the simplicity of the gospel; but God resists him, and discovers to the meek and lowly believer the hardened state and stinking savour of this tool of Satan; and he shuns him, and flees from him. These he hates the worst, and tries the hardest to deceive; and with these he has the least success; for God resists him, and instructs his own children by his Spirit. "He guides the meek in judgment, the meek will he teach his way." He labours to enshrine and exalt himself in the eyes and affections of God's people, in order to exclude them from Christ, and that he may be looked up to as a wonder from the Lord of hosts: but God resists him, till every professor that has any reverence of God, or respect for him, despises him, and looks upon him as an incurable leper, with his plague in his head, as a perilous transgressor, a hardened

rebel, a cursed vagabond, an incarnate devil, and a walking hell, with every visible token of perdition upon him; and shuns him, and dreads him, as he would a fiery flying serpent.

It is upon these animals that the devil carries on the affairs of his kingdom, and his state matters. Without such men as these he could not well support his interest against the glorious light and power of the gospel of Christ. It is by such that Satan spreads his doctrines, blindness of mind, confusion, hardness of heart, hatred to the truth, pride, and presumption; in all which the kingdom of Satan stands. There is not a mystery in the Bible, not a doctrine essential to salvation, but what these men will attack. What arrogancy will they discharge from their mouth against the glorious doctrine of the Trinity; against the deity of the Son of God; and against the personality of the Holy Ghost! What contempt will they pour upon the satisfaction Christ made by his sacrifice; and upon the efficacy, weight, and worth of all his meritorious undertakings, sufferings, and finished work! To these Christ becomes a snare, a trap, and a stumbling. They kick, and he smites; they presume, and he resists; they peep and mutter, and he baffles and confounds them.

Hence we see, that where the gospel comes, there Satan stirs; and the more the power of God attends the word, the more Satan lays about him. Some hear the word, and give their assent and consent to it; but, as soon as they go from the house of God, then comes the wicked one, and steals away the word sown in their hearts, and they become unfruitful. Another hears it with pleasure and delight, till zeal, diligence, joy, and a visible reformation appears; but these Satan fills with the deceitfulness of riches, and the cares of this life, and leads them away after these things, till he chokes the word. Another sort hear it, and receive it notionally in their heads, and wonderful gifts and abilities follow; but then this stony ground affords no depth for the word to root in, these having no root, in time of temptation fall away. Others fall into Satan's sieve, and are effectually shook, tossed, tumbled, and winnowed: but to these the Lord appears, and takes the prey from the mighty, and delivers the lawful captive, who never forgets the wormwood and the gall. And

those who escape the sieve are caught in Satan's bridle; and this is the worst of all; for Satan will never let such an one rest till he hath involved him in the guilt of the great transgression: he will make him with this bridle set his mouth against the heavens, and his tongue go through the earth, by circulating his damnable heresy. But the Lord's chosen ones return to the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls, while waters of a full cup are wrung out unto them. Blessed be God for convincing us of our ignorance and blindness, and for humbling us to submit to divine revelation; but, above all, for keeping us from kicking, stumbling, and taking offence, at the glorious foundation that he hath laid in Zion.

Again. This bridle is said to be in the "jaws" of the people, causing them to err. Job makes mention of the jaws of the wicked. "I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not, I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth," Job, xxix. 16, 17. Job compares these spoilers to a voracious beast, or mastiff dog, which, when they seize a child, a lamb, kid, or calf, hold so fast, that there is no such thing as rescuing the poor creature, but by wrenching open the jaws by violence. Just such is an oppressor, a grinder of the face of the poor, an overreacher, an overbearer, who is as insatiable after money, as a starved beast is after prey: "these greedy dogs can never have enough;" they go about the city, and grin like a dog, and grudge, but are never satisfied. Job set himself against these, and raised the court against them, and made them relinquish the spoil they had taken. "He hath swallowed down riches," says Job, "but he shall vomit them up again; God shall cast them out of his belly." Just such a beast of prey is a wolf in sheep's clothing, among the sheep and lambs of the Lord's fold; or, to keep to my text, just such an one is a damnable heretic, with this bridle of the devil in his jaws; to devour, divide, and scatter the sheep of Christ is all his work; and he is so bent upon it, that "his sleep is taken away, unless he hath caused some to fall."

The mystical body of Christ is compared to the human body, and the different members of the body to individual believers of

different sizes in growth, or in different stages of grace. The foot and the ear represent the diligent and the attentive believer; and such as these the devil is most watchful over; and when one of these devourers of the poor and needy have been let loose upon the flock, nothing has been left for the Lord but three mangled members, and these sick in bed. "Thus saith the Lord, As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria, in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus on a couch," Amos iii. 12.

In the heart of this monster of iniquity Satan rules; in his vain imagination Satan is exalted, and there he raises his high towers of self-conceit, human wisdom, self-sufficiency, independency, carnal reason, and the wonderful light of fallen nature; and every other "high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of Christ, that not one thought may ever go into captivity to the obedience of him." The reins of this bridle is infernal power, which leads this deluded wretch "captive at his will; nor can he recover himself out of this snare of the devil:" he hath chosen his own way, and God hath chosen his delusions. The bit of this bridle is pride; and a poor wretch hardened and stiffened with pride would sink into everlasting burning, before he would bow, yeild, submit, or acknowledge an offence, or himself in an error. The Jewish Pharisees would plunge themselves in the guilt of innocent blood, and into the unpardonable sin up to the neck, and expose their nation to ruin, and themselves to the greatest damnation, rather than submit to the person or doctrines of Christ, or acknowledge the truth of one charge brought against them by the Son of God. This bridle was in their jaws, and the devil rode them, and managed them, in all their persecutions of Christ, from the manger to the cross: and they pursued him as bad after his resurrection, until the Roman sword came upon them; and then, just as Pharaoh and his troopers perished in the Red Sea, so these were drowned in destruction and perdition: "for wrath came upon them to the uttermost; and at the day of judgment such" (saith Christ) "shall go away with the devil and his angels."

God hath set a brand upon several classes of people, which those who are skilled in physiognomy may read; "a whore's forehead" exhibits a defiance of all virtue, modesty, and chastity; it can redden at nothing; nothing can deface it but "Mary's repentance." The midnight cry will make them change pale, but it will not make them blush. A fallen countenance informs us of the destruction of a false hope, and of some awful bill of indictment being filed in the court of conscience. A sad countenance on the butler and baker of Pharaoh informed Joseph of the sorrow of their hearts. The anxiety, pious concern, wishful eyes, and blubbered cheeks of the spouse in the Song, told the daughters of Jerusalem that she was crossed in love. "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?" The scorner in his chair is to be known by his "brow of brass," which no reproof nor rebuke from man, no warning nor allurement by the ministry, ever melts or removes. A papist carries the mark of the beast in his forehead; judicial blindness, bigotry, hatred, and revenge, are evident enough. But this ungovernable animal in my text, when he is equipped, is the most conspicuous of all: defiance of heaven appears on his brow, pride swells his cheeks, and Satan looks through his eyes, and never suffers one plain truth, in real honesty, ever to come from his mouth. "This is the pale horse, and he that sits on him is Death, and hell follows him," Rev. vi. 8. Be not like a horse or mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, and I will guide you with mine eye, saith the great Commander and Leader of his people; and where this eye, this true light shines, God grant we may ever follow. Amen, and Amen.

Chapter Four

WILLIAM GADSBY
(1773-1844)

WILLIAM GADSBY

William Gadsby (1773-1844) was a minister of the gospel whose preaching was used to establish a number of churches around Manchester and the northern parts of England in the 19th century. He became one of the founders of those Particular Baptist churches which became known as "Gospel Standard Strict Baptists" because of their agreement with those doctrines set forth in the "Gospel Standard" magazine, of which he was the editor for a number of years. He is also well remembered for the many hymns he wrote including "Immortal Honours" and the hymnbook he compiled which is still in use today.

THE GREAT THINGS GOD HAS DONE FOR HIS PEOPLE

By William Gadsby

*Preached on Tuesday Evening, Sept. 13th, 1838, in Jewry Street Chapel,
London, on Behalf of the Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society.*

*"The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."
(Psalm 126:3)*

THERE are three things in the great mysteries of salvation that many professors of religion seem almost alarmed at. One is that God really saves sinners. If a minister of Jesus Christ is led to describe a sinner half as he really is, for to the bottom of him he never can, he shocks their delicate minds, and they are almost paralyzed, and call it the high road of licentiousness to suppose that God saves such naughty sinners as those; whilst a poor soul under the quickening, enlightening, teaching energy of God the Spirit, fears that his case is desperate, and if God sends a minister of truth, who hits upon such a desperate case, and points it out as one that the Lord has in hand, the poor creature is astonished, and wonders where he has been; for he never heard that. Another branch of truth that men seem almost alarmed at, is the method that God takes in saving those sinners. If we come to trace salvation to its spring-head, God's electing love--"O! This is horrifying. We must not talk about election in these polite days. If we believe in it, we must put other words for it, and say, 'The Lord's people,' and 'The Lord's family,' and 'The pious;' but never talk about 'election;'" and thus the doctrine of God's discriminating, electing love is discarded. And then another branch of divine truth, that men seem alarmed at, is the power of God the Spirit in making this salvation known to the conscience, and bringing it with divine power and majesty to the heart and maintaining it there as the poor sinner sojourns in this wilderness. Some people are alarmed at all the three, and some only at the last; some of them will chatter about election till their tongues almost cleave to the roof of their mouth; but if you insist upon vital godliness, the power of God the Holy Ghost in the conscience producing a corresponding conduct, they will call you an enthusiastic legalist. And thus divine things are set at nought on one hand or the other. But God will vindicate his own honour, and "make bare his arm," and bring his loved ones at some period or other to adopt the language of our text: "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

No doubt the psalmist had in view, in the first instance, God delivering Israel out of a dreadful national captivity; and here we are told of them that they were "like them that dreamed," and they

began in wonder to "laugh" in the sweet enjoyment of God's dealings with them. But Israel of old being a typical nation and God's spiritual family being amongst that nation, the Lord has something more in view than this; he has in view a spiritual captivity, that his people are delivered from; and when delivered from it, and brought feelingly and experimentally to know it, then they sing, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Now from this passage, as far as God shall assist me, I shall consider,

I. Who the us are, who have any right to adopt the language of our text, and say, "The Lord hath done great things for us."

II. Point out some few of the great things that God has done for them.

III. Endeavour to notice that whenever God makes manifest these "great things," or a measure of them, in their hearts, it is sure to make them glad. "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

I. Now what persons are these? Who are the us? They are God's spiritual Zion--that family he has predestinated to eternal life, "predestinated to the adoption of children," (Eph. 1:5) "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son," (Rom. 8:29) and brought, by his spiritual power and grace, to know their own ruined condition and the mercy of God in Christ Jesus towards them--who have felt themselves in captivity and felt themselves brought out of it. Some people tell us that there is no cause now-a-days for a sinner to have "the letter" brought into the conscience, no cause for a law-work in their hearts. But that is a heaven that was invented in Italy; it is not God's heaven, it is a kind of purgatorial heaven. For God has solemnly declared that "the law was given that every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty before God." (Rom. 3:19) And if God's law does not stop your mouth, is not brought to your conscience, does not destroy all your false projects, and bring you in guilty and condemned at the feet of

the Lord--if you never feel that, I believe you will be damned, as sure as God is in heaven. Let your profession be what it may, let you be as tall as you may in a profession of religion, you will never enter into God's blessed place above, if you have never been brought to know your ruined condition below. Why, you might as well talk about a man praising a physician, as one who had cured him of a disease, when he never had an illness in his life; you might as well talk about a man speaking of a skilful surgeon, who had set his bones, when he never had a broken bone since he drew breath. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." (Luke 5:31) I do not mean that all God's people are led into the same depth in this. Here the Lord works as a sovereign; but the law must stop their mouths, the law must bring them in guilty, the law must make them feel that they are in bondage, that they are "under tutors and governors," and under such tuition that they are bound by the ties of the law either to fulfill it or be damned by it, and that they cannot fulfill it, and that therefore they can feel no ground of hope upon law principles.

Now when the Lord the Spirit brings a poor soul to this, he finds himself in dreadful captivity. I cannot exactly say how it is in London; but I know in our way we have a great many who begin in election, and go on with election, and never get one step either below or above high-seasoned election; and if you ask them what they know about "the plague of their own hearts," or what they know about "the sentence of death," "O! They do not meddle with such low things as that; they live upon high ground." Ah! And the devil will never disturb you there. If God does not, you will find that such an arrogant presumptuous profession is nothing more nor less than the devil's chariot to carry men to hell in delusion; and, if God does not upset them and bring them to know their ruined condition, they will never enter into the mysteries of God's blessed kingdom, that kingdom that stands in God's own power. But now, when a poor sinner feels the bondage of the law and feels "the sentence of death," he finds himself in a captivity, from which he cannot deliver his own soul. He feels himself without might and without power, and feels the truth of what God says, that he is "not

sufficient of himself" (2 Cor. 3:5) so much as "to think" a good thought, or to pray; as says the apostle, "We know not what to pray for as we ought." (Rom. 8:26) I often think, why what fools the disciples and apostles were to the great men of our time; for they have found out how to pray for themselves and to make prayers for other folks for a thousand years to come; but the disciples asked the Lord to teach them how to pray, and the apostle was brought to confess that he was "not sufficient of himself" and did not know even how to pray "as he ought." And so God's people will be brought to this, when the Lord brings them to know their spiritual bondage and captivity. And then, when he brings peace to the conscience and pardon to the heart, and sets the soul at liberty, then they are the people that can say, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

II. But having thus gone over this description, let us look now at some of the great things that God has done for us.

And we must take into the account each glorious Person in the one undivided Jehovah,—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. For in the "great things," that the eternal Trinity has done for the church of God, each distinct Person has a solemn part, a part that redounds to the glory of all and the blessedness of them that are brought to trust in God. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, as one blessed Triune Jehovah, hath entered into a solemn covenant before all worlds to bring an infinite number of mortals to glory. In this solemn contract, this covenant of grace, the eternal Trinity took a survey of all their sins, and all their weaknesses, and all their misgivings, and all their backslidings, and all their temptations, and all their besetments, and all their slips, and all their falls, and all their tumblings, that this body would have from the beginning to the end of time; and in this immortal covenant God made provision to meet it all, and so to meet it as to be glorified in saving them all from all the horrors and consequences of sin. Now is that not a "great thing?" Why, if we make a provision, as we think, for our children, and make it over to them, one gets proud and profligate, sets up to be a gentleman, and

soon destroys the provision; and the others do the same thing in some other way; so that by and by the mistaken provision we made for them has been a kind of means of leading them into deeper ruin than they would have been in if they had been obliged to work for every penny they have. But our God made no mistake of that nature. One "great thing" he did in his council and covenant was to make the provision sure--"the sure mercies of David;" (Isa. 55:3) certain mercies, "ordered in all things." (2 Sam. 23:5) Why, he saw all thy temptations, before ever thou didst. When he gave thee to Christ, he saw all thy besetments, all thy bewilderments, all thy hard-heartedness, all thy darkness, all thy coldness, all thy barrenness; and in the eternal purpose of his grace, he made such a provision for thee that it is not possible for Satan himself to drive thy poor bewildered soul into any place where God's provision will not reach thee and be sufficiently powerful to bring thee out. Is not this a "great thing," a matchless thing? It was this that made David so sweetly and solemnly sing, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." (2 Sam. 23:5) David's house "not so with God!" Not how? Why, if you read the context, he is speaking about a "morning without clouds," without anything that seems gloomy, when the sun arises upon it, and about the "tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after the rain;" and he says, "My house is not so." Poor creature! He felt clouds and darkness, and often sharp biting frosts that seemed to nip the tender herb. There seemed no sweet going forth of faith, of love, of prayer, of thanksgiving; there seemed a bewilderment in the conscience. But, says he, this is my salvation and all my desire--new covenant blessings stand sure, "ordered in all things (not in one thing only) and sure." This is the strength of divine grace, when God is pleased to give it to a poor sinner to realize such immortal blessings; and this is one of the "great things" that God the Eternal Trinity in Unity has done for his people.

But we must come to retail it out a little. I am a kind of retail preacher; as a friend of ours, who lived in a country place, used to say, "I like to hear our friend, when he retails it out. Sometimes our

parson wholesales it, and we poor folks cannot go to a wholesale shop; it suits me to have it retailed out, for those are the shops we poor folks can go to." And so the people of God are continually brought into such a state that they want to have it retailed out in little parcels, as we may say, that God may be glorified and themselves made glad through his grace.

1. Then if we endeavour to look a little at this blessed covenant, we first of all notice that "herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his Son, and chose us in his Son;" so that in the purpose and councils of God, God fixed Christ and the church in his eternal heart together, the church in Christ and Christ in the church, and God in Christ and Christ in God. And thus the church was made the special charge and care of God the Son before the world was; and, I speak with reverence, God the Father looked to Christ to bring them all to heaven. "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." (John 17:6) And "all that the Father giveth me shall"--shall what? Have a chance of coming? No, not so. Have an offer of mercy? No, not so. Have conditions proposed to them--easy terms? No, nor so either. Well, then, how is it? "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." (John 6:37) Unbelief says they shall not, and pride says they shall not, and the devil says they shall not, and their hearts say they will not, for they love sin, and after it they will go; but God has taken his stand and Christ has taken his stand upon eternal fixtures, and God and Christ have said, "They shall come." Yes, poor souls! And when he comes with invincible power to the heart, he will make them glad to come as poverty-stricken sinners, and be glad to be made partakers of the riches of his Son; and "him that cometh," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." This is the reason why the apostle so sweetly sums up: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places,"--where? "In Christ." (Eph. 1:3) When God created man, he created him holy, in his own image; and it appears he put man in the care of this holiness and this image; he gave the key into his own hands, and man unlocked the door of his heart and let the devil in and all that was holy out, and God will never trust to man again while the world stands. No;

he has secured all spiritual blessings "in Christ," and given him the key of the house; and he opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens. (Isa. 22:22; Rev. 3:7) "It pleases the Father that ALL fulness" should dwell there; (Col. 1:19) and therefore there is nothing but emptiness anywhere else. And he is said to be "full of grace and truth"; (John 1:14) and "of his fulness" we receive, "and grace for grace." (John 1:16) So then the Father, in his great part in this solemn economy of salvation, gave his Son to be the Head and Representative of the church, the grand repository of heaven; and God locked up his honour, his truth, his grace, and "all spiritual blessings" in the heart of Christ, and Christ pledged his honour to save all securely, and to magnify all the honours of God in making this mystery known by the power of his Spirit to the hearts and consciences of his people. And this is a "great thing," that God has done for them.

2. But it will not do to enlarge, and therefore we will proceed to notice what Christ has done for them. There is a great deal said about Jesus Christ in our day. "What a merciful Christ he was," they say, "to come and die for sinners!" But some people tell us that such is the nature of his death, that after all it may be the means of damning us deeper than we should have been damned if he never had died. Why, what an awful thing that is to say? I recollect a minister saying to me some years ago, "You do not love sinners as you ought to do, or else you would preach to them universal offers and universal proffers?" "Indeed," said I. "Let me ask you one thing. Will any sinner that ever gets to heaven be saved by your universal offers and universal proffers?" "No," he said, for he was a sort of a Calvinist, "they will not." "Well, what will become of the rest?" "Ah!" Said he; "they will have a deeper damnation, because they rejected the offers of mercy." "So that is the method you take," said I, "to show you love sinners; as if they could not be damned deep enough, but you will damn them the deeper by your universal offers, when you admit that they cannot be saved the more for your preaching to them? What an awful way that is! It is not according to the riches of God's grace that he has ordained in the salvation of the church."

Now the Lord Jesus Christ, in his rich mercy, undertook to stand accountable and responsible, as the Surety of the family of God, and to have all laid upon him that was chargeable to them; and he bore it, and will communicate to them all that can flow from his blood and love, that can crown God's brow and honour his name; and thus he stood the glorious Head and Representative of the church of the Most High, to the honour of God and the blessedness of all them that are brought by rich grace to believe. But he must be something in his own person beside essential Godhead; for essential Godhead could not accomplish this. The law demanded blood for blood; essential Godhead could not bleed. "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth;" essential Godhead could not do that. Essential Godhead could not shed blood, could not die; yet "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin." (Hebrews 9:22) And yet such is the measure of the "great things," that the Lord Jesus Christ has done for his people, that it is emphatically called "his dying," and his blood the blood of God. "Yes," say you, "but I do not believe it was the blood of God." Well I do in my very soul believe it; not that Godhead could bleed, but that the Person who did bleed was God and man, and therefore the Godhead in union with the manhood made the one Person Immanuel, and it was his blood. If you want a simple argument upon the subject, suppose, when I go home tonight, some person was to stab me, and I was to be bleeding in the street, you would say, "Why, yonder lies Gadsby bleeding." Now my soul could not bleed, you know, and that is what makes the person, is it not? But then you take me as a man, and cry, "He is bleeding;" all that can suffer and bleed is suffering and bleeding. And as it respects Immanuel, the God-man Mediator, all that could suffer and bleed and agonize and die in him did suffer, bleed, agonize, and die; and the Godhead gave immortal validity to the atonement, so that it is emphatically called the blood of God: "God purchased the church with his own blood."

The Lord Jesus Christ, then, the Second Person in the glorious Trinity, in order to accomplish this "great thing" that he was going to do, took up a life to be able to die, took our nature into union with his personal Godhead, and became really man, truly and verily

man as well as truly and verily God, that he might be able to wade through all the miseries that sin and the devil had heaped round his elect, and to go after them, and bear their sins in his own body and soul on the tree, that they might be set for ever free. And thus his sacred Majesty stooped to bear their weakness and infirmities, and to take their sins upon him. Hence it is said he was "made sin for us." (2 Cor. 5:21) Why, that is a strange saying, for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," (Heb. 7:26) and "guile was not found in his mouth." (1 Pet. 2:22) "Made sin?" Aye, he was made murder, and made adultery, and made fornication, and made theft, and made treason. "Shocking!" Say you. "How can that be, if he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?" Because he was made so by solemn contract and solemn transfer. The murder, the adultery, the fornication, and the abominations of David, and Solomon, and Peter, and all God's elect were transferred and placed to his account, and he acknowledged the debt. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not," said he; these things would not do,- "to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:5-7) And Paul tells us roundly that "we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all." (Heb. 10:10) And this was a "great thing" that Jesus Christ came to die. Look at him as the Babe of Bethlehem; look at him as a traveller without house or home; look at him hunted by Satan forty days and forty nights in the wilderness under all the iron tyranny that devils could inflict upon him, when he had too much work to do, too much solemn engagement with all the powers of hell to have a moment's time either to eat, drink, or sleep for forty days and forty nights; and this was all in espousing the cause of the church, in doing a great work for his people. He fought their battle manfully, he vanquished all their foes; but at length his blessed Majesty was brought to be in a solemn agony, and he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (Matt. 26:38) Good John Berridge has a solemn view upon this subject:

*"How his eyes astonished are!
 Sure they witness huge despair!
 On his face what sadness dwells!
 Sure he feels a thousand hells!"*

Aye he did--a million hells. Poor child of God! All the hell thy sins have merited was poured into his soul, and all the hell that all the millions of the elect of God ever merited was poured into his holy soul. And had he not been God as well as man, humanity could not have sustained the load and rolled it over. But immortal Godhead supported humanity under the weight of wrath; his holy soul endured it, and he died "the just for the unjust to bring us to God," (1 Pet. 3:18) and so to accomplish a salvation, rich and free, as extensive as the necessities of his people, as deep as their miseries can possibly be. Has he not done "great things" for us?

And all to give them a chance of being saved,--according to some people. I do not know that I hate any thing more in my soul than to hear that. It makes Jesus Christ so little, that he should do so much, and after all only get us a chance of being saved. Why, if a man is set up in business, you see how often it happens that he fails in it; and if man cannot manage the paltry things of time and sense without being insolvent, what will he do with eternal realities? And if you come a little closer, when God "made man upright" and he had no sinful nature, what did he do with his innocence? Why, he lost it all. And yet poor presumptuous man has the vanity to think you and I could manage the chance of being saved. What an insult it is to the Lord Jesus Christ, to fix the eternal honour of God upon chance, and that chance to be managed by a poor sinful creature who is tumbling into half a dozen holes every hour of his life. No, no. Thanks be to God for immortal realities, certainties. What is said concerning what Christ has done? He has "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" he has "finished transgression and made an end of sin;" (Dan. 9:24) he has "redeemed us from all iniquity;" he has "redeemed us from the curse of the law,"--from destruction and from the power of the devil; he has "obtained eternal redemption for us;" (Heb. 9:12) he has "redeemed us to God." To the honour of the Eternal Trinity, it is said, not that the redeemed shall have a chance, but that the redeemed shall "come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35:10) The Lord Jesus Christ has done this "great" work, and he is gone to heaven, shouting "Victory;" for "God

is gone up with a shout; the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." He rose from the grave as a demonstrative proof that sin was destroyed, law satisfied, God honoured, his people eternally and everlastingly saved. And the immortal honours of God unite in their salvation; and therefore he ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make intercession.

And in order that there might be this great work and this great wonder carried on manifestively, Christ is manifested as the Shepherd to gather his sheep in and to feed them when they are in; as the captain, to fight their battles for them; and as the High Priest to plead their cause, bear them upon his shoulders and present them before God with the plate of "Holiness to the Lord" (Exodus 28:36) as they stand complete in him and he is their Surety ever to represent them before God; as it is said, "He is entered into heaven now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24) in his Surety capacity. He is a Prophet, to teach and instruct us, as well as our Priest, to atone for and to bless us; and he is a Husband, to sympathize with us, and (as it is written so it stands firm) as a Husband he "gave himself" for his wife, "that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, and that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" (Eph. 5:25-27) as he is the Rearward, to bring up the rear. (Isa. 52:12) I have often thought good John Bunyan made a little mistake when he said there was no armour for the back, because then the enemy would soon get behind and shoot between our shoulders; but, while our Jesus has provided weapons for us to meet the enemy with, he is the Rearward to look after the scouting foe; and he watches over the church night and day, and waters her every moment; and he solemnly declares that he will be "her God and her guide even unto death." (Ps. 48:14) What "great things" these are!

3. But God the Holy Ghost is also engaged in this solemn work of doing "great things." There are two things that God the Spirit keeps his eye upon--the enrolment of God, and the sinner enrolled there. And at the time specified in God's enrolment, when that sinner shall

be taken and made willing, the Spirit comes with his power and does it. If it is a Zaccheus in the tree, he must come down. If it is a Peter, busy among his nets and his fish, he must come. If it is a Philippian jailer, lulling his conscience to sleep because he has been giving the apostles a good hearty drubbing, for he thought he had plague enough without being plagued with such fanatics, and he would make them remember coming there, and so he "made their feet fast in the stocks,"--but at midnight the time is come, God puts the cry into his heart, the Holy Ghost makes no mistake, he must cry, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30) If it is a Magdalene, who has been a kind of devil's showbox carrying through the streets to delude you, she must come. O! Blessed be God. The Spirit of God laid hold of her heart, and brought her to weep at the feet of Jesus and cry for mercy. And so if it is the dying thief and he is upon the cross, he must come.

And now let us come a little nearer; where were you, and where was I, and what were we doing? Perhaps there is some poor sinner in this assembly tonight who has come here on purpose to have some little ridicule when he gets away, and is pleasing himself with the idea of having a little fun with some of his wicked companions. O! If this is the day of God's power, may the Holy Ghost send an almighty message to your presumptuous heart! Where are you? WHERE ARE YOU? May God the Spirit pursue you, and bring you to know your ruined condition and perishing state before a heart-searching God! If it is the Lord's time, he will; "for the hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." (John 5:25) The Holy Spirit keeps his eye both upon God's secret enrolment and the sinner enrolled there, and he never loses sight of him; no, not even if he is going to Damascus with letters to persecute the church. When the set time is come, down he must fall. O that the Lord would quicken some of your dead souls, bring you this night to feel what cursed wretches you are in the sight of God, and make you cry to him as perishing sinners; and then eventually you will know some of the "great things" that God has done for you.

Well, when the Holy Ghost has quickened the dead soul to feel, and enlightened the dark soul to see, then the poor creature sets about amendments. He finds, in some measure, that he is in an awful state, and he begins to try to amend it. He shakes off perhaps his companions in drink, he will begin to be dutiful to his master, and he will set about pleasing God and doing something to make amends for the bad things he has done before. But, strange to tell! Everything that he does God the Spirit discovers to be empty, and vain, and wretched; discovers it to be evil, discovers it to be sin; and all the man's doings, and all his sayings, and all his attempts to help his own soul only make him so much the worse in his state and in his own feeling before a heart-searching God. And then the poor creature thinks he has missed it here and he has missed it there; he will try again, and may do better the next time; but he misses it again. "Well," says some poor soul, "that is the way I have been going on from month to month, and I have always missed it yet, but I hope to manage better soon." I tell you, you will never be right till you have lost that hope. "Lost that hope! What! Must I lose that hope? Why, man, you will drive one mad! What! Must that go--that hope of being able to manage it better?" Yes, that it must. That must go, and you must sink with it; and when that is gone--when all hope is gone, not only that you have not saved yourself, but that you never can, then Christ is preached by the Holy Spirit in the conscience, and the soul is brought to know something of "the hope of Israel," (Jer. 17:13) instead of the hope of flesh and blood. And this is a "great thing" that the Lord does for the poor sinner, to strip him of false hope and false confidence and all that would lead him astray, that he may lead him, as a perishing sinner, to the Lord Jesus Christ and magnify the riches of God's grace in his soul.

"Well," says some poor creature, "I think I have been a lost helpless thing in my own feelings for many a month, and yet I do not enjoy God's salvation." I should question whether you are brought to this. Now is there not a little bit of something, a little secret lurking something at the bottom, that still gives you some hope that a favourable moment will come when you shall manage it a little better? Now just ask your conscience, whether it is not so.

("Yes", say you, "it is.") That must go. I know you will cling to it as long as ever you can. I know you will. It is like a man giving up his life, it is like a man giving up every thing, to give up this; but the Holy Ghost will make you give it up at last, or else you are none of his.

And when he has done this, will he leave you to destruction? "Why," say you, "really I am afraid he will; for I have been tempted many times to put an end to my existence. Once, the Lord knows, I had the instrument in my hand, and I think if he had not taken care of me, I should have done it." Well, he will take care of you; though he is hunting you out of all props, and all self, and all false comfort, he will administer true comfort. I have often thought of one occurrence that took place, connected with my own ministry, some years ago. A poor woman in very great distress thought she could go on no longer, and she would know the worst of it; and so she appointed a time in her own mind when she would drown herself; and when the time came she went to the river; but just as she was going to plunge in, it occurred to her, "Why if I drown myself now, the folks at home will not know where I am, and they will hunt everywhere to find me, and they will waste so much time in looking after me that I shall add to my other sins that of bringing my family to poverty. I will go back and bring my little girl with me another day, and then she can tell them where I am." And so the Lord overruled it for that time. Well, she went again accordingly, and took the child with her, and was just going to plunge in, when she thought, "Why my poor little girl will be so frightened that she will jump in, and I shall drown her too. I will go back, and take some other method of doing it." Well, after this she came to the place where I preached, and God set her soul at liberty, and she was brought to know the blessings of salvation. O! How carefully the Holy Spirit looks after the flock of the Lord! How carefully he guards them, when they have neither power nor intention to guard themselves! So great is his love, so great his compassion, so great his care, that he does these "great things" for them, and eventually they "are glad."

Well, then, this is one of the "great things" he does in the end--he reveals pardon; but it is one thing for people to talk about believing in Christ and having pardon, and it is another thing for them to believe and for them really to have pardon. The Holy Ghost comes and brings into the soul the pardoning love of Christ, removes bondage, gives a sweet quiet in the conscience, and gives the happy song, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" (Isa. 45:24) "In the Lord have I mercy; in the Lord I am free." Well, by-and-by the poor creature is brought to think, "Now it will be comfortable all the days of my life." But I tell you, if you live long, the Lord will teach you more of Christ. If any one was to ask you what is intended by Christ in all his offices, in all his relations, in his oath and promises, in all his fulness, you would be ready to say, "O! I do not understand all those divisions and subdivisions. I believe he has pardoned my soul, I believe He has loved me, I feel that I love him, and that is enough for me." O no. You must know more than that; and therefore you shall be brought into straits and difficulties which shall make the offices and relations, the oath and promise and fulness, of Jesus Christ, just suited to your condition. You shall see that what is said about Christ is not like titles of honour given to our noblemen--mere puffs of empty air--but that everything which is said about Christ is essential, real, suited to the honour of God. God will bring his people more or less, to the solemn feeling of necessity--of knowing that they need such a Christ; and then the blessed Spirit makes him manifest to the conscience as "a very present help in time of need." He reveals Christ in the conscience, and goes on from the first moment of his quickening energy, and carries us through this vale of tears, and lands us in ineffable bliss, redeemed through the Lord Jesus Christ, decorated in his righteousness, robed with his salvation, dignified with his honour, and having the dignity of God's glory stamped upon our character, in which we shall shine for ever and ever, to the praise and glory of God's grace. The Lord does these "great things" for sinners--poor, ruined, helpless sinners. "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

And now let me ask you, Do you know anything of this yourself? I will tell you one "great thing" that the Spirit of the Lord will do for a poor sinner who knows anything of these things in reality. There will be times and seasons when you really cannot pray. I do not mean when you cannot say your prayers. God the Spirit will bring you to know that saying prayers and praying are very different things. Your mouth will be so completely stopped sometimes, that, when you are praying, conscience, enlightened and quickened by the Holy Ghost, will say, "You do not feel that," and, "You do not feel that. What a hypocrite you are! You are speaking things to God, and you do not feel them." So that you are completely shut up and confounded, and feel as if you could say nothing but this sentence, "Lord, I am vile!" And you do not feel that, and you so confess before the Lord. Now the Lord sometimes brings a poor sinner to this very point, and the poor creature thinks he can never pray again; but he does pray again. If he lives in the country, he goes moping about the fields, and if he lives in the city, he goes about his work, and sometimes he is looking for some instrument that he wants for his employer, and perhaps he has it in his hand all the time, and he is so bewildered and confused that he feels fit for nothing. Satan tells him he is going mad, and he looks in the glass to see whether he is looking wild; and he thinks there is not another mortal so wretched as himself. Well; when this is the case, and all things seem so gloomy, the Holy Spirit comes, and comes as a Spirit of prayer, humbles him, and puts a cry into his mouth, till he really feels a majesty in prayer, and a power in prayer; and anon he is drawn forth into energy in prayer, and he can feel that God is owned of him, and he is owned of God, and he says, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." O! What a delightful thing it is, when God the Spirit puts such a word into the mouth of the poor worm of the dust! This is one of the "great things" that he does at times; and THEN "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence" to storm Satan's strongholds, and a great blessing comes through the power and energy of the Holy Ghost. But none but the Spirit of the Lord can produce this in the heart of a sinner; and when a sinner is brought here, he knows something eventually of God "having done great things for him."

But I must conclude; my strength tells me that I must.

III. When the Lord makes this manifest in us, it is sure to make us GLAD. Then we can say, joyfully, sweetly, and blessedly, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation and my high tower" (Ps. 18:2)--my ALL. What gladness in the heart when Jesus is thus revealed, and when our souls can sweetly and blessedly triumph in him! "He hath done great things for us whereof we are glad."

May the Lord the Spirit lead you and me to know more of the Gospel of Christ, and to show especial concern for the poor and needy, for his mercy's sake. Amen.

Chapter Five

J.C. PHILPOT
(1802-1869)

J.C. PHILPOT

J.C. Philpot (1802-1869) seceded from the Church of England in the 1830s along with his good friend William Tiptaft. He became greatly used as a preacher of the gospel amongst the Particular Baptists who became known as "Gospel Standard Strict Baptists" because of their agreement with those doctrines set forth in the "Gospel Standard" magazine. Philpot was the editor of the "Gospel Standard" for many years, and his experimental ministry became a great blessing to many who heard him.

THE DAY OF POWER

By J.C. Philpot

*Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, on Lord's Day Morning, July
7th, 1844*

"And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." (Isaiah 29:18,19)

WHAT a picture does the Holy Ghost draw in this chapter of a professing church "having a form of godliness, and denying the power thereof!" (2 Tim. 3:5) And with what a solemn woe does it open: "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt!" Ariel means "the light of God," and is the name given to Jerusalem, as being the place where the Lord specially manifested himself; for "out of Zion went forth the law, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:3) But the Lord saw into what an awful state Jerusalem had fallen; and therefore, though the Holy Ghost still calls her by the name of Ariel, "the light of God," viewing her according to the position in which he had originally placed her, yet he pronounces a woe on her, because that light was become dim, and burnt not as brightly as when David dwelt there. He therefore says, "Add ye year to year"--go on still in your dead and lifeless profession; "let them kill sacrifices"--let all the forms still be observed, but think not that these things are acceptable in my holy eyes, or that I can be satisfied with the form while the power is wanting.

The former part of this chapter is obscure, and probably contains much that remains to be fulfilled; but the latter part is sufficiently plain. God the Spirit files in it an awful bill of charges against the professing church. Let us see what they are.

We read, then, of a general sleep. (v10) "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered:" and the effect of this general slumber, which the Lord thus solemnly declared to have proceeded from himself in a way of judgment, was, that neither the learned nor the unlearned knew the power of God's truth. "And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned." The learned could not read the book, for it was "sealed;" and the unlearned could not, because they were "not learned:" and thus, secondly, the effect of general sleep, was general ignorance.

The third charge which the Holy Ghost files against the professing church, is general hypocrisy. "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me; but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men." The first step then, in the apostasy of the professing church, was judicial sleep; the second, as its effect, general ignorance; and the third, as the fruit of general ignorance, was general hypocrisy; they drew near to God with their lips, while their hearts were far from him; and their fear was not the godly, filial fear which is a fruit of the Spirit, but a base counterfeit, taught by the precept of men.

The fourth charge is general perversion and confusion; "Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay." Right and wrong, bitter and sweet, good and evil, light and darkness, were all confounded; truth was perverted, and error substituted for it; and thus universal confusion prevailed.

The fifth charge is that of general rebellion. "For shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, he hath no understanding?" The creature dared to arraign God's power, "He made me not;" "My own will and power made me a Christian;" and to doubt God's wisdom, "He hath no understanding;" "Man's wisdom outshines the Lord's."

See then, what an awful bill of charges the Holy Ghost here files against Ariel, the professing church of God--general slumber, general ignorance, general hypocrisy, general perversion, and general rebellion. Can we find a counterpart to this picture? Do you think that any church ever existed since that time resembling the one which the Holy Ghost has here described? Yes: the professing church of the day in which we live presents a perfect counterpart to the picture here given; nor could we have a portrait of it more minute in all the details, or a more graphic, vivid, or powerful description of what the professing church is in the day and generation in which our lot is cast. Are not the five marks I have

mentioned now so plainly stamped on its forehead, that he who runs may read?

Has God, then, abandoned his people? Has he forsaken his church? "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" No: he has reserved to himself "a remnant." Therefore we read in the text, "In that day," (that day of general slumber, general ignorance, general hypocrisy, general perversion, and general rebellion), "in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." We see here a gleam of sunshine breaking through the black cloud that overspreads the earth; the Lord still appears on behalf of his people, whom, that they may not be here mistaken, he here describes by peculiar marks.

If we look, then, at the words of the text, we see four characters mentioned in it--the deaf, the blind, the meek, and the poor; and we find certain promises addressed to each and all of them: the "deaf shall hear," the "blind shall see," the "meek shall increase their joy in the Lord," and "the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

In speaking, therefore, from these words, I shall attempt to trace out, as far as the Lord shall enable me, the characters mentioned, and the promises addressed to them. And as it might create confusion if I were to separate the character too far from the promise, I shall endeavour to take up the text as it lies before me, and, following God's order, examine the separate clauses as the Spirit has here revealed them. And may he give me "the tongue of the learned," and you the ear of the wise, and crown the whole with his special savour and blessing to my and your consciences.

I. The text commences, "In that day." It cannot have escaped your observation, if you are an attentive reader of the Scriptures, that the

phrase, "in that day," is much made use of by the prophets, and especially by Isaiah, and that great and glorious things are usually connected with this day. Now, if you will look carefully to the connection where the phrase, "in that day," is used, you will find, for the most part, that two distinct things are spoken of as taking place in it; and that it is either a day of trouble, or a day of joy. For instance, we read, (Isa. 2:11,12) "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, for the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low." This day, we read, is to be upon all the towering cedars of Lebanon, the lofty oaks of Basham, the proud ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures; (Isa. 2:13,16) and the effect of that day is, that "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low." (Isa. 2:17) Again, we read, (Jer. 30:7) "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." We read also of "the day of Lord" sometimes as a day of darkness, as Amos 5:18-20, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?" But, in other places, we find "the day of the Lord" spoken of as a day of deliverance, and therefore connected with joy, praise, and thanksgiving. "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah." (Isa. 26:1) "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isa. 12:1) But some might ask, "How comes it to pass, that the same expression, "that day," can refer to things so opposite? Why does the Holy Ghost speak of one day, when the things that occur in it are so completely different? How can darkness and light, sorrow and joy, affliction and consolation, all happen in the same day?" It is not so. That is not the meaning of the Holy Ghost. But by the expression he means a day of power. It is not the same day as to time, but as to operation; "the day of the Lord" is different from every other day; for it is the day in which the Lord stretches out his hand, makes bare his arm, and conspicuously appears. The same expression is therefore used when the Lord lays low, or when he raises up; when

he makes poor, or when he makes rich; when he condemns by the law, or justifies by the gospel. Each is "the day of the Lord," because it is a day of power; either power to kill, or power to heal; power to pull down, or power to build up. When, therefore, we find the expression, "in that day," or "the day of the Lord," we may assign to it this meaning--a day of power, because it is a day which the Lord calls his own.

But which of these two meanings does it bear in the text? Evidently a day of deliverance--a day of mercy for the church of God. "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book."

II. We come, then, at once to one of the characters before hinted at as descriptive of a living soul, and to a promise suitable to such. But what are we to understand by the expression, "deaf?" Whom does it represent? I think it describes the elect of God in two points of view--what they are before, and what they are after the quickening work of God the Spirit on their consciences. The elect, in common with all men, before God gives them spiritual life, have no ears to hear what the Lord speaks; are utterly inattentive to all he has declared in his word of truth, are deaf to his providences, promises, warnings, and precepts. But the promise runs, "In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book." "The ears of the deaf shall be unstopped;" (Isa. 35:5) and then, and not till then, have they ears to hear what God speaks.

But there is another sense, and that which I think the Holy Ghost means here, in which a person is called "deaf," and that is feelingly and experimentally so, according to these words, (and striking words they are,) "Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears." (Isa. 43:8) What a strange people must these be. Blind people that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears. And they are to be brought forth conspicuously as a strange and peculiar people, that they may be "men wondered at." Naturally it would be a contradiction, and they would be monsters; but spiritually, no contradiction exists, for they feel their blindness and yet see, and feel their deafness and yet hear.

Now, it is with us spiritually, as it was with Paul literally and actually--the first entrance of light makes us feel blind. Did not the light from heaven which shined round about him as he was journeying to Damascus blind him? and was he not three days without sight? So spiritually, we never feel ourselves blind till we begin to see: as long as we think we have light, we are in darkness, but immediately that we begin to see, we begin to feel blind; and when we begin to hear, we begin to feel deaf. The reason of this is, that a new faculty is given us to see and hear with; and this faculty being as yet weak and feeble, and yet we being able to see and hear with no other, are made to feel how blind we as yet are to the blessed truths of the gospel, and how deaf to hear anything for our peace, joy, and comfort.

Now, the Lord says, "In that day," the day of power, when he stretches forth his hand to do his own work, "shall the deaf," the feelingly and experimentally deaf, "hear the words of the book." What is "the book" here mentioned? It is the book on which I now lay my hand, the sacred Scriptures, the revelation of God's mind and will to the children of men. In this book are "words;" and those words the experimentally deaf are brought to hear, "in that day" when God the Spirit unstops their ears. But what are the words which the deaf hear? The expression "words" has a very comprehensive signification; for in God's book are words of thunder, and words of "a still small voice"; words that terrify and alarm, and words that comfort and console; words from Mount Sinai, and words from Mount Zion; words like a two-edged sword, and words that drop like the dew and rain into the parched soil. "The deaf shall hear the words of the book." And the first words which they hear are from Mount Sinai; those words which when the people heard them, they "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more, for they could not endure that which was commanded"; the words that manifest the spirituality of God's law, the holiness of God's character, the sinfulness of sin, and the vengeance due to the transgressor. These words of the book the deaf hear "in that day" when the Lord puts forth his hand, and unstops their ears. And they find, as king Josiah did, when the book of the

law was discovered in the temple, that they are "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" and have a power "to pull down and to destroy," according to one branch of Jeremiah's commission. (Jer. 1:10) But the words of the book which the deaf hear "in that day" are for the most part comfortable words: for they are usually quick enough to hear all that makes against them, but are deaf to what makes for them. The words, therefore, which they want to hear are those which bring peace, pardon, love, and salvation into their conscience; and because they cannot hear these words of the book to their soul's comfort, they feel to be deaf. How often has the case of the poor, tried child of God been described from the pulpit, and yet he could not receive the testimony to his soul's comfort! How often have the very invitations and promises suitable to his case been laid before him, and yet he could not hear them for himself, because he felt his need of the power of God to apply them to his conscience.

But, "in that day," the day in which the Lord speaks, "shall the deaf hear the words of the book;" the book of divine revelation, that shows forth the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; the book where God has unfolded his love in the Person and work of Jesus; the book gemmed and studded with promises, like the stars in the midnight sky; the book written for the consolation and edification of God's living family. "In that day," that day of general profession and darkness to the church, but of power to God's people, "in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book." And when they hear the words of the book, so as to have them sealed on their conscience and applied to their heart, they find a new Bible, a new God, a new heaven, and a new salvation. To "hear the words of the book," coming with divine power into their souls from the lips of God becomes all their desire. It is not eloquence, nor wisdom, nor learning that they care to hear, but the words of the book sealed with a divine power. Let God only speak out of the book, it is enough, for "where the word of a King is there is power." (Eccl. 8:4) A promise is sweet, if he but speak it; a rebuke is felt, if he but apply it; a precept is obeyed, if he but lay it on the conscience; and every truth is precious, if he but make it known.

III. But another character is spoken of in the text, and another promise is connected with that character, "The eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness." What a strange thing it is, that, according to the Lord's words, "those who see not shall see, and those who see are made blind." (John 9:39) What a strange display of God's sovereignty that all professors nearly think themselves right but the people of God, many of whom are harassed with fears lest they be wrong altogether. What a strange display of divine sovereignty, that many who think themselves going to heaven are going to hell, and many who fear they are going to hell are going to heaven; that many who think themselves wise and in the light are in ignorance and darkness, while many who feel themselves ignorant and foolish have true knowledge and wisdom.

But what a painful thing it is to feel ourselves blind; to want to see, and find a vail over our eyes; to walk in darkness, and not see those things which we most desire to behold. How the soul at times groans under felt darkness and blindness. How it longs to look into, and thus realize the precious things of Jesus. Now those who thus groan and sigh under a sense of felt darkness and blindness, are the people to whom the promise is applicable, "the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness."

You observe two expressions here made use of, "obscurity" and "darkness." Some of God's people are in "obscurity," and some are in "darkness;" "darkness" being a deeper shade of "obscurity," and "obscurity" a lighter shade of "darkness." Thus, some of God's people are as if in early twilight, or the first faint dawn of day; others "walk in darkness, and have no light;" they have not yet reached obscurity, that being a midway term between light and darkness, the breaking up of the night, the first symptom of the morning.

But what do those in "obscurity" see? After God the Spirit has made them feel their lost and ruined state, the first thing which they see is, the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour; how God can "be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

(Rom. 3:26) After they have seen "light in God's light," so as to feel and know the thorough wreck and ruin of creature righteousness and false religion, they see out of obscurity, in the light of the Spirit, the Person of Christ, as the Intercessor between God and man, "the Mediator of the new covenant," and, flowing out to him, they see "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." But these views are at present feeble and dim, enough to break the darkness, but little beyond; enough to draw on, but not to satisfy; to see where the sun is, but not sunrise. Many of God's people are here; they have seen and felt a sweetness and suitability in the blood and righteousness, love and grace of Jesus; but these have been like objects seen in the twilight, not perceived clearly and distinctly, the eyes being still in obscurity. Others, again, of God's people are in darkness, so as not yet to know and feel the way of escape from the wrath to come, or how God can be just, and yet save their souls. But the promise is given to each; their eyes (and if they have eyes they cannot be blind) shall see "out of obscurity," and "out of darkness." As God the Spirit brings the precious things of Christ near, and drops a savour of these eternal realities into the soul, the eyes see, and the heart tastes the sweetness of the things presented to the sight. And what a wonderful thing it is to see, in the light of the Spirit, the way of escape from the wrath to come, pardon for the guilty, and righteousness for the sinner. What a glorious sight, when the eyes of the blind are first opened to see the way of salvation through the intercession of the Son of God. It is indeed at first "out of obscurity:" they see dimly but truly, the glorious Person of Christ, in whom all the perfections of Jehovah harmonize; the blood of Jesus, as the blood of the Son of God, atoning for the most aggravated offences; his glorious righteousness, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe;" and they see that those who are accepted in his Person, washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness, shall assuredly escape from the wrath to come. These things they see not in their judgment, or by the exercise of their natural intellect, but in the light and teaching of God's Spirit, making it known to their consciences. Now this is the only light that can satisfy a man who feels himself blind. Thus the sensation of blindness makes him prize spiritual eye-salve;

the feeling of ignorance makes him value spiritual knowledge; groaning under darkness makes him prize the least gleam of spiritual light. And thus, in God's mysterious dealings, previous darkness and obscurity make the light dear to the eyes, and the things presented in that light sweet and precious to the soul.

How suitable are such promises to those who stand in need of them. Do I feel myself a poor deaf creature that can hear nothing to my soul's comfort but what God speaks with power? Do I find all that drops from the mouth of man to be utterly powerless to do my soul good? Do I want the Lord to preach his own gospel to my heart, and proclaim his own mercy, grace, and truth to my soul? If I were not often thus deaf; if I could hear every voice, listen to every word, grasp every promise, close in with every invitation, I should not want God to speak. It is, then, because we feel our deafness, that we want a supernatural voice to speak to us; and we thus learn to prize the words of the book, when God the Spirit is pleased to speak them home to the heart. Again, should I want spiritual eye-salve, to have my eyes opened, to feel the veil taken off, if I did not often feel blind? If I never walked in darkness, if I had no obscurity; if I could see what I pleased and when I pleased, what interest could I have, what interest could I wish to have in a promise like this? Is it not, then, worth being deaf to have an interest in such a promise? Is it not worth not hearing a single word for years, if God speak at the last? Is it not worth groping for the wall like the blind for months together, if at the end God fulfil the promise, and give the blind to see out of obscurity and darkness? These lessons, my friends, we cannot learn from man but from the special teachings and leadings of God; and that is one grand reason why the Lord permits his dear people so often to feel deaf and blind, that he may have all the honour of giving them ears and eyes; for he will not give his honour to man; he will not share his glory with the creature; he will have it all his own, for he is "a jealous God." Is not this the reason why you so seldom hear with power? Is it not to teach you what power is? Why do we often painfully feel ourselves to be such blind ignorant wretches? Is it not because we are deaf to every voice but his, and blind to every sight but the light of his countenance, and the

revelation of his blessed Spirit? It is very profitable, then, to feel thus deaf and blind. There are some here perhaps who have been hearing ministers for years, and yet have never heard to their soul's joy. But is not this far better than to hear any body and every body? Now you cry to God, "Speak, Lord, to my heart through thy servant, or him whom thou shalt send; let the whole earth be still, and thou alone speak; do speak, Lord, for thou knowest my case." And perhaps, there are some here that have been sighing and groaning day after day for months, who feel there are none that can exceed them in ignorance and folly; and of all who have made a profession for years, they think none can have made so little progress in divine things as themselves. But these painful exercises make us prize the Lord's light; and what a sweet and cheering thing light is, when it comes with divine power into the conscience!

IV. But we pass on to the next verse of the text, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." There is a very sweet and experimental connection between the two verses of the text: "the meek" and, "the poor" are closely connected with, and in fact are the same people as "the deaf" and "the blind." But what is it to be meek? It is not to be meek by nature (for such there are), but to be meekened by God's grace, by the dealings of the Spirit in the conscience. To be meek a man must be brought down in his spirit, made humble, broken, and contrite before God; his proud thoughts must come down, his towering spirit be laid low in the dust, and his heart be softened by the grace of God. Two things work together to make a man spiritually meek--a knowledge of God, and a knowledge of himself; a sense of his own deafness, and God making him to hear "the words of the book;" a feeling of his own blindness, and the Lord enabling him to see "out of obscurity," and "out of darkness." Do you think there is a greater pride to be found anywhere than the pride of knowledge in one, and the pride of profession in another part of the outward church? You may find greater heights of worldly pride, but not more towering castles, not stronger bulwarks, than those of dead religious profession. But until these two castles are laid low in the dust, we shall be proud of our

understanding and of our attainments; of our gifts, or of our profession; and the more we walk in this path, the prouder we get. In order, then, to meeken us, this pride must be abased; and how better can this be done, than by being made to feel how deaf we are when God does not speak, and how blind we are when he does not give light? Suppose I, or any other minister, could always go into the pulpit with light and life, power and feeling, thoughts and words at our command, would it not make us proud? How humbling, then, are barren and unfruitful seasons! But when the Lord gives light to see out of obscurity and darkness the things that do our souls good, this enlarges and strengthens our hearts. Do not, then, these alternations and changes meeken the soul? Can pride live in such an atmosphere? Can the pride of profession, of knowledge, of piety, and so on, those great sins of the professing church, live and reign in the heart where deafness and blindness are felt alternately with God's power? If these things are but known in the conscience--our deafness, and God speaking in that deafness,--our blindness, and God giving us light in that darkness,--they lay the pride of profession and of knowledge low.

But what a blessed grace the grace of meekness is--to feel meek and soft in spirit before God. There are many persons towering I know not where, above all darkness and ignorance, but do we find meekness in them? The Lord give you and me meekness before him, for he delighteth in such: let them enjoy their vain confidence, "He dwelleth with the lowly." But what a great deal of discipline it takes to bring down our towering pride, and at all meeken our heart.

What a series of sorrows, trials, temptations, and afflictions do we need to break us down. What a succession of spiritual dealings is necessary to bring true meekness into a man's conscience, to soften and humble his spirit before God. Now you will observe these meek have their peculiar joy, "the meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord." We know nothing of joy in the Lord, till we know this; for what communion can there be between a proud professor and a broken-hearted Jesus? or what fellowship between unhumiliated, uncircumcised hearts, and the "Man of sorrows" groaning in

Gethsemane's garden? There can be no communion with him, no participation of his spirit, till we are brought down in meekness and contrition to his feet; and then there will be a sacred joy in the Lord, which we can know nothing of till we are meek, humble, and broken-hearted, and till we feel that we have nothing and are nothing. Until we feel ourselves the vilest of the vile, and as such creep to his cross, and lie humbly there, we can know no "joy in the Lord." We may joy in our knowledge, in our profession, in our attainments, in our vain-confidence; but we can have no "joy in the Lord" till he reveals himself, manifests his love, discovers his glorious perfections, and makes known his atoning blood. And until we are meekened, we are not fit for it; the vessel must first be emptied of its poisonous contents, its venomous ingredients, before the real wine of God's grace can be poured in. So that the meek who "joy in the Lord," can only joy in him as they are brought down into a resemblance to him. They must be meekened before they can feel his presence, taste his love, or know the power of his resurrection; and in proportion as they are thus meekened, sweetness and blessedness. And it is observable, that these meek and broken-hearted ones, who have some joy in the Lord, (it is not defined how much) are connected with, and indeed are the same persons as those who are deaf, and yet hear the words of the book, and the blind who see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.

But it is said that "the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord." They may not have much joy, but if they have any at all, it is "in the Lord:" it may be little, but it is real. Now you know, if we are honest men naturally, we would rather have one real piece of gold, one sovereign from the mint, than a thousand counterfeits. So our "joy in the Lord" may be feeble and weak, but we cannot take up with any base imitation of it, can rejoice in nothing else, cannot take pleasure in sin, or in having a name to live while dead. If we ever have any joy, any sweet sensations, any meltings of heart, any thing to comfort or encourage our souls, it is "in the Lord," and not in ourselves; in what he has done for us, and not what we have done for him.

V. "And the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." What a strange expression is this,--"the poor among men." How can I better illustrate it than by what is now before me? Here is a congregation of people; but all here present are not poor, naturally or spiritually; yet there are poor among them. So "the poor among men" point to a remnant out of a multitude, a few berries on the top of the uttermost bough. The professing church, as a body, is buried, as I before observed, in general slumber, ignorance, hypocrisy, perversion, and rebellion; and among these "men" the poor seem scarcely worth a thought; among those heroes and giants in their own opinion, what room is there for the "poor," who are nothing and have nothing in themselves but felt guilt, ruin, and wretchedness? But the Lord has promised, that "the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel." And who is this "Holy One of Israel" but the Lord Jesus, for he is "the Holy One chosen out of Israel," the Holy One who died for Israel, the Holy One in whom all Israel is justified and shall glory. "The poor among men" cannot rejoice in themselves, for they have nothing to rejoice in; and having nothing in themselves to rejoice in, they rejoice in "the Holy One of Israel," who of God is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30) Until men are made experimentally poor, they will never rejoice in "the Holy One of Israel." Take it naturally. The wealthy man rejoices in his wealth, in the luxuries and pleasures that wealth procures; and the more wealth he has, the more scope there is for all that money commands. But the poor man cannot rejoice in these things; he has no luxuries, for he can scarcely get necessaries, and therefore he cannot rejoice in what he has not. So spiritually; some professors rejoice in their great knowledge, but "the poor among men" have none: others in their consistency, but these cannot glory in theirs, for they find sin tarnishing every thought, word, and action; others rejoice in a long course of good deeds, and active exertions; but these cannot, for alas, alas, they are poverty-stricken, they have never done anything that they can call good, and they can no more rejoice in their poverty than a poor man naturally can rejoice in the want of all the necessaries of life. But when the Lord is presented to their view, in all his glorious offices and covenant characters, as

"mighty to save;" when they see Jesus by the eye of faith, and can embrace him in the arms of affection, feel a clinging to him and a looking up to him; if they rejoice at all, it is in such a Friend, such a Mediator, such an Advocate, such an Intercessor. But till they are made to feel themselves poor, they will rejoice in every thing but him; nor can they rejoice in him till they have ceased to rejoice in themselves. See then how intimately these characters are bound up together in the bundle of life with the Lord the Lamb. The Lord give you and me to feel that we are spiritually such.

Let me, then, by way of summing up, notice, that these characters, the deaf, the blind, the meek, and the poor, all meet in one person; and if God be our Teacher, we shall have the feelings of these characters internally and experimentally wrought in us. We shall be often "deaf," yet sometimes hear the words of the book with power in our conscience; sometimes we shall feel the reality and weight, and at others the sweetness of the words of truth; and shall only want the Lord to speak to hear glorious and comforting words that shall raise us up, revive our heart, draw up our affections, and advance us heavenward. Can we find we are this character? Then we shall find the next also in our heart, for they all meet in one person, and we shall be "the blind" brought to "see out of darkness and obscurity." Are our evidences, then, often obscure, and have we "to grope for the wall like the blind," not seeing our paths plain or clear, and yet sometimes have sweet views of Jesus as the only way of salvation; see his outstretched arm, his atoning blood, dying love, and something of his preciousness, beauty and glory? And what as to "meekness?" What do we know of that? It is a part of meekness to feel and mourn over our pride, for the proud do not know it, nor are grieved about it. Are there, then, any seasons when we feel broken down, meekened, and softened before the Lord? And as to the fourth character, "the poor among men," surely we can come in there. If the Lord be our Teacher, he has certainly brought us there, to know that we are poor and needy, having nothing and being nothing, and can find nothing to rest upon or boast in, but "the Holy One of Israel." Do we not sometimes feel a solemn joy and sweetness in looking to the "Holy One of Israel?" Are we wholly

destitute of love towards him? Is there any joy in our souls that he should be the "Holy One of Israel?" Would we wish him to be any other than Holy, and love his holiness, though we are all polluted and filthy?

These, then, are the characters exempted from the general woe, "Woe to Ariel, woe to Ariel, the city where David dwelt," the woe pronounced in God's word against the professing church which is wrapped up in general slumber, ignorance, hypocrisy, perversion, and rebellion.

If the Lord has done this much for us, given us ears to hear when deaf, eyes to see when blind, meekened our spirit, and given us to rejoice in the "Holy One of Israel," he pronounces no woe against us; he has exempted us from the threatenings denounced against the professing church; he has made us a peculiar people, and promised us every blessing that we truly need, though utterly undeserving of them. And what he has promised, will he not make good?

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A GOSPEL TO BELIEVE

THE Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus is not a thing to be proved, but truth to be believed. It is not submitted to our reasoning powers as a subject for critical examination. The gospel is a MESSAGE FROM GOD, addressed to the conscience, feelings, and affections. For this reason, men fond of argument and proving everything by strictly logical deduction generally make very poor preachers. In the Scriptures, God does not argue, He proclaims!

FREE GRACE

I admire and love the grace of God; and the longer I live, the more I do I love and admire it. My sins, my corruptions, my infirmities make me feel my deep and daily need of it; and as its freeness, fulness, suitability and inexpressible blessedness are more and more opened up to my heart and conscience, so do I more and more cleave to and delight in it. What, in fact, is there which you can substitute for it?

I assume that you have some concern about religion; that the solemn realities of eternity press with more or less weight on your conscience, and that you are awakened to see the evil of sin and your own evil case as sinners. I speak not to stocks and stones; I speak to you who desire to fear God and to have your hearts right before Him. If you have no concern about the salvation of your soul, you will love many things far beyond free grace. Money, dress, amusements, the pleasures that present themselves on every side, though hollow as the tomb and vain as a drunkard's mirth, will so charm your mind and occupy your thoughts that Christ and His gospel will have no place in your conscience. But if you have any anxiety about your eternal condition, and are brought to cry, *What shall I do to be saved?* then I ask you, what can you put in the place of free grace? Surely, you cannot be so foolish as to put your own works in its stead. Surely, you cannot be so ignorant of your ruined condition before God, and of what is revealed in the Scriptures of the way of salvation by the atoning blood of Jesus, as to substitute the words and works of man for the words and works of the God-Man? You may doubt your own interest in His atoning blood; but you do not doubt that salvation is all of grace, and that if saved your soul can be saved by grace alone. And why not YOU be saved? What countless trophies has grace already at the Redeemer's feet! What hosts of ruined wretches, of souls sunk beyond all other help or hope, has free grace sought out, rescued from their destructions, plucked from the jaws of hell, and ransomed from the hand of him

that was stronger than they, so that they have come and sung in the height of Zion, and flowed together to the goodness of the Lord!

Look at Paul. Where can we find among the sons of men a parallel to the great Apostle of the Gentiles? What a large capacity! What a powerful intellect he naturally possessed, but how subdued and subjugated it became by grace, and how devoted to the glory of God and the advancement of His dear Son! How grace arrested him at Damascus' gate, cast him down body and soul at the Redeemer's feet, translated him from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and changed a bloodthirsty persecuter of the church of Christ into a minister and an apostle, the greatest ever seen. As such, what a deep humility, thorough disinterestedness, noble simplicity, godly zeal, unwearied labours distinguished him from first to last—a course of more than thirty years. How in his inspired writings he pours, as it were, from his pen the richest streams of heavenly truth! With what clearness, power, and savour he describes and enforces the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and obedience of the Son of God, the blessings of free grace, the glorious privileges of the saints, and the things that make for their happiness and holiness! How in every epistle it seems as if his pen could hardly drop a line without in some way setting forth the infinite grace, the boundless mercy, and unfathomable love of God, as displayed in the gift of His dear Son, and the blessings that flow to the church through His blood and love.

But look not at Paul only. View the jewels on every side that grace has set in the Redeemer's crown out of the most depraved and abject materials! Who, for instance, were those Ephesians to whom Paul wrote that wonderful epistle? The most foolish and besotted of idolators, so infatuated with their image which fell down from Jupiter—most probably some huge meteoric stone, that had fallen from the sky—that they spent two hours until they wearied out their throats with crying, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*; men debased with every lust, ripe and ready for every crime. How rich, how marvellous the grace that changed worshippers of Diana into

worshippers of Jehovah, brutal howlers into singers who made melody in their heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19), and magicians, full of curious arts and Satanic witchcraft, into saints built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets!

Now cannot the same grace, that did so much for them, do the same or similar things for us? Is the nature of man now less vile, or is the grace of Christ now less full and free? Has the lapse of 1800 years raised man out of the depths of the Fall, eradicated sin from his constitution, cleansed the foul leprosy of his nature, and purified it into holiness? Let the thin sheet of decent morality and civilization be taken off the corpse, and here it lies in all its hideous ghastliness. Human nature is still what it ever was *dead in trespasses and sins*. Or has time, which changes so many things on earth, changed things in heaven? Is not God the same gracious Father, Jesus the same compassionate Saviour, the Holy Spirit the same heavenly Teacher? Is not the gospel the same glad tidings of salvation, and the power of the gospel the same to every one that believeth? Then why should not we be blessed with the same spiritual blessings as the saints at Ephesus? Why may not the same Jesus be to us what He was to them the same Spirit to do for us and in us what He did for and in them and the same grace save and sanctify us which saved and sanctified them? Here and here alone is our strength, our help, our hope, our all.

Chapter Six

JOHN KERSHAW
(1792-1870)

JOHN KERSHAW

John Kershaw (1792-1870) was a poor Lancashire weaver who was sent out to preach whilst under the pastoral care of John Warburton.

He became the pastor of Hope Chapel in Rochdale where he ministered for nearly 53 years, his ministry being made a blessing to many. He used to preach annually in London, attracting large congregations at each visit.

THE NAME OF JESUS

By John Kershaw

*Preached at the opening of Rehoboth Chapel, Lower Ford Street,
Coventry, on December 25th, 1857*

*"And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall
save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)*

WE have an account just before the text of the circumstances in which Joseph found Mary his espoused wife. Not willing to make an example of her, he would have put her away privily. He was a just man, considering the poor woman would have trouble enough; and while he thought on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son." And then comes in the text: "And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."

- I. In the first place I will, as the Lord shall help me, notice the reference to the name of Jesus.
- II. Who is this Jesus?
- III. His people.
- IV. What he shall do for them.

I. In reference to the name of Jesus. There is no name to be found like it in any other book on earth, no names in any that are brought forth in comparison with it, but all must tremble before it.

In the greatness of his exaltation, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is pre-eminent. We cannot illustrate it more strikingly and more beautifully than the apostle has done in Philippians 2. The exaltation of a precious Christ must shine more splendidly in contrast with his humiliation. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took on 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."

Time would not allow us to dwell on the humiliation scene, that which our blessed Jesus had to pass through. Then said the apostle, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and

things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Observe here, my friends, Jesus has a name above every name, of things in heaven. There the innumerable company of angels, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and confessors have left a great name on earth; but the name of Jesus, as Creator of the world and a Saviour, stands far above all. There the church triumphant, aided by angels, bows before his solemn, divine Majesty, ascribing all might, majesty, power and dominion to Jesus. He who stood condemned at Pilate's bar, crowned with thorns, and crucified, died for his people and was raised again for their justification, entered heaven, and is at the right hand of God to plead, intercede and manage the affairs of his church. He is the Head over all things to his body the church. Whatever they want will be supplied out of the fulness of this precious Jesus.

The apostle, in Ephesians 1, has this gracious declaration respecting the Lord Jesus: "According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Mark again, my friends, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, not only of things in heaven, but of things that are on earth. This shall be solemnly fulfilled at the last day, when everyone shall be constrained to acknowledge him. Now, beloved, there is this discriminating difference. Every elect vessel of mercy, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, called by efficacious grace, convinced of his sin and his need of Jesus, is constrained from the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God in his soul to bow the knee to Jesus here, and confess his sins and his need of him as his Saviour; and this absolutely and certainly flows

from the working of his Spirit. He bows the knee, has godly sorrow for sin, calls upon his name for mercy, peace and pardon with shame and confusion of face; so that every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess, either here or at the great day, that he is the Lord God Omnipotent, Zion's God.

He triumphs and reigns over all kings. He is King of kings and Lord of lords; for all things in heaven and in earth are in his hand. He is the confidence of the soul of every dear child of God, when led by the blessed Spirit to see the pre-eminence Christ has over every other name, every other power. Both men and devils are under his control. He says, "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall the proud waves be stayed." (Job 38:11)

The devils confessed and bowed to his power. We read of the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who commanded the evil spirit to come out. The evil spirit said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" (Acts 19:14,15) And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped upon them and overcame them, and prevailed against them; so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

The name, the authority and power of the Lord Jesus is the same to this day. He is pre-eminent above all in heaven, and has the pre-eminence in his church upon earth. Say to Zion, "Thy God, thy Jesus, thy Saviour, thy Redeemer reigneth." In the song it is, "Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth and triumphs over all." His name is above all names and most precious. The reason why it is so precious is because he shall save his people from their sins. There is not another name given under heaven or among men whereby poor sinners can be saved. How feelingly, powerfully and graciously Peter spoke in reference to this name, when before the Sanhedrim! Neither the Jewish council nor the Sanhedrim could interdict the power by which the lame man that sat at the Beautiful gate had been healed. Bold was Peter in his answer. He felt the name of Jesus precious. It warmed his heart. He said, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the

dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole; neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:10,12) Precious name of Jesus! He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him. (Heb. 7:25) It is in his heart to save; for the prophet Zephaniah says, "He will save." (Zeph. 3:17) The sweetness and preciousness of the name of Jesus is because it is the only name whereby poor guilty sinners can be saved. "A just God and a Saviour." The prophet says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:21,22) No Saviour, poor sinner, but Jesus. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."

God's chosen and redeemed people, those taught by his blessed Spirit, are brought into that state of soul-feeling before the Lord that all the men on earth or angels in heaven cannot save them. As it respects saving themselves, they have tried that old covenant ground, and have felt completely sick at heart at this work. Having been brought in guilty, lost and ruined, weak and helpless, to the footstool of Jesus, pleading for mercy, they have feelingly said, "O Lord, my help must come from thee. Help is laid upon thee; and as there is no other name given under heaven whereby one so vile can be saved, O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Thus the heart of the dear child of God is set upon Christ. His hope centres in him, hanging and cleaving to him with full purpose of heart. The Lord, by his blessed Spirit, brings his own family to feel the necessity of mercy.

Jesus is the Saviour of his people in that he saves them with an everlasting salvation. They are brought to give all into his hands, to lie at his blessed feet, saying, "If I must perish, I will perish at the feet of Jesus, clinging, cleaving to Jesus." Bless his name, he never gives a poor sinner to feel his need of him and puts a cry in his heart, and then disappoints the expectation of that precious soul. No, no! "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; he will hear their cry, and will save them." (Ps. 145:19)

Another reference to the name of Jesus is: there is confidence wrought in the soul of the believer by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus, above every other name. It is in this way, beloved, the Holy Spirit, whose prerogative it is to take of the things of Christ and show them to the poor sinner, shows him the power, the ability, and all-sufficiency and the willingness of Jesus to save poor, lost, guilty sinners. The blessed Spirit works such confidence in the soul of the dear child of God in the very name, the power and the suitability of Jesus to save, that he does, under the holy anointing of the Spirit, name the name of Jesus.

Here let me observe that no man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. 12:3) A man may by his mouth do so; but that is not the point. No man will worship Jesus with divine authority and experimentally as Jesus, that he has confidence in, only as wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit. Hence the desire of his soul is to the remembrance of his name. Blessed Jesus, that I may be found in thee, the desire of my soul is to thy name, above every other name in heaven and earth.

Brethren and sisters in the Lord, how do matters stand? If your desires are to any other name, you are looking to a broken cistern, you are relying upon a false foundation.

It is also said in reference to the name of Jesus, as the ground and confidence of the soul's support, "They that know thy name," which is Jesus, that feel the preciousness and power of that name, "will put their trust in thee." (Ps. 9:10) Such is really the case; for wherever there is a revelation of that name, of the ability and the all-sufficiency of Christ to save, that soul will place all his confidence and dependence in the name, Person, blood, righteousness and power of Jesus. And no living soul, previous to this state, can be under any real gospel rest. No; until brought in this way to know the name of Jesus, to commit the care of our precious souls into his hand, as in the language of the apostle upon a vital point of experimental religion. There is no doubt of the genuine nature and reality of what is here expressed in the following portion of the

Word of God. It bears the stamp of divine inspiration: "I know whom I have believed." I have believed in Jesus to the saving of my soul. "He that believes in him and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded of his power, ability, sufficiency and willingness to save my soul. I am confident that he will keep that which I have committed into his hands against that day. I have committed my soul's salvation into his keeping, committed all into his hand--into the hand of the Lord Jesus the Saviour--with such sweet, solemn, blessed confidence and safety that I can sing with the prophet, 'Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song. He also is become my salvation.'" (Isa. 12:2)

One of the songs that we sing in reference to this important subject among the friends, when we assemble for proposing or receiving members--and I believe that it is often the experimental feeling of their souls--is:

*"Jesus, my God, I know his name;
His name is all my trust."*

Not a part; but all my trust:

*"Nor will he put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost."*

And so on.

We find confidence in the name of Jesus because there is no name given on earth that is so sweet, so precious, so soul-animating to the Christian, taught by the Spirit of God, as that name. The name of the Lord Jesus is a good name, which is as ointment poured forth. Yes, my friends, a divine savour and door is connected with the sweet and precious name of Jesus. When that name is revealed that Jesus known by the blessed Spirit in the soul of a poor sinner, that confidence wrought in the soul in the name of him of whom we

have been speaking, the heart of the sinner is warmed within. His confidence in Jesus is strengthened. He feels such love to him, that he is so precious, so sweet, that his name is such a savour to him, that neither men nor devils can stop him from expressing his feelings in scriptural language: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Precious Jesus! Thou art to my soul the Chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely!

This name of Jesus has the pre-eminence in the souls of his dear children upon earth; so that, under the ministry of the Word, when the minister has been exalting the Lamb of God, under the blessed teaching of the Spirit, they have been laid low at his feet, and emptied of self. Their language and felt experience has been: "Let me be emptied, abased and laid low at his feet, in the dust of self-abasement." The language of our hearts is: "Let the Lamb of God, the sin-atoning Lamb, be exalted. Let me speak well of his name. Let me triumph in Christ and in the power of his resurrection." There is here complete salvation. When you have heard him set forth, in his death, resurrection, ascension and entrance into heaven, while the preacher has been exalting a precious Christ, the Lamb of God, the sin-atoning Lamb, there has been a secret something dwelling in the heart which has warmed and animated your spirit, filling your soul with gratitude, and setting you rejoicing inwardly; and you have placed the crown upon the head of a precious Christ, and said, "Crown him, Lord of all." The name of Jesus, therefore, has the pre-eminence.

To close this branch of the subject, I will just mention this anecdote. More than forty years ago I was speaking of the preciousness of Christ at Halifax. The Lord blessed me with enlargement of heart in speaking of the name, Person and work of a precious Christ. When I descended from the pulpit, an old man was sitting at the foot of the stairs. He put his walking-stick under his arm, got fast hold of my hand in his, and looked me full in the face for a moment. I was at a loss to know whether he was going to condemn or express his approbation, when he burst forth with,

JOHN KERSHAW

*"Join all the glorious names
Of wisdom, love and power,
That ever mortals knew,
Or angels ever bore;
All are too mean to speak his worth,
Too mean to set my Saviour forth,"*

at the same time giving my hand a hearty shake. You cannot tell what a response there was in my soul to what he said. It suited my spirit. The pre-eminence, the majesty, glory, strength, consolation and truth in the name of a precious Jesus is to be found in no other.

II. Speak of this Person who is to do this great work--"save his people." Who is he? There is a general sense in which it may be said scripturally that he is the Lord; and in his complex character of God and man he is the Lord, the adorable and ever-blessed God-Man. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One." (1 John 5:7) The immortal Word is our Jesus. By him all things were created that are named. He became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory as the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) Here we have the mystery of godliness set forth in our text. It is the incarnation of the immortal Word--"made of a woman, made under the law," to redeem his people from the curse of the law; (Gal. 4:4,5; Gal. 3:10) our Immanuel, God with us.

Speaking of Jesus, he really is God over all, blessed for evermore. He is the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. All things are his. He is the great Creator and Benefactor. His mercy and compassion are over all his works as the God of nature, causing the rain to descend and the sun to rise and shine on the evil and on the good, upon the just and unjust. But this is not the sense in which the angel is to be understood in addressing Joseph: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."

III. Who are his people? Why, my friends, without any controversy, his people are they who were loved in him by a covenant God and

Father with an everlasting love, chosen in him unto salvation from the beginning; not because of their being any better than others, or of any worth or worthiness in them more than others. O no, no! But it is all according to the good will of that God who anciently dwelt in the bush. We are, my friends, quite aware those old-fashioned doctrines of salvation and predestination are not popular in the age in which it has pleased God that we should live. Many persons who profess to believe them keep them in the background. And this brings a circumstance to my mind. Some time ago, one afternoon, going to visit a sick friend, on my way I passed the house of a very influential man, whom I had known from a youth [the famous Victorian statesman, John Bright]. I was familiar with his father. I saw him. He said, "Friend Kershaw, I was at your chapel yesterday afternoon." I replied, "I thought you Friends" (called Quakers) "kept to your own meetings." He said, "Generally so; but the fact is I went to see a person, and he was gone to chapel, so I concluded to go and wait for him. I perceived the man who was preaching held the doctrines the same as thee; but he did not bring them out; he kept them in the background. Now, how was that?" How was that? He dared not come out with it, for fear of giving offence. "He that hath my Word let him speak my Word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? said the Lord."

One objection brought against the doctrine is that, knowing we are chosen and certain of salvation, it is apt to make us lifted up, to boast, be proud, despise others, and be high-minded. Now let me tell these objectors they know nothing about it. They are out of the secret. If ever God by his Spirit shows a man what a sinner he is, what he has merited at his hands, and that the great and gracious God should in his covenant love have mercy and compassion upon him, the effect will be to humble him in the dust of self-abasement, and to admire that love that first fixed upon one so unworthy. Instead of despising others, his song will be of God's free mercy and sovereign grace. How abundantly his mercy is set forth in his own words in John 17: "Thine they were and thou gavest them me. All mine are thine and thine are mine." No man shall pluck them out of his hand. "My Father that gave them me put them into my hands,

secured them in me. My Father is greater than all, and no man shall ever be able to pluck them out of my Father's hands."

These people are his inheritance, his portion. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, in a waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." (Deut. 32:9,10)

*"Good doctrines can do me no good,
While floating in the brain;
Unless they yield my heart some food
They bring no real gain."*

It is only as they are made manifest in my heart and soul by the power of the Holy Ghost. There it is, and it does my soul good. Chosen by him, given into the hands of Jesus as the covenant Head and Representative of his people, their Saviour and Redeemer. Then the question arises, "Are you among that happy number? Am I one of those whom the Father hath chosen, and given my cause into the hand of Christ my covenant Head? Have I placed all my confidence and dependence in him?" That is a sweet portion of our Lord's on this point, that sweet declaration: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." (John 6:37) Not have offers and proffers merely; he tells them they shall come. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Ps. 110:3)

Now, the question is, "Has the Lord laid hold of us?" For myself, I can say, when the Lord first began with me, when the arrow of conviction first laid hold of my conscience, when the hidden sorrow for sin caused me to separate from my worldly companions by the power of divine grace, I was brought out of this world and brought to the feet of Christ.

"All that the Father giveth me shall come"--the lost to be saved, the guilty to be pardoned, the naked to be clothed, the filthy to be washed in atoning blood, the weak to be strengthened, the ignorant to be instructed. All Christ's people were given to him by his Father.

Being brought into that state that they know they cannot do without him, they are therefore compelled to come to him.

A word here to the dear child of God. When the Lord Jesus put that question to his disciples, when many of them went back and walked no more with him, "Will ye also go away?" Peter did not say, "We will not;" but puts another question: "To whom shall we go but unto thee? For thou hast the words of eternal life. None can save us but thou, none can help us but thou. There is no joy or consolation only in thee." The dear children given by the Father into the hand of Christ, they are brought to him.

IV. What Christ shall do for his people. He shall save them from their sins. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

Now all the Lord's people are by God the Father kept and preserved in the Lord Jesus, the great Head of the church, sanctified and set apart, preserved in Christ Jesus, and called; and they shall be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

One experimental mark of the people given by the Father into the hand of the Lord Jesus is they are all taught by the blessed Spirit of God to commit the keeping of the salvation of their precious and never-dying souls into the hands of Jesus. If you and I, through grace, are enabled to believe in Jesus, make a humble, solemn surrender of ourselves to Jesus, begging that we may be his, and his only, that he would make it manifest we are his jewels, bound up in the bundle of life with him, a seed to serve him, a generation to call him blessed, vessels of honour, vessels of mercy afore prepared for the Master's use for immortal glory; if this feeling, these desires, are wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, this will make our souls joyful in God.

God Almighty command his blessing on these truths.

JOHN KERSHAW

Chapter Seven

ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE
(1813-1843)

ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE

Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843) led a brief life, but one which was used tremendously by God in His service. M'Cheyne ministered to many in Scotland where his preaching was greatly blessed and attended by much power.

CHRIST, THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." John 14:6

IT is the saying of an old divine, that God often orders it, that when he is in hand with the greatest mercies for us, then we are the most of all sinning against him; which he doth to magnify his love the more.

In the words I have read (John 14:1-6), we find an example of this. At no time did the heart of Jesus overflow with a tenderer and more sovereign love to his disciples, than when he said, "Let not your heart be troubled." They were troubled by many things. He had told them that he was going to leave them; he had told them that one should betray him — that another should deny him — that they should all be offended because of him that very night; and perhaps they thought he was going from them in anger. But, whatever the cause of their trouble was, Jesus' bosom was like a vessel full to overflowing, and these words were the over-dripping drops of love — "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Surely such words of confiding tenderness were never whispered in this cold world before; and O then, think how cold, how dark, how dull is the question with which Thomas breaks in upon the heavenly discourse — "Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" And yet how condescendingly does Jesus bear with their cold-hearted dullness! How lovingly does he begin the very alphabet of salvation with them, and not only answers, but over-answers Thomas — gives him more than he could ask or think. He asked about the way and the place, but Christ answers, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Regarding this, then, as a complete description of the gospel salvation, let us go over the different parts of it.

I. Christ is the Way. — "I am the way; no man cometh," etc. The whole Bible bears witness that by nature we have no way to the Father. We are by nature full of sin, and God is by nature infinitely holy — that is, he shrinks away from sin. Just as the sensitive plant, by its very nature, shrinks away from the touch of a human hand, so God, by his very nature, shrinks away from the touch of sin. He is

everlastingly separate from sinners; he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

1. This is impressively taught to Adam and the patriarchs. As long as Adam walked holily, God dwelt in him, and walked in him, and communed with him; but when Adam fell, "God drove the man out of paradise; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." This flaming sword between the cherubim was a magnificent emblem of God — the just and sin-hating God. In the bush, he appeared to Moses as a consuming fire — in the temple, he appeared between the cherubim in the milder glory of the Shecinah; but here he appeared between the cherubim as a sword — a just and sin-hating God. And I beseech you to remark, that this flaming sword turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. If it had not turned every way — if it had left some foot-path unglared across — then Adam might have stolen in by that foot-path, and made his own way to the tree of life. But no; whatever avenue he tried — however secret, however narrow, however steep and difficult — however silently he crept along — still this flaming meteor met him and it seemed to say, "How can man be just with God? by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified." Well might Adam sit down, wearied with the vain search for a pathway into life; for man by nature has no way to the Father.

But Christ says, "I am the way." As he says in the 16th Psalm, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life." No man could find out this path of life; but Jesus says, "Thou wilt shew it me; in thy presence is fulness of joy — at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Jesus pitied the poor sons of Adam vainly struggling to find out a way into the paradise of God, and he left the bosom of the Father, just that he might open up a way for us into the bosom of the Father. And how did he do it? Was it by escaping the vigilance of the flaming sword? No; for it turned every way. Was it by exerting his divine authority, and commanding the glittering blade to withdraw? No; for that would have been to dishonour his Father's

law, instead of magnifying it. He therefore became a man in our stead — yea, became sin. God caused to meet on him the iniquities of us all. He advanced in our stead to meet that fiery meteor — he fell beneath its piercing blade; for he remembered the word of the Prophet, which is written, "Awake, O sword! against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts."

And now, since the glittering blade is bathed in the side of the Redeemer, the guiltiest of sinners — whoever you be — whatever you be — may enter in over his bleeding body — may find access to the paradise of God, to eat of the tree of life, and live forever. Come quickly — doubt not; for he says, I am the way.

2. The same fact — that man has by nature no way to the Father — was impressively taught to Moses and the people of Israel.

When God condescended to dwell among the children of Israel, he dwelt peculiarly in the holiest of all — the innermost apartment of the Jewish temple. There the visible token of his presence rested between the cherubim — at one time described to us as a light inaccessible and full of glory — at another time as a cloud that filled the temple. But this innermost apartment, or holiest of all (or secret place, as it is called in the Psalms), was separated from the holy place by a curtain or vail, and through that vail no man was allowed to pass, lest he should die, except the High Priest, who entered in, once in the year, not without blood. Now, no picture could express more plainly that the way into the holiest was not made manifest — that no sinful man has any way of coming into the presence of God.

But Jesus says, "I am the way." Jesus was grieved that we were shut out from the holiest of all — from the presence of God; for he knew by experience that in that presence there is fulness of joy. But how did he open the way? Did he pull aside the vail, that we might steal in secretly and easily into the presence of the Father? No; but he offered himself — an offering to satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God. "He said, It is finished, and bowed his head and gave up the ghost. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in

twain, from the top to the bottom." It is finished — the punishment of the law is borne — the demands of the law are answered — the way is finished — the veil is rent, from the top to the bottom! Not a shred of the dreadful curtain now remains to intercept us. The guiltiest — the vilest sinner of you all has now liberty to enter in through the rent veil, under the light of Jehovah's countenance — to dwell in the secret of his tabernacle — to behold his beauty, and to inquire in his temple.

And now, my friends, is this your way of coming to the Father? Christ says, "I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." If, then, you will still keep to your own way, whatever it be — whether it be the way of tears, or penances, or vows of amendment, or hopes that God will not deal strictly — if you will not be warned, you will find in the judgment day that the cherubic sword turned every way, and that you are left a prey to the consuming fire.

But oh! if there be one soul that can find no peace in any self-righteous way — if there be one of you who finds that you are lost in yourself — behold Christ says to you, "I am the way," as he says in another place, "I am the door." It is a full, free, and open way, and it is a way for sinners. Why wait a moment longer? There was once a partition wall between you and God; but Christ hath cast it down. God was once angry; but his anger is turned away from this blessed path. In Christ he is ever well pleased.

II. Christ is the Truth. — The whole Bible, and the whole of experience, bear witness that by nature we are ignorant of the truth. No doubt there are many truths which an unconverted man does know. He may know the truths of mathematics and arithmetic — he may know many of the common everyday truths; but still it cannot be said that an unconverted man knows the truth, for Christ is the truth. Christ may be called the key-stone of the arch of truth. Take away the key-stone of an arch, and the whole becomes a heap of rubbish. The very same stones may be there, but they are all fallen, smothered, and confused — without order — without end. Just so — take Christ away, and the whole arch of truth may be there; but

they are all fallen — without coherence — without order — without end. Christ may be called the sun of the system of truth. Take away the sun out of our system, and every planet would rush into confusion. The very same planets would be there; but their conflicting forces would draw them hither and thither, orb dashing against orb in endless perplexity. Just so — take Christ away, and the whole system of truth rushes into confusion. The same truths may be in the mind, but all conflicting and jarring in inextricable mazes; for "the path of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble." But let Christ be revealed to an unconverted soul — let it not be merely a man speaking about Christ unto him — but let the Spirit of God reveal him, and there is revealed, not a truth, but the truth. You put the key-stone into the arch of truth; you restore the sun to the centre of the system. All truth becomes orderly and serviceable in that mind.

Now he knows the truth with regard to himself. Did the Son of God really leave the bosom of the Father to bear wrath in our stead? — then I must be under wrath. Did the Lord Jesus become a servant, that he might obey the will of God instead of sinners? — then I must be without any righteousness, a child of disobedience.

Again, knowing Christ, he knows the truth with regard to God. Did God freely give up his Son to the death for us all? — then, if I believe in Jesus, there is no condemnation to me. God is my Father, and God is love.

My friends, have you seen Christ, who is the truth? Has he been revealed to you, not by flesh and blood, but by the Spirit of our God? Then you know how true it is that in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" — that he is the "Alpha and Omega," the beginning and the ending of all knowledge. But if you have not seen Christ, then you know nothing yet as you ought to know; all your knowledge is like a bridge without a key-stone — like a system without a sun. What good will it do you in hell, that you knew all the sciences in the world — all the events of history, and all the busy politics of your little day? Do you not know that

your very knowledge will be turned into an instrument of torture in hell? Oh, how will you wish in that day that you had read your newspaper less and your Bible more — that with all your getting you had got understanding — and that with all your knowledge you had known the Saviour, whom to know is life everlasting.

III. Christ is the life. — The whole Bible bears witness that by nature we are dead in trespasses and sins — that we are as unable to walk holily in the world as a dead man is unable to rise and walk.

Both Scripture and experience alike testify that we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins; and yet it is not a death in which we are wholly inactive, for in it we are said to walk according to the course of this world — according to the prince of the power of the air.

This truth is taught us impressively in that vision of the prophet Ezekiel, where he was carried out by the Spirit, and set down in the midst of an open valley, full of dry bones; and as he passed by them round about, behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo! they were very dry.

Just such is the view which every child of God gets of the world. The dry bones are very many, and they are very dry; and he asks the same question which God asked of Ezekiel — "Can these bones live?" Oh yes, my friends; and does not experience teach you the same thing? True, the dead cannot know that they are dead; and yet, if the Lord touch your heart, you will find it out: we prophesy to dry bones; for this is the Lord's way; — while we prophesy the breath enters in. Look back over your life then. See how you have walked according to the course of this world. You have always been like a man swimming with the stream — never like a man swimming against the current. Look into your heart, and see how it has turned against all the commandments; you feel the Sabbath to be a weariness — instead of calling it a delight and honourable. If ever you tried to keep the commandments of God — if ever you tried to keep your eyes from unlawful desires, your tongue from words of anger, or gossiping, or bitterness, your heart from malice,

and envy, and covetousness — if ever you have tried this, and I fancy most unconverted men have tried it — if ever you have tried this — did you not find it impossible? It was like raising the dead. Did you not find a struggle against yourself? O how plain that you are dead — not born again! Marvel not that we say unto you, ye must be born again. You must be joined to Christ, for Christ is the life. Suppose it were possible for a dead limb to be joined into a living body, so completely that all the veins should receive the purple tide of living blood — suppose bone to join on to bone, and sinew to sinew, and nerve to nerve — do you not see that that limb, however dead before, would become a living limb. Before, it was cold, and stiff, and motionless, and full of corruption; now, it is warm, and pliable, and full of life and motion. It is a living limb, because joined on to that which is life. Or, suppose it possible for a withered branch to be grafted into a living vine, so completely that all the channels should receive the flow of the generous sap, do you not see that that branch, however dead before, becomes a living branch? Before, it was dry, and fruitless, and withered; now, it is full of sap, of life, and vigour. It is a living branch, for it is joined to the vine, which is its life. Well, then, just in the same way, Christ is the life of every soul that cleaves to him. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Is your soul like a dead limb — cold, stiff, motionless, and full of corruption? Cleave you to Christ — be joined to him by faith, and you shall be one spirit — you shall be made warm, and vigorous, and full of activity, in God's service.

Is your soul like a withered branch — dry, fruitless, and withered, wanting both leaves and fruit? Cleave you to Christ; be joined to him, and you shall be one spirit. You will find it true that Christ is the life; your life will be hid with Christ in God. You will say, I live; "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Remember, then, my unbelieving friends, the only way for you to become holy is to become united to Christ. And remember you, my believing friends, that if ever you are relaxing in holiness, the reason

is, you are relaxing your hold on Christ. Abide in me, and I in you — so shall ye bear much fruit. Severed from me, ye can do nothing.

NO MAN CAN COME

(EXCEPT THE FATHER DRAW HIM)

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" John 6:44.

SEE how invincible is the grace of Jehovah! No creature power can draw the sinner to Christ. Demonstrations, miraculous evidence, threatening, invitation, may all be used in vain. Jehovah alone can draw the soul to Christ. He pours out His Spirit with the word, and the soul is sweetly and powerfully inclined to run to Jesus. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." Take an example: a Jew was sitting at the receipt of custom, near the gate of Capernaum. His brow was furrowed with the marks of covetousness, and his jealous eye exhibited all the low cunning of the publican. Very probably he had heard much of Jesus; perhaps he had heard Him preach by the shore of the lake of Galilee; still his worldly heart was unchanged, for he remained at his wicked trade, sitting by the receipt of custom. The Saviour passed that way, and as He bent His eyes upon the busy Levi, said, "Follow me." He said no more. He used no argument, no threatening, no promise. But the God of all grace breathed on the publican's heart, and he was made willing; "he arose and followed him." It pleased God, who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will, to give Matthew a saving glimpse of the excellency of Jesus; a drop fell from heaven upon his heart, and melted it; he smelled the sweet savour of the

Rose of Sharon. What is all the world to Matthew now? He cares not for its gains, its pleasures, its praises, any more. In Christ he sees what is sweeter and better than them all. He arose and followed Jesus.

Let us learn that a simple word may be blessed to the saving of precious souls. Often we are tempted to think there must be some deep and logical argument to bring men to Christ. Often we put confidence in high-sounding words. Whereas it is the simple exhibition of Christ carried home by the Spirit, which awakens, enlightens, and saves. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." If the Spirit be breathing on the people, these little words, "Follow Jesus," spoken in love, may be blessed to the saving of a whole congregation.

Chapter Eight

JAMES BOURNE
(1773-1854)

JAMES BOURNE

James Bourne (1773-1853) was the gospel minister used of God in the gracious awakening that occurred in the first half of the 19th century at Pulverbach in Shropshire as detailed in the publication "More than Notion". At one time Bourne sat under the ministry of William Huntington S.S., before being called himself to preach the Gospel, his labours being much blessed of God.

FREE GRACE SALVATION

By James Bourne

"By grace ye are saved." (Ephesians 2:5)

WHAT a wonderful mercy it is to an enlightened sinner to hear what the Apostle says, "By grace ye are saved."

Men under the conviction of sin and the discovery of God's justice and holiness often feel themselves utterly hopeless, and whatever men may say to them about amending their lives, it leaves them in more despair than before, being made to feel with all their amendment they cannot mend that which is past.

What is still more wonderful, if these convictions be of God, they will cut deeper yet, by showing the sinner he was not only a transgressor from the womb, but born in sin, and shapen in iniquity. (Isa. 48:8; Ps. 51:5) This puts the sinner beyond any help in himself. Some try to get over this mire by telling the people that infant baptism is regeneration, for not knowing the hidden secret [and] wisdom of God, they stretch their own wisdom into the utmost confusion by preaching baptism is regeneration, and yet teach children to say that baptism is only the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. We believe God has appointed this sign to show us the need of spiritual baptism, which Titus calls "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:5)

When the convicted sinner has ears to hear this joyful sound, and a heart to understand it, then he finds his despair gives way to hope. And though he finds his heart abounds in accusations of all sorts, yet these tidings of mercy and pardon to the returning sinner encourages him to hope. He is revived to perceive that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, and that salvation is of free grace. Paul begins his Epistle to the Galatians with these words; "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father." (Gal. 1:3,4) This wonderful Scripture is to assure us that it is the will of the Father that a broken hearted sinner shall never finally despair; that the Lord Jesus Christ came to save self-despairing sinners. Not by teaching them to do many things, but by showing them the absolute

necessity of Christ's mercy and pardon. Which he here declares shall bring peace and reconciliation with God, and the Father.

The Apostle tells us, there be some troublers that will preach another gospel and so pervert the gospel of Christ. These lead souls to utter despair, and hide the free grace of Christ and tell the people that by amending their lives they will obtain the favour and mercy of God. But we are taught that no inventions of men can reach the deep rooted leprosy of sin, nothing short of the blood of sprinkling can take it away. "By grace ye are saved." When we fall into distress, and deep temptation, we then find we have no power to help ourselves. What we would most willingly recommend to others, we find most terribly difficult to exercise ourselves. Despair seems to take hold of us. Yet even here, there is a cry and sometimes [it is] so feeble that we can scarcely believe it can be heard, but in the end we find it proves to be the cry of the poor and destitute, which the Lord regards. It is heard when all our strength is gone, and none shut up or left, to show to us that it is the free grace alone of Christ which saves us. When this comes, it always shows us all quarrels are made up with the Father, through this grace of Christ, and sensible friendship again renewed in the conscience. The Spirit bears witness to this truth, who brings along with it a sweet peace that passeth all understanding.

We are sure there are many pretenders to this gospel. They certainly are such as walk in craftiness, and handle the Word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2) and hold their profession with drunkenness and mock God without shame, by a pretended worship and an untender walk. Hypocrites who are ignorant of this free grace of Christ, and yet are made to feel themselves guilty sinners, persuade themselves they can by some means gain pardon. The Apostle tells us plainly, that Christ gave himself for our sins, and that there is no other foundation for hope or mercy, and that this work of grace is so effectual on the heart as to deliver us from this present evil world of drunkenness, hypocrisy and every abomination.

We read, when the widow of Zarephath saw her son was dead, she cried out, "Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" (1 Kings 17:18) It is often so with us. As soon as any peculiar affliction overtakes us, we begin to sink in spirit, and fear lest the Lord should enter into strict judgment with us for many things. This the enemy takes the advantage of and adds many accusations, and this is what David calls "floods of great waters." (Ps. 32:6) "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." (Ps. 69:2) These floods are said to lift up their voice. (Ps. 93:3) This means all the dreadful feelings the children of God often fall into, especially when afflictions threaten to be very sharp. Even here the Lord sits as our heavenly Pilot, so that we perish not, and we at length find that he raises as well as commands the stormy wind and says, "Hitherto shall thou go and no further." The Lord tells us, by these depths he melts our hard and barren hearts, and though we are made to stagger with fear yet the Spirit helps our infirmities in this dreadful place to cry unto the Lord. He makes this storm a calm and shows us more plainly our helpless ruined condition. It is only of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. (Lam. 3:22) Then we know what the Apostle means when he writes, "Behold...what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation" and disgust at the sin of your nature; (2 Cor. 7:11) what zeal and revenge against those dreadful sins that bring a sad reproach upon the cause of God. The Psalmist then adds, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." (Ps. 107:8) He causes the watersprings to run in dry ground and thus shows us how free the grace of God is to returning sinners.

Never forget that Christ died for our sins. (1 Cor. 15:3) The Apostle tells us to be sure to keep in memory this truth. If we will seek to be justified by the works of the law, we are under the curse, but if we come with our broken hearts to Christ, he is said to redeem us from the curse, and the Spirit will enlighten us under his convictions to cry to Christ alone for mercy.

A false ministry will set many things before the coming sinner as needful for salvation, but the Saviour says he was only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matt. 15:24) These lost sheep are called in another place dead, but Christ is said to quicken them who were dead. [These] must now make manifest they are partakers of true spiritual life by not walking after the course of this world, that in future ages may be seen the exceeding riches of this free grace in its effects in us. It humbles us, and makes us simple, sincere, transparent and shows the whole to be the gift of God. [It] gives us some comprehension of "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know" the sweet power of "the love of Christ which passeth" all natural "knowledge." (Eph. 3:18,19) It is for want of this divine secret and hidden power, there are so many fruitless professors. I sometimes wonder such do not look out for the dresser of the vineyard, and expect him to come and examine their fruits. It will be truly awful to hear him say: 'Here is a fruitless tree full of the leaves of profession, but a sad bitter fruit appears. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? I have been digging and dunging this tree for three or four years and yet nothing but an untender walk at last. Cut it down.' (Luke 13:6-9)

The art of Satan is firmly to persuade a hypocrite he is a child of God, and that he will get safely to heaven although he is not so particular as some. He also comes to a poor sheep of Christ and tries with all his power to persuade him he can never be saved. He has no end of his terrifying accusations which raise up many fearful misgiving thoughts in the trembling child of God. [The child of God] cannot see at once this device of Satan, on which account he sinks into many despairing feelings, until the Sun of righteousness arises with light and healing, (Mal. 4:2) to discover the cheat, and cheer the drooping spirit. Thus we find out Christ's love to us and how he gave up himself a sacrifice to God, not for saints, but for afflicted sinners. If Jesus Christ thus fully gave himself for us, and God the Father is said not to spare his own Son, but delivered him up, how shall he not also freely give us all things needful for our salvation. (Rom. 8:32) Is not this free grace for a dejected sinner?

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. 8:35,37) It may be asked; how is it that so many fair professors seem to start so well, and yet are by no means conquerors over their lusts and drunkenness, and are not ashamed. Is it not because they never tasted of the true love of God? For some fair show in the flesh [they] have proved like the foolish Galatians to be bewitched from the simplicity of the truth, and find no grace to render a spiritual obedience to God's Word. These fall away in the hour of temptation. Though they appear to begin [to decline] with very little circumstances of showing their heart is gone, yet presently they become bolder, till at length they are not ashamed to be called enemies--enemies to God; to his Word; to his cause; and to his people. God makes them a reproach by darkening the little wisdom they seemed once to profess. Therefore if by the grace of God any of us are enabled to stand our ground, let us all keep in remembrance the power that holds us up. All fulness is in Christ Jesus, therefore let us learn to magnify the riches of his free grace, who has brought us out of the spirit of this world, and has made us deeply to feel that it is of his mercy he saves us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, (Titus 3:5) which he often sheds abundantly on us when deeply immersed in grief and sorrow, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This blessing reaching us in the time of temptation and conflict, or death itself, has such an unspeakable and divine power as to raise our sinking spirits from hell to heaven, as both Jonah and David tell us. Therefore above all things, keep your eyes; your hearts; and your thoughts; and best affections upon the free grace of Christ. Consider it as your safeguard in all your afflictions; although it be defamed, and reproached, call to mind what the Saviour says, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John 15:18,19) "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the

propitiation for our sins." (John 4:10) Beloved, "hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." (1 John 4:13) We can but love him, because he first loved us. If we take up a profession merely to please men, we may obtain the favour of some, but let us remember no man can serve two masters, he will hold to one and despise the other. (Matt. 6:24) Therefore let us beg of the Lord, that he will continually reveal to us how freely he gave himself for us, that whatsoever conscience says of charges against us, to still come to Christ as an all sufficient sacrifice, believing he came to save sinners who are sick of their sins, and feel their need of a Saviour; to these he declares, "I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37)

To him be all the glory, for ever. Amen.

Chapter Nine

ELI ASHDOWN

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Eli Ashdown was a Strict Baptist minister who lived and preached around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The following sermon can also be found in the publication "The Saving Health Of The Gospel" printed by Gospel Mission Press.

CHRIST, THE FOUNTAIN OF WATERS

By Eli Ashdown

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah 55:1-3

THE wise man saith, "Doth not wisdom cry and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth in the top of high places, by the way in the places of the paths...Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men" (Prov. 8:1,2,4). So our text is the voice of wisdom. She stands at the top of a high eminence, that is, the mountain of God's everlasting love, and her words show the greatness and fulness there is in grace for those that come and receive it. If we saw a number of people perishing with all kinds of diseases and wants, with a heap of infallible remedies in their reach, and almost every one taken up with all sorts of things but these, we should conclude at once they were fools. Well, we may say so of this world. But the great thing is, has grace opened our eyes and hearts? It is easy enough to find a fool, but not to find one who sees himself a fool and has grace to acknowledge it. Paul says, "If any man will be wise, let him first become a fool." I do not believe a man has a particle of wisdom in anything but he has been a fool in that very thing. If he has not, his wisdom is all on the surface; he will fall away in temptation. Not so the humble soul who knows his foolish heart; "nothing shall offend them." It is a mercy when the Holy Ghost in his unctuous teaching goes to the bottom of the heart. We should think charitably of all those moral, consistent people who come under the gospel. In the chapter I read, (Mark 4), four kinds of hearers came under the sound of the gospel, the real seed of the kingdom was sown, and sown by the lips of truth, by him who spake as never man spake; and only one character in four was right. You cannot hear discriminating truths and receive them into your affections by nature; the heart rises against them. "Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy", (James 4:5)? The carnal heart is enmity against God, (Rom. 8:7), against Christ, against truth and holiness; and the deceitfulness of the heart, the subtlety of the serpent as an angel of light, and legal works in the flesh are all against God, his truth, and ways, and are wrapped up in a covering not of his Spirit. They are not known unless the Spirit enlightens the eyes.

*"Trust not to joyous fancies,
Light hearts or smooth behaviour;
Sinners can say, and none but they,
How precious is the Saviour!"*

*"To see sin smarts but slightly;
To own with lip confession
Is easier still, but O, to feel
Cuts deep beyond expression."*

Saving truth makes deep incisions and impressions. We had far better groan under the pangs of guilt and the convincing power of the Holy Ghost than walk with the giddy multitude of professors that are destitute of his teaching and full of confidence. "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." But, "with the lowly is wisdom."

We will make a few remarks, if the Lord help, (I). On the character in the text: "Every one that thirsteth." If I were to preach indiscriminately to all that have a thirst for religion, "Come ye to the waters," I should say what God's Word does not say, and should go home guilty. Suppose a man has a great thirst for gold, and everything else is worth nothing to him; he will deny himself necessary food to treasure up gold. If you invite him to a feast of wine and keep gold from him, you will not satisfy his thirst. People thirst after different commodities in this world. If I were to say, "Every one that has a thirst, come ye," and all that thirsted came to these waters, they would say, "We do not want them." Therefore it is the adaptation of the thing to those that want it that these words signify.

In speaking of these thirsty persons, we must first bring a few characters that seem the right one; then try to show what real thirst comes from; and that may help your soul to hang a little on this fountain of waters. We read, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." This is the living fountain in the text; it is

nothing but the Lord Jesus Christ. His grace is as free as the air we breathe; it flows as freely as the beams of the sun upon the earth. The earth does not cause the sun to shine, or merit it, but rather sends out fogs and vapours to come between; but that does not stop it shining. No more will all the vapours in our hearts stop Jesus from sending forth his own divine savour. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is as free and impossible to be merited as the rays of the sun. All that are under his beams are welcome to them, but there must be an adaptation in the heart to them.

We read, a great man sent his servants to call those that were bidden to the wedding. They had followed the sound of the gospel, for it is said they were bidden; and they all with one consent began to make excuse. One said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it." Another, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." And another, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." Those three kinds set forth and enclose every obstacle that stands in your way of receiving the gospel of the blessed God. You feel, "If it were not for so-and-so, I could receive it; now I cannot. I pray thee have me excused." This is the thing. Has grace moved that out of your heart? You cannot, any more than you can make a world. As sure as you come under the gospel, these things will be an obstacle in your way by nature; and you will know when grace removes them. This wisdom is from the Lord, to move away every obstacle; and he never prepares the heart for the gospel but he puts it in. To others who hear the sound of it he says, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And you labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me;" as if he said, "You think you have my meaning; but you have not." The person who takes things for granted is the most likely to be deceived.

I have a great desire that no person under my preaching should be deceived; you will never die so if I can help it. You recollect when those that were bidden would not come, the king said, "They shall not taste of my supper." I have thought of Moses. Because he provoked the Lord at the waters of Meribah, he never went into the

promised land. You cannot trifle with God and truth and be clear; that you cannot. If you do and you belong to the Lord, you will have his rod as sure as you breathe; and if you do not belong to him, it will be a solemn matter with you indeed. You cannot treat his word with contempt and be innocent. God knows the motives in your heart when you come to hear, and he says, "All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." He knows your motives when you talk to your friends, and whether it is clean for his honour and the welfare of his church.

Then the king sent his servant, and a great company was brought in of the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind; and the servant said, "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." And the king answered, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Then the king came in to view the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. "What," he said, "is not my truth, my house to be held in honour, that you come in here with a common suit on, common, carnal ways?" And he commanded his servant, "Take him, bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." You see it is not our thirsting after religion ourselves, nor being brought in by friends; but it is being in the things of the gospel according to the King's invitation. This is not my doctrine, but God's. Hear his word: "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live;" as much as to say, "Your soul is at stake; there is death before you; and unless you hear what I say, your soul will be swallowed up in that great gulf of death."

If you read the 50th Psalm, you see how diligent the people were to offer sacrifices and serve God in the ordeal he commanded year after year. "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me"; but he says, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High." "I will reckon

nothing of what you do while your heart is privily in the world, in self, and your own ways." "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

There are various things religious people spend their time and money to obtain, and seem to be satisfied in them; but it is like a hungry man who dreams he eats, and when he awakes, his soul is empty. Jude calls these "filthy dreamers"; and millions of them do not wake up till the soul quits the body. It is a solemn thing for a man's thirst to be slaked short of the blood of Christ. Eternity is close at hand, and O to be saved. There are many in the church of God who live on things short of Christ, and are quiet and satisfied all the year round. The foolish virgins were just like that, and had no thought or discernment of any lack, till the Bridegroom came. They had the truth in their sentiments and in their walk, but no oil, and when the Judge of quick and dead came, their lamps went out. If any one says, "I will not be so particular," I would not be in your place for a million worlds. "He that hateth reproof shall die."

Now the true character, "every one that thirsteth." The apostle shows it at once when he says, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). Spiritual thirst attends that quickening power; light attends that, poverty, and want. "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). The ever blessed Spirit takes up his residence in the heart as the Spirit of light, of power, and of a sound mind; and as soon as he does, the man cannot live on the externals of religion. He will feel,

*"Lord, in thy house I read there's room,
And venturing hard, behold, I come;
But can there, tell me, can there be,
Among thy children room for me?"*

That is one that thirsts. Hear what wisdom says to such: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and ye that have no money," not a fraction to bring with you, not as much as a good

thought of your own, "come ye, buy and eat; yea, come; buy wine and milk without money and without price." At the beginning of this thirst, the soul stands at the entering of the gates, and O to get in! I believe this is a solemn fact, that none ever enter savingly into the truth but by the Holy Ghost. If you do not mind about being taught by him, yours is a hollow religion. These are poor, because they have no money; and we call them poor that have a great want and nothing to buy with.

When the Holy Spirit comes, one of the first movings in the heart is thirst after God's mercy. You will thirst in the night season sometimes, beg and cry for mercy, and can no more lay hold of the gospel when it is preached than make a world. Some, if they have not heard the truth, will wander to and fro, and nothing meets their case. Others brought up under the truth have the same thirst. "Have mercy upon me, O God." "According to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." David was brought up under sound doctrine and consistent teaching in Jesse's household; yet when grace laid hold of him, he became a praying man and sighed after mercy. How many of you know what that is? Has your heart thirsted after free mercy to put away your sins and make you one of his people? Dead folk never pray in spirit, never have spiritual wants.

Now we have found the character, we may be universal. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." If every one in the chapel had this thirst, I should be as sure you would all get to heaven as I preach; for God has not opened this divine, ever-flowing spring in vain. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." He has put his power into the will and into the heart, and that makes it thirst after God's mercy.

Another thing his people thirst after is spiritual life. One says,

*"Daily we groan and mourn
Beneath the weight of sin;
We pray to be new-born,*

*But know not what we mean;
We think it something very great,
Something that's undiscover'd yet."*

This is thirsting after the waters of life. The prophet Ezekiel saw a river whose waters issue forth from the sanctuary, and whithersoever they came, everything had life. Our text moves towards that poor sinner who has this thirst: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." It is like a great gliding river, flowing close to your door. See the waters come to you, and what you want is but a venturing faith to leap in. That is to venture to be naught, sink or swim.

My late friend at Maidstone told me that the day before the Lord brought peace and pardon to this: "Lord, if thou send me to hell, thou art righteous. I have tried to make my heart better, and cannot; and now I fall into thy hands, Lord. Here I am; do with me what thou wilt." And he said divine peace and love broke directly, and he could not get his guilt back again. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

Another thing these have a particular thirst after is wisdom. If you thirst after that, it shows you have lost your own; and you will want wisdom to direct you in all things. If you are employed in any matter, you will cry, "Lord, do give me wisdom to do this." You will want wisdom to walk among men, among your friends and relatives; yes, and before him too. When Solomon was anointed king of Israel, the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying, "Ask what I shall give thee." And Solomon said, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad." Well, the religious world would say, "Any fool may know that." Not a soul knows good from bad unless he is taught by the Holy Ghost. I am speaking now of spiritual discernment, not of moral. If your religion does not go further than moral good, it is of no use for eternity. Every living soul wants wisdom to perform what he has to do consistently with God, and to walk before him. Sometimes he feels he wants wisdom

to speak to his children or to his wife, for he does not know what to say. He feels like David, "If I speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children." It is said, "Seek righteousness; seek meekness;" and where meekness is, the man wants wisdom.

*"Give wisdom to direct our way,
And strength to do thy will."*

Another thing he thirsts after is righteousness. "O," saith the soul, "I would be holy." We read, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;" showing that those who are spiritually taught are destitute of it altogether and of any power to work out a righteousness; and being in a dry and thirsty land, they hunger and thirst after it. "They shall be filled." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye; buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Milk is very nutritious and suitable for babes; and hence this invitation takes in all God's family, little children as well as those of matured age, as they walk through this vale of tears, where no water is. "Buy wine and milk." The Lord said to Peter twice, "Feed my sheep," and again, "Feed my lambs." You see he gave him two admonitions to feed his sheep. Some say, "I feed the lambs, but I let the sheep alone; they are sure to get on." That is not according to the gospel. If the old sheep are not on good pasturage, the flock is sickly all through. But where the old sheep are looked after, the lambs always do well; there is a thriving flock, and the sheep bring forth nice lambs. We must not forsake the lambs. They are to be dandled on the knees and comforted; but the sheep of Christ, the flock of slaughter, must be fed with the finest of the wheat. We read, "Open thy mouth for the dumb." "Plead the cause of the poor and needy." And, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

If the Lord help us, we will go a little further into the blessed admonition we found in the text this morning. We said these waters were particularly adapted to a certain kind of thirst, not all kinds; that there must be a spiritual thirst in the soul under the teaching and exercise of the Spirit of God, and where there is not his teaching, there is no real thirst after them. None saith, "Where is God my Maker?" in the desire of his soul; none have spiritual desires for God but by the Holy Ghost. And we spoke of our need of this caution: "Hearken diligently unto me;" do not take things for granted and say, "I know them." I used to think my heart was in unison with the doctrines of eternal predestination and election; but it had never been tried on those points. An untried faith is an unsound faith; as gold that has never been in the furnace is not pure. We read, "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth." There is such a knowledge of the truth in the professing church that has never been tried, such a flow of preaching and resting on nominal things, many think, "I can endorse this and that." You do not know; I would not encourage you. Do you think God would take pains to try the grace he puts in your heart, if it did not signify whether it is tried or not? We read, "He shall sit" that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Jehovah, "as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi;" and you know the figure is taken from a furnace. Now, really, it is a foolish man who says, "It does not signify whether my faith is put in the furnace at all; neither do I want to be tried." Your heart charges the most wise God with folly. May the Lord save us from such a presumptuous act. "Though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," not before. God never intended that you and I should have any of this honour till Christ comes. Then when you receive it, you will palm it all on his holy head, and say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake."

"Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Then it will not be in the works or wisdom of creatures, of angels or archangels. "There is

none good but one," essentially so, "that is, God." Then we may say out of this good God fatness flows, and nowhere else. So the man who has nothing to do with God in his religion has not any of it. He cannot delight himself in fatness, for he has none.

There are three things still to notice in the text: 1.) The Person who is spoken of under the figure of waters, what we understand by this, and how these waters are put within the reach of the most weak, feeble, and frail individual that has a heart for them; that none shall seek in vain, but shall obtain. The first thing is the Lord Jesus Christ and all covenant blessings in him. Then, 2.) The exhortation: "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live;" evidently showing it is not hearing with the outward ear, because thousands hear the sound of the gospel that never have life. And, 3.) A few words about the "sure mercies of David," or the condition of those persons who have the covenant performed in their hearts, which is "ordered in all things and sure."

I.) The Lord Jesus Christ, being the covenant Head of his people, is the great fountain whence all mercies flow to sinners. Here we must glance at the doctrine couched in the text. Before man fell, this holy covenant was made between the Father and Son, and ratified and witnessed by the Holy Ghost. Hence we read, "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One." These Three bear record of the eternal covenant, yes, from age to age, and will when all the election of grace are brought safe home to glory. Not a jot or tittle of it can be made null or void, but will certainly be accomplished in all its grace and power in every individual concerned in it. Now the covenant in the text made with you and me flows from this great covenant made by the Eternal Three. As it is made with us it is a finished covenant, a sealed covenant, an applied blessing, an absolute promise, called a covenant with us because through it we receive the Lord Jesus and surrender heart and soul to him. In the 50th Psalm it is said, "Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice;" and Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living

sacrifice," not under the sentence of death in the covenant of works, but "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God," purged from dead works. And mark, no saving power ever comes into a sinner's heart but through the covenant transaction between these Three sacred Persons. Every particle of saving grace comes out from that covenant into our hearts, and is a changeless blessing. It has all the grace, power, and wisdom of the Three-One God to continue it to the end of time, till soul and body are safe in heaven.

The Lord Jesus is called the Covenant of his people: "I will preserve thee, and give thee for a Covenant of the people" (Isa. 42:6). This shows there was a great breach between them and a holy God, but not on God's part. He never left them, but they left him in the Fall of Adam. They left this blessed God, their Creator and Sovereign; and in leaving him became in league with the devil, and served God's foes instead of him. This was a great breach; but it never altered God's covenant. "Well," you say, "that must be an unutterable mercy for a holy God to make a covenant in respect of sinners and transgressors, and their sins never to have stopped him." Man was created in fellowship with his Creator, and all the while Adam held his primitive state, his delight was to walk with God, and for God to walk with him. His nature was holy, for he was made in the image of God; and who dare say that the image of God was not holy? Adam was holy and every way equipped and qualified to walk in fellowship with his Maker. But when sin entered, all was defiled; he lost God's image and took Satan's his mind was blinded, and he was alienated from the life of God through ignorance, chose darkness rather than light, to flee from God instead of going to him, to hate him instead of loving him. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). It was in view of this state the blessed covenant was made; and to accomplish this great design, to bring all his chosen people to eternal glory, it pleased the Father that in his Son, Jesus Christ, should all fulness dwell. First, that in him should dwell "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," or essentially; secondly, that all counsels, decrees, purposes, and holy wisdom, abstractly, fully so, should be placed in him; and thirdly,

that all the bowels of mercies, compassions, gentleness, kindness, grace, pity, love, righteousness, that ever angels or mortals knew, should be all in him. All the things the great covenant consists of are in him; therefore he is called the Covenant, and he is everything to the church.

Then that person that does not make the Lord Jesus everything has made a mistake. Is not that true? Look about in your heart, and see if you make him everything. If you do, you have this, a jealous suspicion of your own heart and ways; you will not think much of either of them. But if you do not make him everything, you have some love for your own ways; though you may profess not to have.

*"How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
To for heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesu's blood thy only plea?
Is he thy great Forerunner there?"*

And this is the point:

*"Is thy proud heart subdued by grace
To seek salvation in his name?
There's wisdom, power, and righteousness
All centring in the worthy Lamb."*

That is a true criterion of a man's faith. Even weak faith will make the Lord everything. The Lord Jesus makes everything he is over to that soul; and that soul by living faith, though trembling, makes him everything. See what a blessed jointure and union there is between the holy Father and the Lord Jesus, the Friend of sinners, and the operations of the Holy Ghost in the sinner's heart. These things fit in like tenon and mortise, and make a holy unison as set forth in the building of the temple.

Now having spoken of his blessed Majesty as the covenant fulness of his people, the Lord help us to look at his Person in

human flesh. I have something in my heart that so delights to speak of his Person, Immanuel, God with us.

*"Could we his Person learn to prize,
We more should prize his grace.*

*"'Tis no wild fancy of our brain,
No metaphor we speak;*

*The same dear Man in heaven now reigns
Who suffer'd for our sake."*

Living faith is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It is a reality, for it brings Christ into the heart, the Hope of glory, God's co-equal, co-eternal Son. The conditions of the covenant hang on his shoulders, on his power and unchanging ability. If that fail, certainly the covenant will never be carried out; if that does not fail, it certainly will be. For myself, I believe he never will fail in any of the jots or tittles; neither do I believe this holy covenant hangs on the wills and contingencies of poor, sinful mortals at all. But as the Lord has fulfilled his work of atonement for millions of mankind, the Holy Ghost will bring it into the heart and practice of every one; and all religion that is not of the Holy Ghost is deception.

You say, "If that is true, you place us entirely at God's disposal." I wish I could in your hearts; I wish you were brought there with a cry, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." I have known the time when I did the best I could to keep a good conscience. You say, "Don't you do it now?" Yes, but on a different footing. I do not count myself to have a good conscience unless something comes in from God, a little touch of his power, a sprinkle of his atonement. If I walk in rectitude and do not feel guilt all day, but have no access or touch of his grace, I do not go to bed with a good conscience. One glimpse of Christ does more good than all moral walking. I would keep that in its place; but never let it jostle out a precious Christ and his merits and atonement. We read, "The Gentiles which followed

not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law" (Rom. 9:30-32). If it came by the law, Christ would profit you nothing. You jostle Christ out of the heart altogether, and lose all. This made Hart say with great meaning:

*"Thy whole dependence on me fix;
Nor entertain a thought
Thy worthless schemes with mine to mix,
But venture to be naught."*

And again:

*"The poorer the wretch, the welcomer here;
Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome and bare,
You can't come too filthy, come just as you are."*

He is a "merciful and faithful High Priest," to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, by his covenant blood; as one says,

*"There is a fountain fill'd with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."*

They are all gone, and it is a lasting cleansing. We read the Lord said to Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common or unclean" (Acts 10:15,28). It is as pure as God is pure, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, not in creature ability, but in the name and merits of Christ.

Now the Lord Jesus, being this fountain fulness in his own Person by the eternal counsel, was the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. He spoke all things into being out of nothing. Hence it is

said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). His glorious and eternal Majesty is the Second Person in order of revelation, not inferior, but the Son of the Father in truth and love before all worlds. The Father is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; but there never existed the everlasting Father in the Trinity before the Son; not one before or after another. If it were not so, we should believe in a changeable God, which the Scriptures deny and my faith denies, and I hope yours too. Christ is the holy manifestation of the Trinity in Unity, in order that glory may redound to the sacred Trinity from poor saved sinners' hearts that deserve nothing but hell. This Second Person took upon him human nature in the womb of the virgin; as it is said, "A body hast thou prepared me." Therefore it was his own body, prepared for him, and never existed but in union with his eternal Deity, any more than our souls ever existed before they were in union with our bodies. I say the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus was made in all things like unto his brethren, sin excepted. A poor fallen woman, a daughter of Adam by nature, bore this holy humanity which the Son of God took; as we read, "That holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." His gracious Majesty in this body was hungry, weary, sleepy, at one time we read he was asleep in the hinder part of the ship, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

This glorious Person, as he came into the world, was by the eternal predestination and finger of God made under the law, lay under our guilt, under our condemnation, our judgment, our wrath, our darkness, our distress, under it all, without a murmuring word or once repining or regretting his great undertaking. In this capacity, as Immanuel, God with us, he really did fulfil all the jots and tittles of the law we had broken, and made it honourable. A broken law is not honoured; it must be carried out to make it

honourable. He fulfilled it perfectly, and then suffered all the penal wrath due to transgressors. God the Father poured it on him without any mitigation. He made all our sins to meet on him; and at that particular juncture the floodgates of wrath were opened. Hear him say, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me" (Ps. 42:7). "Mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me" (Ps. 38:4). In this wrath his holy soul was wrung with all those agonizing tortures due to us. We are poor creatures; we can see his body suffering on the cross by faith, but who can contemplate the millioneth part of the sorrows of his holy soul? I have been in excruciating pain in terrible, spiritual anguish; and I can say that pains of body are nothing to the agonies of the soul. Spiritual afflictions are afflictions indeed. Therefore the greatest afflictions of the Son of God were in his soul; and O, the destructions, the deaths, the hells, his holy soul went into the bowels of, not locally, but experimentally.

*"Hell was our just desert,
And he that hell endured;
Guilt broke his guiltless heart
With wrath that we incurr'd.
We broke his body, spilt his blood,
And both became our heavenly food."*

Hear him on the cross utter this blessed exclamation, "It is finished!" And he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

What we want to infer is this. God's people hold fast by faith that this sacrifice of Jesus is all-sufficient to save a soul, without any works or merits added to it. It is the fountain of waters for the thirsty soul, "without money and without price." Our forefathers died martyrs in this hope. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," though a polluted worm truly in himself. Our forefathers had this blessing of imputed righteousness proclaimed in their hearts. Who dare say it is not sufficient to sanctify a man?

Who dare say it is not a reality? Certainly it is. As sure as this doctrine gets into a heart, it will produce its own fruits. What is it that shows the distinction between this and all other supposed righteousness? It brings forth fruit unto holiness and the end, everlasting life. A good tree will bring forth good fruit, and a corrupt tree will bring forth evil fruit. "A good understanding have all they that do his commandments;" but unless God puts his holy, covenant grace and Spirit into the heart, a man will never do them; he is too far fallen. Abraham could obtain Ishmael by his own contrivance. So you may get bastards by your own faith, or bear fruit after the flesh in the shape of religion; but it will be of no use, and bring nothing but trouble. But if you have one grain of faith through this covenant in your heart, O, I say, blessed man. What an endless blessing God has given you. I would encourage you to live to him, to honour him, to fall flat into his hands to commit your troubles to him, let him be all, and surrender yourself to him to be crucified; and he will accept you as you surrender yourself by precious faith altogether to him, and fall flat on his Person and merits.

2.) This leads us to the other side of the text, the exhortation: "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live;" showing that a sinner convinced by the Holy Ghost still has a proneness to labour to make himself better and please God under the covenant of works. That is not from faith. Supposing you did practice all, till you had not a particle of guilt, Christ would profit you nothing. You must be strong enough to say, "I can get to heaven without him," or else be a poor, penitent sinner, fall at his feet, and lie there till he saves you. I have more confidence in that sort of religion than in moving about in our own strength; for I have proved it. The Lord brought me to a state of insolvency after thirteen years waiting; and I lay at his disposal with a thousand fears he would frown me to hell, but he did not; and I never knew what his smile and pardoning love were till then.

*"'Tis perfect poverty alone
Which sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."*

Then see the necessity and the mercy, too, of the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Take this for an instance. If you have a little soft feeling on a Lord's day, and look back and see how dull, lifeless, and prayerless you have been in the week, as soon as you feel a freshness and moving in your soul you may think, "Next week I will be more careful and watchful." That is good in its place, but do not rest on it. One says:

*"I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesu's name."*

Instead of nursing that sort of feeling, "Next week I will be very diligent, and give myself to reading and prayer," say, "Lord, do keep me. 'Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.' 'Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.'" That would be more orthodox, and honour him; and "them that honour me I will honour." Do not rest on anything short of the Lamb and his blood. If I get through a day without guilt, I examine it at night. "What has made your conscience so quiet today? Is it the virtue and merits of Jesus?" And if I cannot find that, I do not listen to my quiet conscience, but sigh,

*"Convince me of my sin,
Then lead to Jesu's blood,
And to my wondering view reveal
The secret love of God."*

The heart is full of inward sins, temptations, and evils. Time is very short, and to be tantalized by a legal spirit, a proud heart, to rest on things that are not saving, I say it is waste of time, of life, and all. We read, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." We

need the Holy Spirit that we may flee to the blood of Christ, and let nothing quiet us but the atonement.

3.) "The sure mercies of David." The covenant God makes with us I understand to be this. When you and I are brought to the Lord Jesus by precious faith in the simple way I have described, to let him be All in all, that is the Lord making an everlasting covenant with us, even the sure mercies of David. It is a covenant of free grace and atoning blood; there is perfect atonement in it for all sin, perfect justification from all unholiness, and the Spirit of adoption is brought into the heart with it. There is many a seeking soul who has not yet had it made with him; but when it is ratified by the Holy Spirit in the heart, he will say, "My Lord and my God."

*"O my Jesus, thou art mine,
With all thy grace and power;
I am now and shall be thine,
When time shall be no more."*

This covenant made with a sinner is individual and particular. How many of us have had it made with us? As sure as it is made, the fruits of it will follow. If you have it in your heart, you have chosen him for your Lord, your Advocate, your Guide, your good Physician, your All. You will be his by a living faith, and he will be yours by his gracious atonement and pardon. He will dwell with you, and you with him; and nothing can make it null and void. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." That is the consummation of it all.

*"The sinner that by precious faith
Has felt his sins forgiven,
Is from that moment pass'd from death,
And seal'd an heir of heaven."*

ELI ASHDOWN

*"Though thousand snares enclose his feet,
Not one shall hold him fast;
Whatever dangers he may meet,
He shall get safe at last."*

Amen

Chapter Ten

FRANCIS COVELL
(1808-1879)

FRANCIS COVELL

Francis Covell (1808-1879) was a preacher who became a great friend of J.C. Philpot. Indeed Philpot sat under Covell's ministry in his latter years. Covell began preaching in his own home and his ministry proved to be a blessing to many. Remarkably he was afflicted by a terrible natural stammer which the Lord removed when he began to preach the Gospel.

THE GOOD THING PROMISED

By Francis Covell

Preached at Croydon on Sunday Morning, November 24th, 1878

*"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing
which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah"
Jeremiah 33:14.*

GOD would have us take particular notice of and consider what He says. Hence He begins in my text with, "Behold!" Look to, mark well, and see if I have ever deceived you in any thing, or ever will. What a mercy to have such a God to do with,

*"Whose promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet."*

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord." Our time is always ready. Let God speak in any way to our souls, we expect the answer directly; we cry out, "Why tarry the wheels of His chariots?" (Judges 5:28) We forget that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). The Son of God told His disciples, "Your time is always ready, but My time is not yet;" but His word will never fail. We may say, "Make haste, O God, make haste;" unbelief is always in a hurry, when faith is in exercise she is willing to wait, but we have not faith at our fingers' ends; we are more subject to doubt, fear, and unbelief than faith. We find God is not so quick in His movements as we are in our expectations. He told the Jewish church, "For a small moment have I forsaken you," (Isa. 54:7) that was seventy years. What did they think? "Our hope is lost, God hath forsaken us." But He said, "I will bring you up out of your graves, O My people" (Ezek. 37:13). If you look into God's Word, and into the experience of His people, you always find, however they have feared, and failed in their feelings, they have always had to speak well of God, that He has never failed them. Joshua told the Israelites, "There has not one thing failed of all the good things which the Lord your God promised you, but all are come to pass" (Joshua 21:45). David said at times, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" He said in haste, "All men are liars"; and he said, "I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul"; but when he had waited a little longer, he said, "Goodness and mercy hath followed me all the days of my life" (Ps. 23:6). "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5). If ever you can get God, by His Word and Spirit, to persuade you in your heart He will do you good, heaven and earth will pass away, but that never will. "Well," say you, "I remember some years

ago, when seeking the face of God by prayer, I had such a persuasion that God would save my soul, that at times there was a good thing in my heart towards the Lord God of Israel, that not all the devils in hell could have persuaded me out of it. I have had many dark days since then, and fears that it sprang from my flesh, and that because I desired those things I worked myself into those feelings, so I am afraid that it will never come to pass." "Behold, the days come." That promise is coming; God will never bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth; you will as surely realize what the Holy Ghost has persuaded you of, as God is true. I have known what it is for God to promise, and give me intimations of things, then I have thrown it all up; but this has been a help to me a good many times, "Though we believe not, God abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). If He had not meant to do it He would not have given intimations of it; if it had not been in His heart He would not have told you of it: "The thoughts of His heart are to all generations" (Ps. 33:11). With all your unbelief and questionings, you would not like to lose that promise, you would not like to abandon it. Are you not glad at times that there has been a persuasion in your heart that there is a good thing towards God? "Yes, I am," say you, "I have often looked to that place where I had it." That is faith telling you to hold out, it is not willing to let go. It is coming, and you will be able to say one of these days, "Faithful is He that has promised, who also has done it." At times after God has persuaded us there is a good thing in our hearts, He is pleased to make things work contrary and opposite, to make it more clear, and to show the truth of His promise; then how it shines out. It is like the background of a picture, it brings out the other parts clearer.

*"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."*

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised." God need not have promised anything, but, as He has done so, we have got His bond; now, so to

speak, we hold Him fast; I speak it with reverence. Here is Thy bond, with Thy hand and seal. God has promised many "good things" to His people, and none of these things have ever failed. His people have tried Him in many ways, but they always have found the promise sure. But this promise in my text is the great promise, "I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and the house of Judah." This is the greatest thing of all. Hundreds of good things God has promised, and is fulfilling them every day, but this is the promise of all promises; in this promise all other things were promised, and all flow out of it. You can see they all flow out of this, "It has pleased the Father that in Him (that is, Christ) should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:19). This "good thing" God promised is no other than the gift of His Son. Whatever God might have given, if He had not given us His dear Son we had been miserable creatures. Let God shower down upon you all the blessings and comforts of this life, let Him give you health and life for a hundred years to enjoy them, with all blessings of a temporal nature that heaven and earth can bestow, yet what a miserable wretch you would be without Jesus Christ, because they must come to an end. But if God gives us His Christ, then we have everything in Him; we have the Father's love, we have everything that can make us happy in this life, and we have heaven at last. Christ is the true philosopher's stone, that can, and does at times, turn everything into gold. He can make a man that has not a shilling in his pocket contented and sing; He can make him stand in the flames of martyrdom, and feel it is a bed of roses; He can make him play with lions. You can see what a "good thing" that is. All other things are good in their places; we have reason to be thankful and grateful for the bread we eat and the water we drink, for by sin we have forfeited all. We have reason to be more grateful and thankful than we are for the mercies we are surrounded with, but all these are as nothing to the promise in my text, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing." When God says it is a "good thing," you may depend upon it it is good; for what we call good God thinks nothing of. I dare say all of us would call a lump of gold a good thing, or if anybody was to make us a present of a handsome estate, we should call that a good thing; but God calls all

these things "thick clay." We should not think much of it if any one was to come and plaster us with thick clay, we should think it a nuisance. Then if what we think good God thinks nothing of, what must that be which God calls good? It must be a superlative good, and so it is. That good is His dear Son. You can see He had promised it to our first parents. What a while it was coming! How slowly the wheels seemed to move, how they seemed loaded with lead for four thousand years. How they kept looking out for Him. Poor Eve thought she had got the promise quickly; she said, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," but she made a mistake. Sometimes we think we have something good, then we find out it is not so good as we expected. Have you never been deceived in what you thought was a good thing? Have you always found it sweet? Have you not found there was not that in it which you expected? I have no doubt you have, as well as I have, but in this "good thing" there is no deception. Let this come to us, we shall find it above all we looked for or expected, according to the scripture, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). Now this was "that good thing:" "the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" (Gen. 3:15). The Son of God saith by the prophet, "From the bowels of My mother hath He made mention of My name" (Isa. 49:1). Now, as I said before, this set all those whose hearts God had touched looking for it. You hear the Church crying out, "O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion" (Isa. 46:13). Their hearts were big with expectation. Abel rejoiced in it. Abraham had a glimpse of it. The Church in the Song cried out, "O that Thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find Thee I would kiss Thee" (Songs 8:1). You hear her crying out again, "Unto us a Son is born, unto us a Child is given" (Isa. 9:6).

"Behold, the days come." It is such a short time in God's reckoning. So in Jeremiah's days, "I will perform it," God says. Then you find God says by the prophet Ezekiel, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; and he shall be a prince among them" (Ezek. 34:23). Daniel is so much in expectation of it that he says, "After threescore and two

weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself" (Dan. 9:26). Malachi sums it up, and says, "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall" (Mal. 4:2). One would have thought it was just at hand; it was four hundred years after. Now all is dark and miserable, all hope of the promise being fulfilled seems gone; the Church thin and few, and no prophet to speak about Him. Then John appears in the wilderness; he came to herald forth the promise, "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). "Behold, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Luke 3:4). Then, "in the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4,5). Then we hear an angel proclaiming Him, and a multitude of the heavenly host bursting through the gates of heaven, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14). "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Now the promise is fulfilled, now the days have come! Therefore Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward" (2 Pet. 3:9). While men may say, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. 3:4)

*"The promise may be long delayed,
But cannot come too late."*

This is the "good thing" that God has promised. In what way? Peter says, speaking of David, "Of this man's seed hath God raised up Christ to sit on His throne" (Acts 2:30). That was the "good thing"--a Saviour. What! To be saved from sin, to be saved from hell, to be saved from destruction! That is a "good thing" indeed. Therefore the angel said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). What was the promise? "I will send them a Saviour, and a great one, and He shall deliver them" (Isa. 19:20). "Through this Man is preached unto us

the forgiveness of sins, that all that believe may be justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39). What better thing could you have? What greater thing could you ask God the Father to give you? Hearken to what the Son of God saith, speaking by the prophet Isaiah, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save" (Isa. 63:1). What better thing could you have than that? What greater thing could you ask? You read, "God so loved the world, that He gave"--what? Heaven? Earth? Kingdoms? Crowns? O no! "God so loved the world;" so to speak He had such a burning love, such everlasting love, such a love that knows no bottom nor bound, "God so loved the world--I will give you the greatest thing that was ever seen--He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." Now I ask, what greater or more glorious thing could God give than His Son to save us? We read that,

*"A Saviour must be one that can
From sin and death release us,
Make up the breach 'twixt God and man,
Which none can do but Jesus."*

Now, poor sin-bitten sinner, cursed by the law, damned by your sins, held fast by the devil, and claimed by justice, to have a Saviour to save you, One to pick you up, pardon your sins, and present you to God blameless and faultless, what greater thing could God promise? "The days" have come, the promise is fulfilled. "Unto them that look for Him"--Are you looking for Him? Is this what you want? Is sin your burden, trouble, and distress, and do you want to be saved? Say you, "O if He would but save me! I could bear anything, suffer anything, only to feel in my soul that I shall be saved; what a happy man I should be." You are just the man; there is everything in this Saviour to do that. "O, when I look at myself," say you, "and see what I am, the evils of my heart, my shortcomings, my misdoings, and the lump of sin that I am,"--why,

you have the more need of it, poor creature. Do you think for a moment, poor, anxious, earnest, sighing man, or woman, that Adam's sin could sink us lower than what Christ could save? Shall Adam ruin us more than Christ can bring us out of? Can we sin deeper than His blood can cleanse? Does this mean anything, "Mighty to save?" Has it not heights, lengths, depths, and breadths to meet thy case and condition? What "good thing" would this be, "I will send them a Saviour, and a great one," if He could not save us from the hell in which sin would plunge us? What comfort would it be to our poor distressed souls? While the Son of God is the Physician, and His blood the plaster, you may depend upon it it will go to the root of the disease. Just to show us this, He says, "Walk about Zion;"--you feel what you are as a poor ruined sinner--"mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces," (Ps. 48:13) that you may see that "this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our Guide, even unto death" (Ps. 48:14). What do I understand by these bulwarks and towers? These are sinners He has raised up, that we may look at them, and see there is nothing too hard for Him to do. He would have us look at these towers. Look at Adam, what he did. Look at Manasseh, what he was. Look at Magdalene, what she was. Look at Rahab, what she was. Look at Bathsheba, what she was. These are the towers that you may know that "this God is our God." This is the "good thing" He has promised; now Christ is revealed in His suitability and sufficiency as "mighty to save." He would be no Saviour unless He could save us completely. Paul says, "Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7:25).

*"What's thy sin to His great grace,
That cancels all the sum?"*

I can tell you that I have had minutes in my room, on my knees, alone with God, when I have had such discoveries of the beauty, sufficiency, and of the sin-cleansing blood of the Son of God, that I have felt, base devil as I am, had I all the sins of this parish laid upon me, I could believe He could save me out of and from them all; nor should I fear to have it. Therefore, poor thing, here is a

"good thing" He has promised. Now bring thy sins. I will tell you what they will do for you; in the hands of the Spirit your sin and guilt will show God's great salvation. If you have got a feeling sense of sin, know the vileness of it, feel the filth of it, want to be saved from it, you are the man that will prize Jesus Christ; you will look out for His coming. "Will he come? Will He save me? It looks so dark, so dismal; I am so cast down and discouraged." So were they of old, but He came. As Paul says, "He will not only give me a crown of righteousness, but all them also which love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). If this is what your soul is after, if you can say, as you were singing,

"More frequent let Thy visits be;"

and,

*"O come, Thou much-expected Guest,
Lord Jesus, quickly come;
Enter the chamber of my breast,
Thyself prepare the room;"*

If this is really your feeling, as sure as God liveth He will perform that "good thing" to you. The days will come when there will be a jubilee trumpet in thy soul, "Behold, thy salvation cometh; go ye out to meet Him." That is what God has promised you. "Promised me?" Say you. O yes. God promised it to those of old; it was a long while before it was fulfilled. You can see that He promised it to you. The Son of God said, "When the Holy Ghost is come, He shall convince the world of sin" (John 16:8). He has done that. "O yes," say you, "whether the Holy Ghost has convinced me or not, I am a sinner, I know. I cry out, 'God be merciful to me.' I am so convinced about it that not all the world could persuade me out of it. If I were to die now, I should say before God, 'O Lord God, I am a sinner.' That is a matter of fact. I am as sure of it as I am I am a living man. If there is not another sinner upon earth I am one; I am convinced painfully; sorrowfully I know it." See whether God has not promised you a "good thing." Where art thou looking for salvation? Where is thy

little hope and faith flying? "When the Holy Ghost is come He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you," says the Son of God. You can find this feeling in your spirit, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Ps. 121:1). You are satisfied that Christ only can save you, whether He will you have thousands of doubts about; but that He can save you if He will you do not doubt. Is not thy faith fastening there? Say you, "None but Jesus is of any use to my sin-bitten soul. Save, Lord Jesus, or I perish." If God had not promised it to you, you would not look out for it. You cannot say, with all your fears, "I have no expectation that I shall be saved." "O no," say you, "I could not say so." It is promised to you. Therefore, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing." You will have it, and you will feel, "This is my God, I have waited for Him, and now He is become my salvation." Blessed are all they that wait for Him, for they shall never be disappointed.

--ooOoo--

In the morning we took a little notice of how God would have us mark and consider, in the word "Behold," the things He promises to do, that we may see how faithful and true He is to His word. We noticed, too, how certainly He fulfilled the promises He had spoken, and though we might wait for years for the accomplishment of it, the thing was certain; in the end we should have to declare the righteousness of God. We then noticed the "good thing" that was promised. We noticed there were many good things promised in God's blessed Word to men and women that fear Him, but we found the "good thing" in my text was something above them all; it exceeded all others as far as heaven exceeds hell for height, and light exceeds darkness; for we found this "good thing" was no other than the gift of God's dear Son. We noticed it was promised to Adam, and all through God's Word till the fulfilment of the promise, how the people were looking out for it, knowing that it was the greatest thing God could bestow, that heaven was in Him, and that all their hearts could wish or desire was in Him. Therefore what earnest desires there were for Him till He came. Then we may

say, so to speak, all was outdone when He came. God said, "I will send them a Saviour, and a great one, and He shall deliver them." We found that He was indeed able to save; no matter how great the sins, or the number of them, or how high, how deep, how broad, or how long, He was "able to save." Nothing would stand against the blood of God. We found that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sins," it sank sin like lead in the mighty waters; that when the sins of Judah were sought for there should be none, for God would pardon them whom He reserved. Therefore the angel told Mary, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." We found indeed what a Saviour He was; this was a "good thing" promised. He could "save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him." No sins could be too many, too deep, too black in their defilement, but what His blood could reach, purge, cleanse, and purify. Not only did we find He was able, but that He was also willing to save; hence He says, "Come, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1:18,19). Such is the willingness of His heart that He says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the Fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). This is a "good thing," that He should not only have power, but that He should be so willing. How does He stand in thy estimation? Is this the Saviour that you want? Is this the "good thing" that thy faith is looking after, thy expectation has been raised up for, that thy hope anchors in, and that thy soul is at times crying out for, "When wilt Thou come unto me?" Will no other Saviour do? Will nothing less than His blood satisfy thy guilty conscience, and make thee happy? If it be so, "Behold, the days come;" you will find this Jesus you are looking for, waiting for, longing to realize and enjoy, will come to you. He shall come to all that "look for His appearing." Hearken: Anna spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel. The Scriptures declare "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Thy soul will echo, if God the Holy Ghost has made thee feel what thou art, and given thee a glimmering of what there is in the Christ of God, "I want no other." Then God and you are agreed, and can walk together. It is only those that the Holy Ghost convinces of sin to whom He reveals the suitability and sweetness there is in God's dear Son; therefore these shall surely find Him. Now we will pass on.

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah." Not only did He promise us a Christ to save us, but He promised us in Him a righteousness to justify us; for it is said, "This is the name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6). Paul tells us that is the blessedness of it, for he says, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness" (1 Cor. 1:30). That is a "good thing"; I have no doubt some of you feel and think so. You sensibly feel, I have no doubt, that all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). You feel,

*"Can sinful souls, then, stand unclad
Before God's burning throne;
All bare, or what is quite as bad,
In coverings of their own?"*

I will venture to say, if God the Holy Ghost has shown you what you are, you would not be found in your own righteousness for all the world. You sensibly and truly find that, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5). Therefore this is a "good thing," that He wrought out a righteousness. It is said respecting His spouse, "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework" (Ps. 45:14). He has wrought out a righteousness "which is to all and upon all them that believe." This made the apostle Paul say, "That I may be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9). This made David

say, "My tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness all the day long" (Ps. 35:28). It is called the righteousness of God because it was wrought out by God's dear Son.

*"A sinner clothed in this rich vest,
And garments dyed in blood,
Is rendered fit with Christ to feast,
And be the guest of God."*

The Son of God opens it up in the parable of the prodigal son. When the poor wretch came home ragged, tattered, and miserable, the father said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." Dr. Watts says,

*"And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around."*

Therefore the Son of God says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). I dare say there are many here whose righteousness does not come up to the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, yet, poor hoodwinked men and women, you believe you are going to heaven. The Son of God said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites"; with all their religion. How do you keep the Lord's day? They were particular about that. They tithed anise, mint, and cummin; what do you do for the cause of God? They prayed many times a day; how many times do you pray? They fasted; what do you mortify yourself in? "Eh," say you, "what will become of us all?" I tell you honestly, by God's Word, unless you have a better righteousness than this, you will all be damned. Perhaps some may say, "I wish I had not come here tonight." It may be you may have to bless God for it. You may go home, and turn it over, saying, "Good God, what will become of me? I do not observe the Sabbath, deny myself, or do anything for the cause of God. As to prayer, sometimes I just

mumble out something at night, but I am too busy in the morning." Why, man, your righteousness does not come up to the righteousness of those that the Son of God pronounces damnation upon! Now may God make you fly from that, and look out for something in which you may stand in the burning day of God; for "unto them that look for Him shall He appear" "without sin unto salvation." Here is a "good thing," seeing all our best is nothing worth, and that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, that Christ has wrought out and brought in an everlasting righteousness. For what does He say? "He that has two coats, let him give to him that has none" (Luke 3:11). Blessed be His holy name, He has two; He had a righteousness as God and a righteousness as Man. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). Then He wrought out a righteousness for sinners; thus He had two. "As by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). To him that believeth God imputeth righteousness without works; for it is said how the Lord justifies the ungodly: "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). "O," say some before God, "I do rejoice in the blessed truth. It has made me sing many a time, and made my heart as full as it could hold, feeling that Christ is made righteousness to me; and that, 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit'" (Rom. 8:3,4). Are there some before God who sensibly see and truly feel that they can do nothing? They have tried hard, laboured hard, charged their eyes, charged their tongue, charged their heart not to sin against God, but to do the works and commands of God, walk in His ways, keep His law, love and serve Him, yet have never gone one day right. They have fallen down under the guilt of it, and have tried again the next day to see if they could not work something wherein they might appear before God. They have prayed hard, and striven hard, and God has brought down their hearts with hard labour. Are there such here? "Yes," say some. Then says the Son of God, "Hearken to

Me, ye that are far from righteousness, I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be abolished. I will place salvation in Israel for My glory" (Isa. 46:12,13). Are you not glad to hear that there is a righteousness wrought out complete, whereby God can justify thy soul, and that faith will put it on? You have not a finger to put to it, not a thought, word, or deed of your own; it is given freely, lovingly, and graciously by God. Hearken: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Is not that a "good thing?" It does not matter how bad you are, you can only be bare. This covering is for those that have none; it will hide all their defilement from view. In this righteousness you will be "brought unto the King in raiment of needlework." Whenever by faith you are enabled to lay hold of this righteousness, and wrap yourself up in it, go to God in it (I know what I speak now). He will smell the smell of your raiment, and will surely bless you. It will be in substance, though in a more glorious way, as Isaac said to Jacob, "The smell of thy raiment is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed, therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth: let thy brethren and thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee" (Gen. 27:27-29); and with corn and wine he sustained him. That is what you will find. Many times I have known what it is to be covered with guilt, shame, confusion, and trouble, and I have known what it is for the blessed Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them unto me, and He has worked faith in my heart, so that I have laid hold of Him, and I have gone to God, and have been smiled on and kissed by the Father of heaven, and have feared neither death, hell, nor condemnation. Nothing pleases God like going in the righteousness of His dear Son. May the blessed Spirit therefore work faith in your heart. "What! Do nothing?" say you. No, you would spoil it. I will tell you what the blessed Spirit has to do with us; He has to take us, and throw us aside like lumber. This does not suit our proud nature. This righteousness wants nothing of our doings, it is wrought out by the active and passive obedience of God's dear Son; it sparkles with His merit, it perfumes the nostrils of God by His obedience. The Lord "will perform that good thing" in bringing this

righteousness near, and putting it on us. Therefore may God stop you from working, and bring you to "lift up your eyes to the hills from whence cometh your help," and to "embrace the Rock for want of a shelter," and come to this blessed Son of God that He may clothe you, the same as He did Joshua the high priest. "I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. 3:4). What a "good thing!" If Christ had not wrought out a righteousness not one of us could have stood before God, from Adam the first to the last that shall exist in this world. God tells us by the prophet Ezekiel, "I thoroughly washed and clothe thee" (Ezek. 16:9,10). In this we can stand complete before God; yea, stand higher than angels, draw near to Him, come into His heart, and be embraced by Him. The angels' righteousness is only a creature righteousness, but we stand in the righteousness of God, more glorious and blessed than they. If you have been driven out of yourself, if you have ceased from working, and your cry is, "O to be found in Christ!" If this is thy cry, thy panting, and what thou desirest, "Behold, the days come," God will perform it, you will have it, and you shall sweetly sing, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

Again. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and the house of Judah." Another "good thing" He has promised is, that Christ shall be our sanctification. Some of us are willing to acknowledge with the great Apostle, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). Apart from God's grace, there is no more holiness in us than in the devil himself. David knew this; he said, "I was conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity" (Ps. 51:5). God speaking about us says, "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot ye are full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isa. 1:6). "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). That which is flesh is flesh, you will never better that flesh. You may take nitre and much soap; I was going to say I have taken as much as most people, perhaps more than most, but mine iniquity is marked before God; in me dwells no good thing. I painfully and grievously know that "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,

adulteries, and an evil eye," (Matt. 15:19) and that the imagination of man's heart is only evil from his youth up. "Why, that was said before the flood," say you. But flesh has not altered, the Holy Ghost says to the last, "It is sown in corruption." What makes the great Apostle say, God "will raise this vile body"? What makes it vile? There is nothing vile but sin. The child of God knows that. I have no doubt there are some here who truly know it; if they do not, I do. Unless Christ is made sanctification for us, and God has made Him a High Priest before Him, I should have no more hope of going to heaven than the devil has. None but God knows what I feel, none but God knows what I sigh, grieve, and groan about from day to day. I cry out, "O God, I would be holy; create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10); "keep me from evil that it may not grieve me." None but God knows, my friends, how I groan, sigh, and grieve from day to day, under the evils, abominations, and sinfulness of my wretched heart and flesh. What could a poor creature like me do without Jesus Christ? O, eternity will not be too long to praise, adore, and magnify the Christ of God for saving a filthy wretch like me. How do you feel? Is it a "good thing" to you which God has promised? We can see wherein Christ was typified in days of old, and the Holy Ghost sweetly opens it up and reveals it. It is said respecting the high priest, he only was to go in to the "holy of holies." He was only to go with holy garments upon him; with a holy mitre on his head, in the front of which was to be a plate of pure gold, inscribed, "Holiness to the Lord" (Exo. 28:36; Exo. 39:30); by which he should bear away the iniquity of the holy things of the children of Israel (Exo. 28:38). When he went into the holy of holies he was always to have on a breastplate of gold, set with stones, engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel. While they were without in their sin and filth, he went in with his mitre and breastplate; he was accepted of God, and they were accepted as a holy people in his person. What does the great Apostle say? "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11,12). Now he says, "If

the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14) Now He is in the holy place as the High Priest of our profession. As Paul saith, "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Therefore he says, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Now we have an High Priest before God, not with a plate of gold on His forehead, but as the angel told Mary, "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The Son of God has passed into the heavens, there to make intercession for us. Now all our sinfulness, all our vileness, all our filth and pollution, in thought, word, and deed, that we may grieve about, and fear what the end will be, our High Priest is within the veil to put away:

*"'Tis He, instead of us is seen,
When we approach to God."*

We are accepted in the Beloved, the eyes of the Father are upon His holy Son: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." See what that sanctification does. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). "For this cause I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:23). "By His one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," (Heb. 10:14) and has gone into heaven for us. Therefore, "as it is appointed unto all men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him" (Heb. 9:27,28)--are you looking for Him? "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Here is our sanctification. This made the Church say, "I am black as the tents of Kedar, fair as the curtains of Solomon" (Songs 1:5). How she laid hold of it by faith! What does the Son of God say respecting His spouse? "Thou art all

fair, My love, there is no spot in thee" (Songs 4:7). Is not that a "good thing," that you stand in Christ without spot, blame, or any such thing? While we are walking here below, full of everything that is hateful in ourselves, He is our sanctification. While in us there is no good thing, we are accepted in Him; the Father is smiling on Him, regarding us in Him, looking on the face of His Anointed; He accepts our persons, regards our prayers, smiles on us, and says, "I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither have I seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them" (Num. 23:21). If it were not for this, what would become of us? I will venture to say, if you take cognizance of yourself, there is not a day without some defilement. I think no one knows this verse better than I do,--

*"Daily to feel thyself undone,
Will make thee haste to kiss the Son;
And on thy knees for pardon sue,
And praise, and bless, and love Him too."*

O, my friends, mine is an everyday religion, I have not to go months or years back to find it. I can tell you how I blessed God in the week that is past that Christ is my sanctification. Stinking in my own nostrils, I could draw near to the Majesty on high, with the sweet feeling that the High Priest is before the throne. Therefore I could say indeed, when the words of the text came dropping in my mind, "O Lord God, what should I do without Christ for my sanctification?" Seeing that our flesh will never be better. All the corning in the world will not keep it from rotting. If the blessed Spirit has thus turned your inside outside, and you have tried all things to wash and purify you, and you feel you cannot move the spots of the leopard, you will say, "What a 'good thing' that Christ has holiness to justify us all." This will cause you to bless God, praise Jesus Christ, and entreat the blessed Spirit to reveal Him more to your heart.

There is another "good thing" that God has promised: "Thou Bethlehem-Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of

Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2). We have got such a King as this. God promised Mary, "The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; He shall sit and rule upon His throne, and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32,33). It is a "good thing" that we have got such a King to rule and manage for us all through life, bring us through death, and give us a kingdom at last. May the blessed Spirit give you to see, realize, and feel, more and more, what God hath done for us in the gift of His dear Son, and so bring you in heart, in faith, and in love, to feel, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

Chapter Eleven

JOHN VINALL
(1782-1860)

JOHN VINALL

John Vinall (1782-1860) was converted under the ministry of William Huntington before becoming the minister, for forty-five years of Jireh Chapel, Lewes, and of Providence Chapel, Brighton. He was a man who knew and loved the same doctrines as the old "Coalheaver" and hence he became known as a "Huntingtonian". His ministry was much blessed of God to many who heard him.

SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

By John Vinall

Preached at Lewes, Sunday Morning, July 31st, 1853

*"I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. And the Lord
spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."*

(Jonah 2:9,10)

I HOPE I can say in sincerity that I am willing to spend my little remaining strength for the glory of God. I only say I hope so, because my heart is so deceitful that I cannot trust it. The devil has great power against me, but none against Jesus Christ. He could not go into the herd of swine without the Lord's permission. I was much comforted on Thursday last, and brought very low yesterday, and so I have learnt this text, "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down." I was brought yesterday to the bottoms of the mountains where Jonah was. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." He conceals from me the knowledge of whether he is about to send another fit, and take me home, or to leave me a little longer in my afflicted state, or perfectly restore me to health. I have already shown how Jonah disobeyed God's command, and what that disobedience brought him into. Why did not God stop him from going into the ship? Because he loved him, that is, his person first. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight" (Prov. 15:8). How far should you have gone had not God sent a storm to stop you? I know not where I should have gone to. Were you not going further and further from God's presence until he stopped you? The mariners had all their different gods, and so we have many sects now. There is but one God--three Divine persons in one undivided essence. If you make more gods than one, you are an idolater. "It pleased the Father that in him (Christ) should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1:19). There is no other way to God but by him. In all other ways you will find God to be a consuming fire. Then Jonah prayed, and afterwards, it says, he cried by reason of his affliction. I am obliged to do the same. Do you not get closeted in your affliction? This is what we need. "Let us trust thee evermore, Ev'ry moment on thee call, For new life, new will, new pow'r; Let us trust thee, Lord, for all."

I would venture a thousand lives on the person and righteousness of the dear Emanuel; but you must not rest on your prayers. Jonah did not pray at the bottom of the ship. He was asleep there; but the Lord put him into a closet, and then put a prayer into

his heart. I have been as Jonah was, sullen under a sense of sin. If you are in debt and cannot pay, are you not ashamed of meeting your creditors? I am glad to see so many here this morning. My bowels yearn over God's dear children, but not over reprobates. The proud Pharisees all made prayers, and so do the Papists--they don't object to that--but Jonah was brought to a cry, and this is what God hears. He heard the cry of Moses at the Red Sea. "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" It is the cry of the Holy Spirit--perhaps it is a breathing, or desire after him, or a groan. This goes up to heaven. "Salvation is of the Lord." "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord" (Ps. 37:39). "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord" (Ps. 3:8). I think Dr. Gill was a very sound man in doctrine, and he says that salvation in my text, comprises temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation. I spoke a little of vows last Sunday. Jonah made a vow. So did Jacob, and so did Hannah. But I did not speak of Jephthah's vow. He was a remarkable man, and stands among the worthies, though his brethren turned him out, because he was the son of an harlot. Afterwards Israel got into captivity under the children of Ammon. Then they sought out Jephthah, because he was a valiant man. Those that had set him at naught, came to him in their distress. And Jephthah required that he should be made their head, and to this they gladly agreed. There is but one head. Then Jephthah made a solemn vow to God that if he would deliver the children of Ammon into his hands, whatsoever came out of his house to meet him on his return, should be offered up for a burnt offering. When have you made a vow in spirit that if the Lord delivered you he should be your God? The Lord hears a whisper in the heart. I have not made such a vow outwardly, but many times have I said in spirit, if the Lord shall appear for me at this time, it will be such a sure token that I will set up my Ebenezer, and not doubt again. Now the Lord answered Jephthah's desire, and gave him the victory. Then his daughter and only child came out to welcome him home. I was under a peculiar trial once when one of my children was under severe bodily affliction, and I was told he would die before morning; but I would send for no assistance. I said I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back. I was told it was like Jephthah's hasty vow. I replied, you may call it what you please, but he had a place among

the worthies. My child was quite well in the morning. Jephthah said, "Alas, my daughter, thou art one of them that trouble me; for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." Then she gave herself up accordingly, and he paid his vow. We will consider salvation in a threefold sense. I have two sorts for certain, and the other will come in God's time. Temporal salvation is God's deliverance out of outward trouble. The Israelites were pursued by Pharaoh and his host. Then Moses, the head, steps forward and says, "Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will shew you today" (Exod. 14:13). Afterwards he sweetly sang of the Lord's saving them from their enemies. This was temporal salvation. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses." When the Israelites got through the Red Sea, the carnal gospellers and all sang together, because they all shared in the temporal salvation. Moses had faith that God would deliver them. That was the true living faith. How are we to know when we have spiritual salvation? "'Tis to feel the fight against us, Yet the vict'ry hope to gain; To believe that Christ has cleans'd us, Though the leprosy remain."

A person may have the temporal salvation without the spiritual. Have you ever found the presence of Christ in your temporal salvation? Then you have both sorts, temporal and spiritual salvation, for Christ is God's salvation to the end of the earth. When Christ delivers you from the curse of the law and the wrath of God, then you have spiritual salvation completely. Zaccheus was the object of God's love. He had a desire to see Jesus, and he went and climbed up a tree. Don't suppose that you can see Jesus by getting up the legal tree of your own works. Do you find a springing up of desire and a hankering after Christ? It says Christ came that way, so he always comes where there is a spiritual desire after him. He has kindled that desire himself. Jesus said, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." Did you ever come down to a humble broken heart, and did you not receive him joyfully? Could you not say, O precious Jesus, do not leave me.

Where there is a soft sweet constraining power on the spirit, that is receiving him. And Zaccheus said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." The Lord came into his heart, and the world went out. Did you not find the pursuits, pleasures, vanities, and comforts of the world go out when Christ came in? These are secret things which belong to God's children only. Zaccheus restored fourfold. The love of sin went out. And Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:1-9). Salvation is surely come to that heart where Christ has entered in. If any one here can come up to the evidences of grace thus manifested in Zaccheus, I could say, This day is salvation come to you. Did you not ascribe this salvation unto the Lord. It is of the Lord. I am a little revived in my old age, after being a standing miracle before you for more than twenty-one years. Eternal salvation is this--"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:9). This is what I am looking for. Jacob was looking for the same, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Will you not join with me and with Jonah now, "I will pay that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord." May you know temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation, and ascribe it all to the Lord.

Chapter Twelve

JOHN WARBURTON
(1776-1857)

JOHN WARBURTON

John Warburton (1776-1857) was born in Lancashire, and was to all intents and purposes one of the founder members of the group of "Gospel Standard" Baptist churches, along with William Gadsby and John Kershaw.

From 1815-1857 he was pastor of Zion Chapel, Trowbridge, where he often preached to a congregation of over 1000 people.

His autobiography, "Mercies of a Covenant God", has proved to be his enduring memorial and has been translated into several languages including Dutch and Russian.

THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF GOD

By John Warburton

*Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London on Lord's Day evening,
April 8th, 1855*

*"O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee."
(Psalm 36:10)*

I. Here we see the lovingkindness of God the Father in the choice of His people, that it originated in His sovereign, discriminating love, and that this love was so strong and enduring that it is from everlasting to everlasting upon those on whom it is fixed. We notice also the lovingkindness of God the Father, in providing and preparing all blessings in His beloved Son, for the supplying, the supporting, the refreshing, the delivering, and reviving of His people in their journey in this wilderness below; that there is not one blessing, for body or soul, but comes freely from God as a sovereign gift. We notice, in the third place, that the lovingkindness of God the Father is revealed in the Scriptures; that He has there revealed Himself; and that He has provided and prepared an home for His dear people, when all their tribulations, and griefs, and sorrows are ended; that they shall never have one more than He has appointed, and never one less; that all is fixed, and certain, and sure; and that He will bring them at last through much tribulation to enter into the kingdom of God. My friends, this is lovingkindness!

II. We may now take notice of the lovingkindness of the Son of God co-equal with the Father, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." (Heb. 1:3)

1. O what wondrous, glorious lovingkindness shines forth in the Son of God in doing the work for His people in finishing and completing the work for His people. Are there works to be done? Yes; never will any mortal enter heaven that does not enter there by God's work, as well as by grace. "O," say you, "I thought you folks would never talk about good works entering into heaven." O yes, we do! Heaven receives good works and heaven approves of good works; but not works that are good in the eyes of flesh and blood. The very law of God requires good works; and it is utterly impossible for a just God to smile upon a sinful creature without them. God is a just God; "He cannot acquit the guilty" (Num. 14:18). What lovingkindness, then, was it in the Son of God in condescending, out of mere sovereign, free, divine pleasure and love, to enter into covenant, and there to engage to come and be

responsible for the sinner; to stand in his stead; to be his head, his bondsman; to take all debts upon Himself, and clothe him with His own righteousness! Is not this lovingkindness, my friends? Did anything in our nature move the Son of God to come and manifest such lovingkindness as this? No, no; it is of His own sovereign, divine grace; and therefore it was certified of Him in prophecy, "Offerings and burnt offerings thou wouldest not; but a body hast thou prepared me; and lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5-7). Here is lovingkindness stepping forward to come and do the work that we had neither the will nor the power to do, but which He, out of sovereign, discriminating grace, engaged to do. And therefore He comes in the form of a man; and the apostle says, that "he was made sin for us, who knew no sin," (2 Cor. 5:21) having all the sins of His chosen imputed to His charge.

Shall you and I ever fathom the depths, or comprehend the height and breadth, or have an adequate idea of the glory and the length of this lovingkindness? It is the love of Christ which is beyond words ever to express and hearts ever to feel. He comes, and is born of a virgin; and here He is, as a child born and a son given. He bore the transgressions of His people, bore them all upon the tree, suffered the just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18). The justice of God had no pity upon His cries and groans; for He had engaged to be the Bondsman and Surety, bound himself by covenant bonds, and this not with reluctance, but with pleasure and delight, for He said His delight was with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31). The apostle sums it all up when He says, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 12:2). It was His delight to do completely the work for His people, that love, justice, and righteousness, and every perfection of Deity might meet together in perfect harmony. O what lovingkindness is this! You are not saved because of your good deeds, nor for any good works that you can do, but because of the lovingkindness of the Son of God, in performing and completing the work. And it is done in such a way, that neither law, nor justice, nor righteousness, nor sin, nor men, nor devils, nor death, nor hell,

nor all put together, can break or destroy it! It is out of the reach of them all; and therefore has He told us that "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end" (Isa. 45:17). "Yea," says Paul, "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Therefore, He was called Jesus, because He should "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The law honoured in Him, justice is satisfied; and therefore it can be sweetly said, "Deliver them from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom, saith the Lord" (Job 33:24).

It is lovingkindness and tender mercy in the Son of God, in doing the work for His people, in going before them, in saving them from hell, from sin, from the law, from divine justice; so that the Father is now well pleased in Him, and can say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). The apostle says, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:33,34). He ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto God by Him; and no one can come to God aright in any other name (Heb. 7:25; Acts 4:12). God teaches them that there is no other name, and no other way; therefore they are brought into this way by God's blessed Spirit, and receive all the blessings that are treasured up in Jesus Christ the Lord.

2. The Son of God not only saves His people from law and justice, and from going down to the pit, but He saves them from all their enemies. He has conquered them all. There is not a single one that can ever molest the child of God, that He has not met and battled with as their Head. He has gone before them; He has led the way; He has "borne their griefs and carried their sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). There is not a temptation of the devil that He has not gone through and overcome; He has had all his fiery darts and all his blasphemous suggestions hurled at Him; but Satan could not find a place for them to enter in.

Some child of God here may be tempted with blasphemous suggestions, and is drawing the conclusion that he must be nothing but a reprobate. He is afraid he has sinned against the Holy Ghost he is so tempted to blaspheme the Spirit of God; God seems to have given him up entirely, and he feels as if he must blaspheme Him. O poor soul! But can you do it? "O," says the soul, "I am afraid I shall!" But have you done it yet? Does not your soul burn against it and ache over it? Is not your soul crying to God to deliver you from it? It is the devil that is pouring these awful blasphemies against the Spirit, and not your soul; and the devil will have the punishment of it for ever.

Do not look then upon the temptations of Satan as a sign of being given up; the Son of God Himself was tempted in all points like unto His brethren, (Heb. 4:15) that He might succour those that are tempted. You hate the suggestion, and are trying to oppose it; it is not your own will and your own soul that is making it; it is sin and the devil dwelling in your heart. And here what God says: "No temptation shall happen to thee but what is common to man; and he will with the temptation make a way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13). Now, the Lord has done His work; He has conquered Satan, trampled upon him and His brethren shall trample upon him too; but they must have the same trials, in the measure that they can bear them; for He says they must be baptized with the same baptism that He was baptized with, and partake of the same sufferings. Therefore there is a time when they shall be delivered, as there was a time when the Son of God was delivered. He was forty days and forty nights under the conflict; but He conquered at last, and was brought forth into Judea with tidings of joy and peace.

3. The Son of God has grappled with death. He has gone with all the sins of the church to face death; the sting of death entered into His heart, and He drew it out again; and now death is a friend to the child of God, for the Saviour has conquered "death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). All this was done in lovingkindness! And He has ascended up on high, having finished the work, conquered every foe, satisfied every particle of

the demands of justice; He has gone there, and is now surrounded with glorious majesty. He went up as a conqueror, with the sound of the trumpet; as it is said, "God went up with a shout, and with the sound of a trumpet." "Open ye the gates", and let the King of Glory come in. "Who is this King of Glory?" "The LORD mighty in battle," (Isa. 26:2; Ps. 24:8) that has conquered all His foes, redeemed His church, satisfied every perfection of Deity. Child of God; He is thy Head; and thou, virtually united with Him, went up with Him virtually into glory. You ascend up on high, and are there virtually seated with Him, until He brings you home at last, one glorious man, perfect in Christ Jesus the Lord. What lovingkindness! O, would to God this sweet blessing were fully revealed in every contrite heart, and that the Comforter would bring the light, and power, and glory of it into our souls!

III. The lovingkindness of the Holy Ghost is equal with the lovingkindness of the Father and the Son; for He, the Father, and the Son, are one God. Some people wonder, my dear friends, how this can be; but we have nothing at all to do with the hows; it is what God reveals that we have to do with. The children of God prove by the testimony of their consciences, that what God reveals is true: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one."

1. What lovingkindness then in God the Holy Ghost, in revealing Christ to us, in taking of the things of God, and bringing them home to souls. It is as much the work of God to do this as the creation of the animal and vegetable world was the work of God. It is as much the work of God to reveal in the heart of His chosen these grand truths in all their power as ever it was for God to speak us into being; for His chosen in a state of nature are dead, like the rest of the world. They have no more feeling or desire for spiritual blessings than the four-footed beasts. They are "dead in trespasses and sins"; and nothing short of the lovingkindness of God the Holy Ghost can quicken them or bring them to life.

The apostle gives this testimony concerning the elect, in the declaration he makes to the church at Ephesus: "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world....the children of disobedience....and were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace are ye saved" (Eph. 2:1-5,8). Now, can any mortal ever overthrow this? What ground is there for argument and disputing? It is the work of the Holy Ghost, and that from His lovingkindness and sovereign pleasure. While the Father set His love upon His chosen, and the Son of God accomplished and completed the work of redemption for them, and honoured every perfection of Deity, the Holy Ghost, one with the Father and the Son, engaged to bring them to Him "in the day of his power," (Ps. 110:3) and all through sovereign, discriminating mercy and lovingkindness.

Now, are there not a good many of us here this evening that are living witnesses of this? Tell me, you that know anything about it, was there anything in you that merited God's kindness towards you, in stopping you in your mad career of sin, and saving you from going to hell? "No," says the soul; "of all wretches I think I was the worst; and had it not been for God's sovereign, discriminating grace, I had now been in the very state I was in, or else in hell, lifting up my eyes." It is all of His sovereign, discriminating grace; and every child of God that has this quickening life in his heart acknowledges this, and gives testimony to it that it was God that opened his eyes and stopped him in his mad career.

2. The lovingkindness of the Spirit of God has also been manifested in stripping the believer of his own righteousness. None can strip themselves of their own righteousness. Even the poor child of God, in all his troubles, let him have lived years and years, and proved his righteousness to have been nothing but filthy rags, yet he has got the working of it in his nature and thinks that he ought to do this and that and the other, and that it would be better for him,

and that God would be more pleased and favoured by it. A just God is never pleased but in His beloved Son, who has done the work for His dear people, and completed it, and perfected it. He can only delight in them in His Son; and if they are in Him, they are one with the Father and the Son, and made perfect in one. But when the Holy Spirit comes and reveals to the child of God what God's righteous law demands, brings it home to his soul, reveals it to his heart, and gives him to understand that the law looks at the very thoughts and intents of the heart, and that the very "thought of foolishness is sin," and merits damnation for ever and ever, that law, he sees, is good and righteous; and he is brought to see that it demands nothing but what is right. Here then he is condemned, his mouth shut, and he is brought to feel that God is just in the sentence of damnation upon his soul, so that he can acquit Him of any unrighteousness, and can testify that "the law is just, holy, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

Now the Spirit of God breaks into his heart a real confession, and a real sighing and groaning unto the Lord Jesus Christ for deliverance, and gives him to see that there is no one but the Son of God that can relieve him. This is the work of the Spirit of God in the heart, in showing him that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12) but the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost, in His blessed lovingkindness, sometimes gives the soul a little encouragement; a little light breaks into the heart; he learns that Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which is lost; and he is lost, and so was Saul of Tarsus, and Mary Magdalene, and Manasseh, and thousands besides, and He saved them. There is such a plea put into his heart, that he cries, "O Lord, have mercy upon me! O bless me with a sense of pardoning love, do but speak to me, and tell me that Thou hast died for me, and hast finished salvation for me." The Holy Spirit then brings the soul to feel that His lovingkindness is teaching it to leave all the world, all professors, all the opinions of men, and all the books of men, and to come with wrestling, cries, tears, and prayers, unto Christ for salvation; and that there is no power upon earth that has anything to do with it but God and the soul itself.

Do you know anything of such teaching as this? This is what David was taught; this is what Paul was taught; this is what God's people of old were taught; and this is what God teaches His people now. For there never was a soul that came to Christ yet that was not drawn by the Father, never one that learned His glory and beauty that had not been to the school of the law to learn what his misery was, and to bring him to see his lost condition; for who can ever bless a physician, but the man that seemed at the point of death? Who can ever be thankful for water, but the man that is dried up and nearly killed with thirst? Who can ever prize bread and food, but the man that is hungry, and given it all up for lost for want of provisions? The lovingkindness of the blessed Spirit of God is seen then in stripping them.

3. But, there is the lovingkindness of the Holy Spirit manifested in the heart by the work of the law on the conscience of a child of God. It is fitting him for the lovingkindness; it will be made known manifestly when he is brought to feel that there is nothing but damnation for him, and to fall down and cry to the Son of God to save him as an act of grace. If He condemn him, he feels that it is an act of justice, and down he falls; he throws himself on the Son of God, sink or swim, damned or saved; and there is no condemnation at the feet of the Son of God; for this is the work of the Holy Spirit, His lovingkindness. No human teaching can ever teach this. O no; it is the Spirit's teaching, and none can come and admire the blessed Redeemer but he to whom the Spirit reveals Him. "No man can call him Lord," his Lord, "my Lord, and my God," but by the Holy Ghost.

The testimony of the Spirit is necessary to give testimony to the heart of the blood, the righteousness, the beauty, and the glory of the Son of God, and to reveal Him in the soul. The apostle says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Ah! What lovingkindness comes into the heart of a condemned sinner! When the Lord brought it first into my heart, I got out of the town as soon

as ever I could into the fields, through a long wood; and the singing of the birds and the rustling of the leaves of the trees, the hills and the valleys, all seemed to be speaking of His glory; and I said, "Is this my God, my King, my Lord, that hath blotted out my transgressions like a cloud?" I thought He was going to send me to hell; and instead of this He has brought me up out of the depths of the pit, and raised me up from a beggar on a dunghill to sit amongst the princes of His people, to inherit everlasting glory. Ah! What lovingkindness! Blessings, blessings be upon Him!

4. There is the lovingkindness of the Spirit, in reviving, in teaching, in correcting, in reproving, in blessing the believer's soul with fresh light, fresh strength, fresh support, to guide and direct him through the wilderness over Jordan, and take him safe home to glory. His lovingkindness is in it; His delight is in it; His glory is in it. Therefore their souls are His temple, His house, His dwelling-place, His rest, and here He dwells; for He says where He has begun a good work He will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6). Nobody who knows these things can help worshipping the Holy Ghost as God. There is the Father who is God, the Son who is God, and the Holy Ghost who is God; yet are there not three Gods, but one God. And here is the mystery the mystery that wisdom can never find out; but faith believes it, and love embraces it; and we have proved it in our hearts, and are daily proving it, for every revival is of the Spirit of God.

IV. Notice by way of conclusion David's prayer. "O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee." I do not think David means that there is any danger of the lovingkindness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost not continuing. I do not think that David had a single idea of this in his prayer; but humanly speaking, it might appear as if he meant that the continuance of the lovingkindness might depend upon certain conditions, such as the creature performing his duty, and doing what he ought to do. But it was nothing of the kind. David's petition appears to me to mean simply this, or something comprehended in this: Continue thy lovingkindness in its visits to my soul, that I may have the visiting

of thy lovingkindness unto my heart, to renew my soul again and again. For David, as well as every child of God, knew that the experience of God's people is not all sunshine and not all prosperity, and not all health, but that there is darkness, and night, and adversity, and wounds, and tribulations.

No, it is not all sunshine; the blessed Sun of Righteousness is sometimes hid behind the clouds, and darkness seizes the child of God; confusion of heart sometimes lays hold of him, and he begins to question what his religion is, how it began, what were the testimonies he had, and to fear that what seemed to be the work of the Spirit of God might be nothing but the work of the flesh; and his soul sinks, and his heart is sometimes so distracted that he falls down before God. But he is honest; his is an honest and upright heart, which is the work of grace; and when he seems stripped of every comfort, he falls down before His God, and says, "Lord, search me; search me and try me; I do not know what I am, I am so confused; I cannot tell whether my religion is the work of God, or whether I am only one of the stony-ground hearers. Here I am." And that soul cannot stir a hair's breadth till God moves him; neither can he look back to raise an Ebenezer unless the light of the Spirit of God brings it to his remembrance; but he cries to the Lord, and says, "Ah! Grant me another token for good, another revival of Thy lovingkindness in my heart! Oh! Continue the visits of Thy lovingkindness! I have no hope in myself, nor hope in man; give me another testimony of Thy lovingkindness; renew my soul, and bring me up again out of the depths, that I may have another testimony that Thy lovingkindness is still resting upon me."

It is now going on for sixty years since I first felt the lovingkindness of God, in delivering my soul from the curse of the law, and I have been muddling on ever since, and scores and hundreds of times have had the sweet testimony of lovingkindness in my heart, reviving me again and again. Yet I am as poor a creature as any one, and am as much shaken as ever when God withdraws His lovingkindness, and leaves poor old John and the devil by themselves. I tremble in my soul then, and I can but come

again and again with my old tale; and God never wants anything else but old tales. And what are they? "God be merciful to me, a sinner." "Lord, teach me; Lord, instruct me; Lord, strengthen me! O give me just another testimony; give me just one more!"

I have often thought of Jonah, whether he carried it on to the day of his death; but when he sinks down into the belly of hell, he cries out, "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple." The children of God in all their sinkings, will be looking for the lovingkindness of the Lord again, the same lovingkindness that set them at liberty before, and brought peace and joy to them before. Some professors of religion, when they come to hear such things as these preached, say, "O dear me! What! Will folks run to hear that fellow? He has no variety about him." What sort of variety does a hungry man want? Why, some good food that he has tasted before, and proved and relished. What sort of variety does a thirsty man want? Why, the same water from the same spring that he has tried before. What sort of variety does the poor tired and fatigued man want? Why, his bed to rest upon that he has proved again and again. What sort of variety does a man want that is bowed down with a burden upon his back, and is faint and sinking? Why, he wants his burden removed again. These are the varieties that God's people that know God want. All the professors of religion, with all their judgment, and all their wisdom, and all their talk, and all their memory of Scripture, if they have nothing of this, depend upon it, there is no proof of the powerful teachings of the Spirit of God in their hearts. David says, "They that have no changes, fear not God."

God bless the few hints that have been delivered, for His name's sake.

THE MOURNER BLESSED

By John Warburton

*Preached at Gower Street Chapel, London on Monday Evening,
October 31st, 1812*

"Blessed are they that mourn." (Matthew 5:4)

WHAT a mercy it is, then, to be a mourner! Whatever the mourners may think, whatever the mourners may say, whatever the mourners may believe or fear, God says they are "blessed." And He cannot mistake the matter, for He is God; and He can never speak anything but truth. And there never can be any uncertainty in its being accomplished; for what He says He does, and it stands for ever and ever. "Blessed are they that mourn." There are many times when mourners do not think so; there are many times when they do not believe it; but no matter for that. There are times and seasons when God will bring them to see it, believe it, yea and rejoice in their God.

By God's help, we shall endeavor to show some of the blessings that the mourners are blessed with.

I. These mourners are blessed with the light and life of God in their souls. What a great blessing is that! All talk without the light and life of God is but empty words, and tends only to puff up. Without the light and life of God, what is prayer? It is only the chattering of the lips. Without the light and life of God, what is preaching but an empty sound? The light and life of God are the very blessings that will secure all the mercies of God to the heart. We are certain that there must be the light and the life of God in the heart before ever a man can "mourn." For a dead man cannot mourn; a dead man cannot sigh; a dead man knows nothing about feeling. But when the light and life of God enter into the heart and dwell in the soul, it is a blessing that never can be drowned, that never can be conquered, that never can be overthrown. It abides,--abides for ever. God says it is "everlasting life,"--"everlasting light,"--"a well of water springing up into everlasting life." So here is a rich blessing.

Now the light and life of God give the mourner a discovery of what he is. The light of God gives him a discovery of himself, and a discovery of God, in the measure that God sees right and fit; and life to feel it--so that it is "the light of life." And when the mourner comes here, and has a sight of himself, of his baseness, of his ingratitude, of his wanderings, of his unthankfulness, of his pride,

of his hardened, presumptuous feelings, of the dreadful workings that there are in his mind, O what a grief he has at times over these! What mourning he has over his baseness, against the goodness, the mercy, the kindness and the compassion of God! There are tens of thousands of professors of religion that know no more about this than a young colt; this they leave for a parcel of people, they say, that are away with nothing but fleshly wind. But mourners, they have this experience, and they had rather have a thousand times over a sense of their vileness, and even bewail it in the dust, than they would have mere sentiment in their heads, and not the life of God in their hearts. I believe God teaches them to feel such a value in the immortal blessings of His eternal truth that they had rather suffer anything than be deceived and carried away with empty doctrine, without the teaching or power of God's Spirit.

When the mourner comes to have a sight of himself, and the life of God in his soul to feel it, how it grieves him! How his soul is weighed down! What does he say? "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in [me], but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores" (Isa. 1:6). He cries, "O wretch that I am! beast that I am! O, what a miserable, ignorant, worthless, foolish, wandering, ungodly, hell-deserving wretch I am!" He mourns to feel it in his very heart. Where the light and life of God are in the soul, it is that blessing that will teach the soul to see and feel the heinousness of sin, and teach the heart to abhor it. A man having the blessed light and life of God in his heart, and following after sin with patience cannot drink it in with gratification!--why, that is giving the Word of Truth the lie. The mourner has got enough in him to see and feel the wretchedness of his heart, the slipping of his tongue, the ungratefulness of his feelings for God's mercy, the evil passions that sometimes rise up, the hastiness of his expressions, the wretched feelings that he durst not name to mortal, to clothe him with sackcloth; and he mourns before God, and confesses it.

Have you never had these feelings? Do you know anything now of what it is to mourn? If you do not, you have not God's blessing of

light and life in your hearts, however you may talk about it, and whatever you may think about it, and whatever others may think of you or may say of you, and whatever use you may be to others. You may be useful to God's people, and God's cause; you may be of as much use even as a scaffolding is to a building; but when the building is complete, the scaffolding is taken down; it is no part of the building. If you know nothing about mourning, grieving, sighing, panting, confessing, and hating yourself for your sin against God, you have not the blessing of God's light and life in your soul.

II. "Blessed are they that mourn;" for they are blessed with an appetite,—a keenness, a longing, a panting, a desiring appetite for Christ, the Lord of life and glory, that they may feed upon Him, live upon Him, eat His flesh and drink His blood, and prove that He is their God and their Saviour. Every mourning soul has this blessing. I do not mean that he has this blessing every moment, that he has this blessing perpetually in exercise, of a keen appetite after Christ and for Christ, a begging for Him to enter in, to open the door and walk into his heart. No; sometimes the mourning soul is as dry, as dead in his feelings and as barren in his heart, as a barren heath; and sometimes he fears that he is just like a tree "plucked up by the roots", "twice dead"; and he is afraid that there is not the life of God in his heart. But there is. It is the light and the life of God that give him this feeling, that give him the confession and feeling of his state; and in God's own time he is brought again to have such an appetite. And how is he brought? Why, the soul is brought by the Spirit of the living God to see and to feel that there is no other object but Christ, that can satisfy his heart. He is cut off from men, cut off from himself, cut off from a covenant of works, cut off from every object under heaven, cut off from his own help, cut off from every hope; and his heart is brought to pant for Christ to come into his soul, and to have the sweet testimony that he is His, and that Christ is in him: his heart pants after Christ, "as the heart pants after the water brooks."

This is "blessing,"--the blessing of God. A natural man has not this blessing; a man dead in sin has not this blessing. "Ah!" say you, "but an appetite, a longing appetite--how can this be a blessing?" Why, the poor soul does not feel it a blessing; he does not enjoy a hungry appetite as a blessing; but it is a blessing. Have you not found it the case literally, with your body, that if you have had no appetite when the dinner has come upon the table, you have looked at it, and smelt it, and tasted it, but nothing was palatable, you did not enjoy any of it; it seemed to have no savor to your taste; it seemed as if the plentiful table that was spread was a mockery; your appetite was gone, and you could not give yourself an appetite. But when you have a good appetite, how sweet it is, is it not? Why, is it not a common saying in natural things,--what a good thing it is to have an appetite! I have been told, many a time, to go and walk out in the air before dinner, as the means of getting a good appetite. When there has been plenty to eat, it has been very nice to have a good appetite; but it is a most dismal thing to come with a good appetite and with great expectations, and find nothing but the cloth and knives and forks, and no provision.

The appetite itself is not the blessing, merely to have the appetite when there is nothing to meet it. But when the mourner has this appetite, God is preparing for him the feast. God is emptying him of the world, stripping him of self, bringing him out of every refuge of lies, to see and feel that he is damned without Christ, and nothing but Christ Jesus entering into his heart as his God and Saviour can satisfy his poor hungry soul. This is a blessing; for if there is a poor soul that has any such appetite for Christ, and has been panting for Christ, longing for Christ, thirsting after Christ, He will appear by-and-by. Ah! I was months, and months and thought I never should see Him, and He would never satisfy my heart; but He did. He says, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Nobody else can satisfy these hungry souls; no, not all the men in the world, nor all the ministers of God, nor all the sermons you may put into their hand, nor all the prayers of godly men, nor all the testimonies that men may bring out of the Word of God. It is God Himself alone who can do it.

It is the blessing of God that gives these mourners, cut off from every other object, this appetite for Christ, only Christ, to be set up in their hearts as their God and their Saviour. Natural men may have many natural convictions, and they may have many fears of hell, a great dread of hell; and they may cry for the mercy of God to save them from hell, and they may beg of God's people to pray for them, that God will save them; and they may be sincere in their prayers, for they really do not want to go to hell, and to be in that place that is pictured, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." But to have an appetite for Christ to enter into the heart, to long for His blood, His love, His righteousness, and to pant "as the hart panteth after the water-brook" for Him to speak it into the soul, they have nothing of this. This is an appetite that is given of God; a blessing that comes from God.

III. "Blessed are they that mourn," for God does not leave them with this blessing of an appetite; but He blesses them in His own time with the satisfying of that appetite, blessing the appetite with the provision He has prepared for it. For He has provided a rich feast, a blessed table, where there is abundance to satisfy the poor, thirsting, hungry, panting soul. What does He say? "I will abundantly bless the provisions" of My house. You see, we parsons have nothing to do with communicating the blessing; we are only as stewards to the family of God, to tell them what the Lord has provided, and the rich mercy prepared. It is the Lord who must speak it home to the heart. "I will abundantly bless," He says, "the provision" of My house; "I will satisfy her poor with bread" (Ps. 132:15). But when? He says there is "a set time to favour Zion" (Ps. 102:13). He says, "The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2:3). When did God give a stone to a child that asked bread? "Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"--yea, "give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" He tells us He "filleth the hungry with good things, and the rich he doth send empty away;" yes, "he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

So this blessing to the mourner is fixed; and in God's time he is sure to have it. What a blessing is this, when God brings it into the heart,—when God the Holy Ghost reveals Jesus as the Bread of God, and blesses the soul with faith to enter into His sufferings, His death, His blood, His love, His righteousness, His glory. What an eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood! What life, what love, what feasting, what pleasure, what delight, what joy, what transport! He eats and drinks; his appetite is satisfied, and he says, "My cup runneth over." Yea, and the Lord smiles, and says, "Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." This is a blessing that "maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it." When a man enjoys this blessing in his heart and in his soul, every crook is straight, every rough place plain, every mountain level, every valley raised up; every promise in the Bible hangs like grapes; every step that ever he has been led is all of God; and beauty and glory shine in all. Everything that ever took place is straight and right when God shows Himself, and the heart feels His glory. There is no disturbing the soul then; for when God gives peace, who can give trouble?

Have you ever had this, mourner? Have you ever been blessed with this in your heart,—to look upon Him whom thou hast pierced, and to mourn for your ungodliness, that ever you should have pierced the Lord of life and glory, and to feel your soul satisfied with His goodness? Whatever may take place, whatever ins and outs, whatever ups and downs, God will bring you safe home. He will; if you have many a dark night in the journey, God will bring you safe at last; for God's blessing is an eternal blessing.

There is some poor mourner, who has never had this blessing. You know what it is to have an appetite for Christ, and to pant to have an interest in His blood and righteousness, and to be stripped of every other resource; and whether damned or saved, you can hang nowhere else; but you have never been blessed with that precious faith that can say, "Abba, Father,"—"My Lord and my God." I can tell you, you will have it. As sure as ever you have been blessed with an appetite, as sure as you can never be satisfied

without it, you will have it. God has given you some intimations of it; He has given you a promise of it; and if He did not design it for you, you would never have had a promise brought into your heart, to break your heart, and bring you down to the feet of Jesus as a little child, to tell Him you are not worthy of His notice, but if He would only give you a lifting up of your soul, you would be so glad, and that you can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

"But," says the soul, "I want Jesus to say, 'I have loved thee.' I know I have loved Him; I know I have felt my soul go out in love to Him; I know there is nothing to suit me but Christ; but I want Him to say, 'I have loved thee.'" Can you find in all the books of the Bible that ever a soul loved Christ, but what He loved that soul? Love is of God; it is not in the creature to love Him, nor is it the work of nature; and God says, "I love them that love me." He has given you intimations of it at times in blessing you with hope. Have you not sometimes felt that text,--"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God"? Has not your soul sometimes whispered, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord"? These are drops out of the Fountain; these are intimations of His precious lovingkindness as your God and your Saviour; and having given you the testimonies, in His own time you shall be brought to the full enjoyment. If it is not now, it shall be in death; and if it is not then, it shall be in glory; it shall be in His own time.

"Ah! but," say you, "have you found it a blessing, when you have been hungry?" My friends, God has set forth His own truth better than any man in the world can. God marks it out in this way; the body hungering and thirsting, and the soul hungering and thirsting; and then feeding and enjoying. Now anybody of common sense, that has natural life, can tell what grief and pain it is to be hungry and have nothing to eat. A plough-boy can tell that; he does not need to go to school to learn what hunger is, nor to learn what provision will do. I have watched him many a time, and smiled to

see him eat when he had come out of the field, quite worn out. "Well," say you, "and suppose there are but a few crumbs on the table; are crumbs a blessing to him?" I will tell you what those crumbs will do. They will give him just a little taste, and make him long the more, pant the more, hunger the more; for the appetite must have its fill to stop its craving. And I am never afraid of stopping a child of God short of Christ. Some people are afraid to preach that the poor hungry soul is a child of God. They say he has no business to be set down as one of God's children until he comes to the full assurance of faith that Christ has died for him; and I have been told sometimes that I make people content, and satisfy them in their hungerings. I never heard such ignorance in all my life;--satisfy a living man with hunger? Dead men are never troubled about hunger. You may put victuals into their lips, but they cannot chew; or to their nose, but they cannot smell; or into their hand, but they cannot move; but nothing except eating will satisfy a living man who has an appetite. Nothing will satisfy a living soul but what Jeremiah had: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." Poor souls that have had but crumbs, and drops, and tastes! Hunger on, cry on, pant on; for God has promised that you shall be satisfied, and His Word "has gone out of his mouth," and "shall not return unto him void."

IV. "They that mourn are blessed" with many useful, valuable, needful troubles, sorrows, and afflictions. Indeed, there is not a single thing that ever is sent from God as a Father to His dear children, but what has a blessing of God linked and coupled with it. They are blessed; and they never can be cursed.

God in infinite wisdom sends a variety of crosses, to cut up His people's fleshly schemes, to blast their fleshly plans, to chop up all their fleshly hardness, and to break down all their castles and their high towering views. Every child of God has a nature that is proud, a nature that is independent, a nature that likes prosperity, a nature that is very fond of proceeding with respectability and not being beholden to anybody. But it is God's will that His dear children

shall be stripped of every object but Himself; and for wise ends and purposes He sends troubles. Sometimes trials in providence; losses on the right hand and on the left, that threaten nothing but to bring the poor man to the workhouse. The devil says, "Ah! where is your Christianity? Where is your God? Have you not prayed, hundreds of times, that God would open a way in providence? But where are your prayers, and where is the appearance of your God?" Then he turns the poor soul round, and tells him to look at some of his neighbours that are wicked and have no fear of God before their eyes, and see how everything they put their hand to prospers. "And," says the devil, "how can you prove that there is even a God, who inhabits the heavens?" And the poor soul "reels to and fro." Sometimes on the back of this God sends afflictions into the family, sometimes bereaves it of the dearest object upon earth, and sometimes comes with such tremendous darkness into the soul, and so hides His face, and everything appears so against the child of God, that he cries out, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." "What!" say you, "do you call these 'blessings?'" I do; very valuable blessings, prizable blessings, needful blessings.

"Well," says some soul, "to God's people they will be, I believe, in the end; but I fear that I am nothing but a hypocrite, and God is sending these as judgments." Such a soul as this has something else to do than think about what they are to other folks. When he comes into such spots as these, he has enough to do with himself; he leaves everybody else, for his troubles, his sorrows, his griefs. And they cut him up in such a way that he fights, and he rages, and he is troubled and he sometimes says, "I will never call upon God again; I will have nothing to do with religion. It is all an empty farce." He says, "I wish I had never opened my mouth for God or religion at all." His wound is like a bear bereaved of her whelps; as the prophet says, "We roar all like bears." Then, instead of looking at these things as blessings, he looks at them as curses, fears them as curses, dreads them as curses; but it is no such thing, they are blessings. And I will tell you how they will work under the hand of God. They will never work anything but wrath and wretchedness in themselves; but when God's mercy comes in them (as the apostle

says, "All things work together for good to them that love God"), He gives the soul to see the emptiness of every object but Himself, and to see that there is no rest but in Himself. God strips him from every source but God; and brings him at last with all his burden, with all his weight and all his care, to cast himself and all that he has upon the Lord. And when He is brought by the good Spirit of God to cast himself and his all upon God's promises, what a blessing!

When God brings the soul here, He teaches him what to say. The Holy Spirit puts words into his heart, and into his mouth. And the poor thing comes like a little burdened child, wounded from head to foot, and he says, "O Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest notice me. I am a poor fool; nay, I deserve hell; but here I am, cut off from every source, and wilt thou turn a poor beggar away? Wilt thou turn back from thy promise? Thou didst look upon poor Bartimeus, who was by the wayside. Thou didst remember the poor woman, who was but 'a dog' in Thy sight, and wanted but to sit under the table, and have the crumbs. Thou didst remember the poor and needy of old; wilt Thou turn Thy back on such a wretch as I?" And then he comes a little further, and he pleads God's promise, and he says, "Hast Thou not said, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee?'" (Ps. 55:22) The poor soul comes with such freedom, and he says, "Lord, search me; am I not 'casting it on thee?' Am I looking to any arm of flesh? Am I looking to any other source? Here I am; wilt Thou deny me? Thou hast said, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'" (Ps. 50:15) So the soul comes with all its troubles to God; and God by-and-by sweetly opens up His mercy.

What a sweet way God has of working! When He has loaded the soul with troubles, and griefs, and sorrows, and overruled them to cut him off from every source but Himself, God puts the promises in his heart, brings him to God, and teaches him what to say. He says, "Hast Thou not said, 'Put me in remembrance?' (Isa. 43:26) and wilt Thou turn a deaf ear to my complaints?" And by-and-by God opens His mouth, and speaks; and says, "It is done as thou hast requested. It is done according unto thy petition"; and the

mourner's burden drops, and his cares drop; the goodness, and the mercy and the kindness, of his God in his deliverance sanctify his crosses, and his losses, and his afflictions to bring honour to God; and he is purified here seven times to the honour and glory of God.

Some people's religion comes to nothing at all in affliction; nothing but rebellion, nothing but wretchedness. Afflictions in themselves work nothing but rebellion; the flesh cannot bear afflictions, cannot bear crosses; pride will fight against them. But with God's children, when God overrules it, turns the captivity, and blesses the soul with a deliverance, what a blessing then are afflictions! When this is the case, the soul can join with David, and say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes" (Ps. 119:71). He can enter into what the apostle says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11). And how sweet it is for such souls, when they can enter into that precious blessing, to say with the apostle Paul, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

Crosses, afflictions, and griefs, with God's overruling hand, are blessings to the mourner; and he is brought to see his need of them. I am so foolish that I never can walk straight for long together without a pack. Now that God has taken away the pack of old debts, and I have neither over nor under, neither riches nor poverty, I am burdened internally with a load of sin, and sometimes burdened at home; and when I have no crosses or afflictions I sometimes get so carnal, there never was such a bungling fool at prayer. I have hard work to conduct what is called family prayer sometimes then, stammering and fumbling to find words for about six minutes; and I dare not neglect it, for conscience condemns that. Really, it is hard work. But when God hides His face, and the pack is upon the back, and the heart begins to feel it, and some keen affliction threatens, then there is a little life again; then there is a coming to God with the heart, and wrestling with God with the

soul. About three weeks or a fortnight before I came from home, I felt myself as dead as a stone. I could not pray, nor come to God with a single breath, and I seemed to think it was all over; and then tidings were brought to me that one of my daughters was taken suddenly ill, and was just at the point of death, and not likely to live an hour. Then, what matter for prayer! Prayer stirred up its mighty arm, and thrust the rubbish out of every corner, brushed all the carnality on one side, and my soul was brought to wrestle with God till my body was in an agony, and God told me (and I could not leave Him till He told me) that sickness was "not unto death, but for the glory of God." Ah! these are good things, these are blessings,--to be brought to a throne of grace, and to prove our God a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God.

Such blessings are trials to the mourners. They are "blessed," and they shall be blessed. Whether it is in prosperity or affliction, life or death, wherever God sends them, His blessing will be round about them; and every cross they have is God's blessing, and it shall be overruled for good. Mourners, lift up your heads; things are not half so bad as you imagine. Your God has all power in His hands. Angels, men, and devils are at His beck. The earth is His, and "the cattle upon a thousand hills." He carries "the keys of death and of hell"; nothing can move without Him. What a God you have! What a Head you have! What a Husband you have!

V. "Blessed are they that mourn." They are blessed with an everlasting kingdom given to them, to enter in, and to be with their God for ever, and never have another mourning day or moment. All their afflictions ended, "their day as a hireling accomplished," and all the trials God has appointed them passed through, death only remains to separate body and soul, that the body should turn to corruption, to be raised again an incorruptible body, like unto Christ's, and the happy spirit of the mourner takes its flight into the realms of eternal day to its Father's house. There is no mourning there. The Lord "leads them to living fountains of water, and wipes away all tears from their eyes." They will "see him as he is," and be with Him, and be like Him; and their song will be, "unto him that

loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. 1:5,6).

So that the "mourner" is "blessed"; blessed in all the applications of God's truth, blessed in his troubles, blessed when he is stripped, blessed in dying, blessed to all eternity. "Blessed are they that mourn." They are blessed, and none can curse them.

What a mercy, then, to be one of these! O may God bless you and me, that are mourners, that know these things, with much of the presence and blessing and smiles of God in our hearts; and He shall have the glory.

Part Two

SOVEREIGN GRACE - FROM THE PRESENT

Chapter Thirteen

BENJAMIN A. RAMSBOTTOM
(1929-)

BENJAMIN A. RAMSBOTTOM

Benjamin A. Ramsbottom (1929-) is the present editor of the "Gospel Standard" magazine and is also the pastor of Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel at Luton. His sermons are regularly issued in booklet form, and he has written a number of books including several excellent biographies.

THE GLORIES OF THE RESURRECTION

By Benjamin A. Ramsbottom

*Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton, on Lord's Day morning,
11th April, 2004*

*"And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I
know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is
risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay"
(Matthew 28:5,6)*

NONE of us can ever truly realise the awful darkness, sorrow and gloom that rested on the Lord's immediate followers after His death. Beloved friends, you and I this morning look back two thousand years. We know the end, the glories of the resurrection. They did not. "As yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead."

It must have seemed the end of everything to them. The immediate disciples, these godly women, had they been deceived? Were they completely wrong? It seemed as if Satan had triumphed, as if the powers of hell had triumphed. It must have been one of the darkest days in the history of the whole human race, that day between the Lord's death and His glorious resurrection.

O but what a wonderful thing we see in these godly women! If you want to know what the sweet constrainings of the love of Christ are, you see it in these godly women – the last to leave the cross, the last to leave the sepulchre, the first there in the morning of the first day of the week. They did not understand it; they were broken-hearted; but they could not keep away. Something was drawing them. The love of Christ was constraining them. "When it was yet dark." So early in the morning these women were going along to the sepulchre. Love overcomes everything, the love of Christ. Love is stronger than death. So it pulled them toward the grave of the Lord Jesus. The most they could expect was to honour the lifeless body of their late Lord and Master. Instead they met with a risen Saviour.

I could not help keep thinking of that word: "To seeking souls He always gives more than their hearts expect." Well, these were seeking souls. They did not know what they were seeking. They were sorrowing because their Lord had gone, but they were seeking souls and they were most blessedly given more than their hearts could expect. So it is today. So it will ever be. "The angel ... said ... Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus." And the Lord knows who they are, here this morning, who have come truly seeking after a once-crucified, but now risen, exalted Saviour. Well, I do not know who you are, but the Lord does: how few, how many,

whether the old ones who have never really found Him, or perhaps some of you young ones, and perhaps some seeking the Saviour for the first time. But blessed souls who are seeking after Christ and cannot be satisfied without Him.

I was reading one of J.C. Philpot's letters only this week (and Philpot was very cutting and separating). But John Kay, the clergyman who had come out of the Church of England and had suffered for conscience sake, was preaching so severely in our chapels, cutting almost everybody off. Philpot wrote to his friend Joseph Parry and said, "There is one thing our friend Kay can never do. He can never blot that text out of Scripture, 'Seek, and ye shall find,' and what a mercy!" "To seeking souls He always gives more than their hearts expect." "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus."

As we read this morning (Mark 16), you remember there was one thing that burdened the hearts of these godly women, and that was the great stone. "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? ... for it was very great." Poor, feeble women could not roll the stone away. That great stone was there at the door of the sepulchre between the body of the Lord Jesus and themselves, and who shall roll it away? "And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away." You do not need me to tell you what had rolled away that great stone. The power of His resurrection. And beloved friends, the power of His resurrection is still the same this morning as when the Lord and Saviour rose triumphantly from the dead. And not just that; it can be known. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." "Well, perhaps like those godly women some of you have a great stone. Who shall roll it away, for it is very great? You realise you cannot roll it away. Perhaps it is a stone that comes between your Saviour and yourself and it separates, and who shall roll it away? Or what about those of you with sin and guilt, that great stone lying heavy on your conscience? Who shall roll it away? And what about all those stones you have in providence, so many of you with your troubles in your families, your health, those you love, your circumstances and the unknown

way? And who shall roll you away the stone? With many it is that great stone, and you see it at the door of the sepulchre. It is when you look forward to your end. "How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" There is a great stone there, and who shall roll it away?

"And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away." The power of Christ's resurrection had done it. And how many a believer has found, when you come there, not before, when you come there, the stone is rolled away, for it is very great! That hymn we sang recently, how good it was: "When I come there, I can't be confounded, the Lord will appear." "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great."

One thing: have you ever noticed that in holy Scripture there is never really a description of how the resurrection took place? There is the announcement made, the clear, blessed announcement, but it happened in secret, and there was a veil drawn over it. The old godly divines used to say they felt that was one great point of inspiration of Scripture. If it had just been a human story, a human fabrication, O what a wonderful account would have been given of the Lord Jesus rising from the dead and coming forth from the grave; but there is that veil drawn over it. The crucifixion was very public, and the ascension; but the resurrection, there is that veil over it. Just the simple announcement: "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." One thing we are told, that an angel descended from heaven and rolled away the stone. You might say, "What need was there for an angel to come from heaven? The Lord Jesus rose triumphant by His own divine, almighty power. What need was there for an angel to come and roll away the stone?" Well, as I see it, when the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ cried, "It is finished," then His shame and His ignominy were ended for ever. He must have an honourable burial, not the lot of those who were crucified. He must be "with the rich in His death." It must be an honourable burial, and for His coming forth out of the grave, an angel must come from heaven to roll away the stone

before Him. A wonderful truth, the resurrection. "The Lord is risen indeed."

*"Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
Death in vain forbids His rise;
Christ has opened paradise."*

"He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." We are told that when this angel descended from heaven, "his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." We cannot help but think of the general resurrection of the dead in the last great day. O what a scene that will be, when all the graves give up their dead, when the righteous rise and when the wicked rise, and when like this, the garden tomb in Jerusalem, "for fear of him" – an angel – "the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." What about when,

*"Lo! He comes, with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain,
Thousand, thousand saints attending?"*

Have you noticed the contrast here, the marked contrast, the gracious contrast? "For fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye." O you see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, and so it will be in the great day when millions shake and become as dead men. But, "Fear not ye." Who? Those who by precious faith have sought the Saviour and have found Him." "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Well then, this announcement. So simple this announcement that Christ who was crucified is dead no more, that He lives, that He is risen from the dead. "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." I do

not know how you think about the resurrection, beloved friends, but as it hovers round my spirit I tend to think of the resurrection in three ways. First of all there is the fact of the resurrection, the glorious fact. "The Lord is risen indeed." But then there is a second thing: the power of His resurrection, that power which was put forth when He rose from the dead, that power that can still be known today, that power which is put forth when a sinner is born again, that power the Lord's people experience. And then hovering round it there is a third thing, and that is the risen Saviour. It is not just the fact, not just the power, but it is a Person, a glorious Person. "The Saviour lives no more to die." And He says to all His people, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

So we think of this garden scene, the rock sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, and we think of this glorious fact of the resurrection, and we think of this divine almighty power, the power of the resurrection. But above all we think of the risen Saviour. The vital point for you and me is this: a vital, personal, saving knowledge of Christ – not just to know of Him, not just to know about Him – but to know Him, whom to know is life eternal. Now how many of you from an honest heart can personally say that you do know the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, this risen Saviour? He can be known; He can be loved; He can be worshipped. "The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said."

The resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith, that He who was crucified rose triumphant from the dead and rose to die no more. Now what is the importance of the resurrection? Have you noticed the Lord Jesus in His ministry laid so much emphasis on it? "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He laid so much emphasis on it, that He would die and that He would rise again. "I have power to lay it [My life] down, and I have power to take it again." In one sense other people had risen from the dead. You think of the Shunammite's son; you think of the widow woman's son at Zarephath. Come to the New Testament, and you can go through a few: Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, the son of the

widow of Nain. O but the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ laid so much emphasis on it, that He would die, but by His own almighty power He would rise again. The Lord Jesus spoke of it as an evidence that He was whom He claimed to be. He said He came forth from the Father. He said He was the Son of God eternally. He said He would die and rise from the dead. So He was "declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead."

But more than that, it was not an ordinary death the Lord Jesus died. He died a sacrifice for sin. He died with all the sins of all His people laid upon Him. If one sin had remained, if one sin had not been atoned for, then the lifeless body must have remained in the grave. But, "The Lord is risen indeed," the open seal that the Father had accepted His sacrifice, the open evidence that sin is for ever put away and God's people "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." O how much there is that hangs on the resurrection! Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15: "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.... And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." "He is not here: for He is risen, as He said."

"The Saviour lives no more to die." But do not forget the angel did not leave this out: "Jesus, which was crucified." The resurrection supposes that Jesus died, and He did. And what a death He died! "Jesus, which was crucified," in love to sinners, to open a fountain for sin and for uncleanness in His precious blood, to open up a new and living way to heaven, to pay the ransom price, to save His people with an everlasting salvation. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified." Well, we do; no hope apart from a crucified Saviour. "We preach Christ crucified," but not a dead Christ, a living Christ. We preach Christ who was crucified, who died, who was buried, who rose again. "But now is Christ risen from the dead."

"The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." The glorious fact of His resurrection. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." They were invited to view the empty tomb. They were invited to view the place where the Lord lay, to see a tomb for ever empty, to see a tomb for ever vacated. The Christian religion invites investigation. It is not afraid of it. You remember right at the beginning of the Lord's ministry, those two who were following Him said, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" He said, "Come and see." And the Christian religion always speaks like that. It says, "Come and see." There is proof here. There is evidence here. "He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" – that tomb for ever empty; that tomb for ever vacated. Not long after this Simon Peter could stand up not far away from the rock tomb and he could declare without fear of contradiction that that tomb was empty, that the Lord had risen triumphant from the dead. "He is not here: for He is risen as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Now there are two very beautiful applications of this word, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." The first is the ordinance of believers' baptism. The open baptistery represents the grave of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "View the rite with understanding; Jesus' grave before you lies." In the ordinance of believers' baptism by immersion in water, going right underneath the water and coming right up from it, is symbolised the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The person being baptized simply confesses this openly before all: my only hope is in what the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ accomplished in His death, burial and resurrection; and also that desire to be buried with Him by baptism unto death, to rise again to newness of life, to die to my past life, to live that new life by faith upon the Son of God. Now, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." It is a most beautiful ordinance, and it is an ordinance for sinners. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

The second application: the grave of a believer. O how often have we looked down into the open grave of a believer and we have said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay"! All the sin, all the bitterness taken out of it, that as surely as Jesus died and rose again, the blessed dead who have died in the Lord will one day rise again triumphant to eternal life. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." "And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

You notice it says, "The angel answered." But we do not read that these godly women had spoken a single word or asked a single question. "The angel answered." The Lord knew what was in their heart and the Lord knows what is in your heart and the Lord knows what is in my heart. It is a wonderful thing when you come to the sanctuary seeking answers. Well, I suppose they had many questions, especially when they saw the stone rolled away. They had many questions, and perhaps as you come to the house of God this morning you have many questions. Perhaps, Why did the Lord Jesus die and rise again? And perhaps, Did the Lord Jesus die and rise again for me? But you have all these questions. If it be so tell me, and if it be not so, tell me. "And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

This then was the first word that was spoken after the Lord's resurrection, and it began with this: "Fear not ye." In other words, no cause for fear now the Redeemer is risen triumphant from the dead having conquered sin, Satan, death and hell. "Fear not ye" – the first word spoken after the resurrection and spoken not just to these godly women but spoken to the whole church of God right down to the end of time. "Fear not ye." Because it can be said of believers in all ages, "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified." So this is the first word spoken after the resurrection. The first word spoken personally by the Lord Jesus Himself after the resurrection was this: "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" – the risen Saviour to Mary Magdalene. And here, no cause for fear if the Saviour be risen. There, no cause for fear if the Saviour

be risen. "Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?" "Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

Remember it was a similar word that the Lord Jesus spoke to John on the Isle of Patmos. John said, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me" – that right hand of gracious authority, that right hand of love. "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." That means complete authority over hell and death, but it means this: if the Lord Jesus has the keys of hell, when He cried, "It is finished," He for ever locked the doors of hell against all His people ever entering therein. "And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified."

So what are your fears this morning? Fears because of your sin, fears because of your soul and the great day, the day of your death, fears because of temptation, fears because of the assaults of Satan. "Fear not ye" – the answer to it all is in the Saviour who once died, who now for ever lives and ever reigns, who is almighty to save, and who is so full of compassion. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." "Fear not ye." What are your fears? Things in providence, the afflictions you are in, the peculiar circumstances through which you are passing, the unknown way. "Fear not ye." To see the risen Saviour exalted at God's right hand. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." That means all things, all things in the hands of the risen Saviour: the whole of redemption, the whole of creation, the whole of providence, yes, and you personally if you are one of His people, you with all your concerns, all these things in the hands of the risen Saviour. We sing, "Sovereign Ruler of the skies." Look at that well-known line: "All my times are in Thy hand." But to see Christ as a once-crucified, but now risen and exalted Saviour, and to feel that all my concerns, all my times, all my providences, all my circumstances, all are in His divine, almighty, gracious, all-wise

hands. One hymn writer says, "My times are in Thy hands; my God, I wish them there." O to see everything in the Saviour's hands, and then to see Him, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms."

"The angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Chapter Fourteen

DON FORTNER

DONALD S. FORTNER

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JESUS ONLY

By Don Fortner

*"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no
man, save Jesus only"
(Matthew 17:8)*

PETER, James, and John were with the Lord Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. There they saw the Saviour transfigured before them. We do not know what that vision was like. But we do know that it was a dazzling display of his divine glory and majesty (2 Pet. 1:16-18; John 1:14; 1 John 1:2). Suddenly, Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain with them and talked to Christ about the death he must accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:32). Needless to say, Peter, James, and John were awestruck! I would be too. Wouldn't you? When Peter saw and heard Moses and Elijah, he blurted out, *"Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!"* The Lord Jesus said nothing. But while Peter was yet talking, *"A cloud overshadowed them."* God simply snuffed out Moses and Elijah. He took them out of the picture. *"And behold a voice spoke out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."*

Moses and Elijah were removed from the scene for a reason. The Old Covenant was vanishing away. The dawn of a new day and a new covenant had come. When the Lord God said, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,"* he was saying to Peter, James, and John, and to you and me, "Moses and Elijah have been fulfilled. Moses and Elijah have nothing more to say or do. All that they said and all that they did was in preparation for and pointed to the coming of my beloved Son. Here he is. *'Hear ye him!'* Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets have no other function."

At Sinai the people were forbidden to make any approach to the presence of God. They were not allowed to even touch the mountain. In the tabernacle and in the temple a thick, thick veil stood before the most holy place, constantly separating the people from God. The law did nothing to bring sinners into God's presence. It never could (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 10:1-4). In fact, it did just the opposite. The law forbade men from even trying to approach the holy Lord God! No one could ever approach the God of heaven and earth until the law was fulfilled, its curse removed, and sin was put

away by the satisfaction of God's justice. The Lord Jesus, so to speak, came down the mountain to the people, tore down the veil, and by the blood of his cross opened to fallen men a way of access to the Lord God (Heb. 10:19-23).

When the disciples saw Christ in his glory and heard God speak from heaven, they fell on their faces. They realized that they were in the awesome presence of the glory of God and were terrified by it. That is always what happens when a sinner realizes who he is before the holy Lord God (Job 40:3-5; 42:5-6; Isa. 6:1-8; Dan. 10:8).

Then, after they fell before him in utter terror, we read that *"Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid"* (v. 7). God the Son, having assumed our nature for the express purpose of redeeming us and, thereby, showing us how greatly he loves us, here reveals that his whole heart towards his own is love, and bids his chosen never to be afraid.

"And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (v. 8). When the law has been honoured, fulfilled, and silenced and you look up to see the One by whose obedience it has been fully satisfied, you will see *"Jesus only"*. When you are made to understand that all the prophets have been fulfilled and you look up to see who fulfilled all those prophetic visions and promises given in the Old Testament, you will see *"no man, save Jesus only"*. The Lord Jesus Christ alone is our salvation, comfort, strength, and hope.

Our Saviour

"Jesus only" is Our Saviour (Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 1:30-31). In the matter of salvation Christ stands entirely alone. We put no trust in the flesh, in ourselves, or in anything we do or experience. We trust *"Jesus only"* (Phil. 3:3; Rom. 11:6; Gal. 5:2,4). We trust Christ alone for righteousness (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:25-5:1; Jer. 23:6; 33:16). *"Jesus only"* is that Holiness we must have, without which none can see God (Heb. 12:14). We trust *"Jesus only"* for redemption

(2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; 3:15). We trust *“Jesus only”* for sanctification (1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 10:10-14). We trust *“Jesus only”* for preservation in grace (2 Tim. 1:12). We trust *“Jesus only”* for our resurrection and glorification (Ps. 16:9-11).

Either Christ alone is my Saviour, or I have no Saviour! Either he completely saves, or he does not save at all. If so much as the will to be saved depends upon me, I cannot be saved (John 5:46). If, after having been saved for fifty years, I should be required to reach back and drag my foot across the threshold of heaven, I would sink at last into hell. *“Salvation is of the Lord!” “By the grace of God I am what I am!”*

Our Lord

“Jesus only” is our Lord and Master — *“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”* (2 Pet. 1:2). I know that the Lord Jesus Christ is the sovereign Monarch of the universe and the Ruler of all men, the wicked as well as the righteous. But he is the Lord of his people willingly, by our voluntary consent (1 Cor. 12:3). True faith voluntarily surrenders all things to the rule of Christ (Luke 14:24-33). True faith trusts Christ's providential rule of all things, saying, *“Thy will be done.”* True faith is obedient to Christ the Lord.

The Church of God is a Kingdom under the rule of Christ by voluntary consent, willingly obedient to his Word, his ordinances, and his will. He is our Master, and we are happy and thankful that he is.

Our Rule

“Jesus only” is our rule of life. We are not slaves under the dominion of the law. We are children, walking in the path of our Elder Brother because we love him and seek the honour of his name (John 13:15). Our rule of life is not the ten commandments, but the whole revealed will of God given to us in Holy Scripture. It is

summarized in two commandments, two motivating forces by which we are governed in all things: faith and love (1 John 3:23).

Our Hope

"Jesus only" is our hope before God (Col. 1:27; Lam. 3:24-26).

*"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ the Solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."*

Our only assurance and peace is Christ (Rom. 5:1). All who know him gladly confess, "I am a poor sinner and nothing at all; but Jesus Christ is my all in all!" Christ alone is our plea before and advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1-2). Christ alone is able to present us faultless before the presence of God's glory. And he will do it (Eph. 5:25-27; Jude 24-25).

*"Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay,
While through Christ's blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous guilt and blame?"*

Our Reward

"Jesus only" is our reward in heaven. *"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever"* (Ps. 73:25-26). In heaven's eternal glory we want nothing and hope for nothing but *"Jesus only"*. He is the Crown we seek and the beauty we desire (Isa. 28:5). *"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up"* (Ps. 27:10). Soon we shall be with

Christ (John 14:1-3). Soon we shall see his face (Rev. 22:4). When we see him, we shall be like him (1 John 3:2). We shall be fully satisfied with him (Rev. 21:1-4). And the Son of God shall be fully satisfied with us! (Isa. 53:11). Imagine that!

Our All

“Jesus only” is our all. As the Spirit of God states it in Colossians 3:11, *“Christ is all, and in all.”* To him every knee shall bow. Christ is all in all in creation, redemption, providence, grace, glory. He is all in all in his church and in the hearts of all his people. Christ is all in the Book of God, the sum and substance of the whole Bible. He is the living Word of whom the written Word speaks. The Lord Jesus Christ is not one of many revelations. He is the revelation of the invisible God. Christ is not one of many words. He is the Word of God (John 1:1-3; 18). You and I cannot see God, know God, speak to God, be spoken to by God, or come to God except by Christ (John 14:6; Matt. 11:25-27). Christ is the Way – without him, there is no going to God. Christ is the Truth – without him, there is no knowing God. Christ is the Life – without him, there is no living before God. There is no prophet like Christ our Prophet. He is unrivalled in his excellence as the Revelation of the invisible God.

When we read the promises of God, we understand that Christ is the first promise in the sacred Word, and the whole of every promise that follows. In him all the promises of God are yea and amen. When we read the law of God, we rejoice to know that *“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”* When we read of the sacrifices, we rejoice to know that Christ has, by his one sacrifice fulfilled them all, for by that one sacrifice he has *“perfected forever them that are sanctified.”* When we read the prophets, our hearts leap with joy because *“to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”*

“AS AN EAGLE”

“As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him.”

(Deuteronomy 32:11-12)

LIKE other creatures of our God, the eagle not only appears to show great affection for her young; but manifests tremendous superiority over other winged creatures in taking care of her brood. She provides for them and protects them, as other birds of the air do. But, in training them, she constantly shelters them from danger, far more than other birds do their young. The Lord our God seems to have created her with such excellence, that she might be illustrative of his affection for, tender care of, and protection of his children.

John Gill wrote, "Of all animals the eagle is most affectionate to its young, and most studiously careful of them. When it sees anyone coming to them, it will not suffer them to go away unpunished, but will beat them with its wings and tear them with its nails."

Stirs Up

“She stirreth up her nest.” — Though they might be naturally inclined to do so, the eagle will not allow her young to be lethargic. She stirs her nest, calling them to life and excitement. As she stirs her nest, she *“fluttereth over them,”* over her young. The eagle does not go into her nest suddenly. She first makes a noise and awakens her chicks with her wings, striking them against a tree or its branches. Being awakened, they receive her gladly, without fear.

On Her Wings

She “*spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings.*” — In this way she both teaches them to fly and protects them. Other birds carry their young in their talons. Held in their claws, the young might be easily snatched away and killed by some bird of prey. If someone from the ground should shoot at the bird, her young might be killed and the bird herself unharmed. But the eagle carries her young on her wings, so that no arrow from beneath can touch the young, until it has first pierced the heart of the old bird.

So the Lord

“*So the Lord alone did lead them.*” — What a precious word this is to us! What a picture this is of our God's tender mercy toward us in Christ! Our great God, “*the God of all grace,*” by the irresistible power of his Holy Spirit, stirs up his nest. He will not allow his children, chosen, redeemed sinners, to remain as they are born into this world. He would not allow us to sleep forever in the unawakened state of sin and death. He has brought us out of our unregenerate state of death.

We were at ease and had no desire to be awakened and stirred out of our death slumber. But the Lord our God, because of his great love for us, awakened us, stirred us up, and brought us out, by sending a gospel preacher in the power of his Spirit to arouse us. He sent his law into our consciences, working in us a sense of guilt, wrath, and death. By his Spirit, revealing Christ in us, he convinced us of our sin, of Christ's righteousness, and of judgment finished. Exerting the omnipotent power of his grace, he plucked us as brands out of the burning. Taking us up on his omnipotent wings of mercy, he teaches us to fly with heart aspirations after him, setting our hearts upon Christ and things above.

He has led us and fed us all the days of our lives. He has, as it were, hovered over us, though we knew it not, from our mother's

womb. Even now, he causes us to *"mount up with wings as eagles,"* to soar aloft in the exercise of faith, hope, and love, entering within into the veil, into the holiest of all by the blood of Christ, living in the constant and comfortable expectation of *"the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."* He lifts us up from our low estate and raises us in sweet communion with himself, bearing us on his heart, in his hands, and on his arm, supporting us in all our temptations and afflictions and carrying us through all our troubles and difficulties, safe to eternal glory and happiness.

One Chosen

The eagle will usually lay three eggs, but normally only hatches and rears one, devoting everything to its chosen. So the Lord our God has chosen One, even our Lord Jesus Christ, as his Elect; and, blessed be his name, he has chosen us in him and as one with him. Though all the rest of Adam's fallen race are left to themselves, as the unhatched eggs in the eagle's nest, our great God and Father devotes himself entirely to his chosen!

Let every ransomed sinner rejoice and give thanks for this sweet, comforting word of grace from our God. — *"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him."* Christ, our God and Saviour, has born and still bears us upon eagles' wings. He stirred us up and brought us to himself. He will not allow any of his little ones to perish. It is written, *"he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."* While on his omnipotent wings of mercy, nothing can touch us until it first touches him. Nothing can harm us, until it first harms him. Nothing can destroy us, until it first destroys him! How safe, how secure we are on his wings!

After commenting on this portion of Scripture, Robert Hawker made the following supplication to our God. Blessed are those whose hearts echo his prayer. "Oh Lord, give me grace rightly to enjoy and use such marvellous blessings. And since, to the wisdom and strength of the eagle, thou hast now added the tenderness and

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solicitude of the hen, do thou, Lord, gather me under thy wings, and nourish me with thy love and favour, that I may be thine for ever, and live here by faith, as hereafter I hope to live with thee in glory."

WHY WAS HE FORSAKEN?

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1).

EVERYTHING recorded in the 22nd Psalm, if I understand it correctly, was written prophetically, penned by divine inspiration, as the very words spoken by our blessed Saviour when he hung upon the cursed tree, bearing our sins as our Substitute. Spurgeon wrote...

"Before us we have a description both of the darkness and of the glory of the cross, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow. Oh for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture it is in this psalm."

Christ Forsaken

These are the words of our blessed Saviour when he hung upon the cursed tree as our Substitute, when he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. At the apex of his obedience, at the time of his greatest sorrow, in the hour of his greatest need, the Lord Jesus cried out to his Father, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* That is the question I want to address. Answer it I cannot. Declare it I must.

After asking, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* our all-glorious Redeemer tells us how utterly forsaken he was, so utterly forsaken that the Father refused to hear the cries of his own darling Son in the hour of his greatest need. — *"Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."* I read those words with utter astonishment. I will not attempt to

explain what I cannot imagine. But these things are written here for our learning, that we might, through patience and consolation of the Scriptures, have hope. And I hang all the hope of my immortal soul upon this fact. — When the Lord Jesus Christ was made sin for me, he was utterly forsaken of God and put to death as my Substitute; and by his one great, sin-atonement sacrifice he has forever put away my sins. He not only bore our sins in his body on the tree, he bore them away!

The Reason

Yet, when we read verse 3, our holy Saviour, when he was made sin for us, answers the cry of his own soul's agony. *"But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel."* Why was the Lord Jesus forsaken by his Father when he was made sin for us? Because the holy Lord God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Our Saviour was forsaken by the Father when he was made sin for us because justice demanded it. *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity"* (Hab. 1:13).

Here, in verse 3, our Saviour, when he was dying under the wrath of God, justified God in his own condemnation, because he was made sin for us. He proclaims the holiness of God in the midst of his agony. He is so pure, so holy, so righteous, so just, that he will by no means clear the guilty (Ex. 34:7), even when the guilty One is his own darling Son! Rather than that his holy character be slighted, our Surety must suffer and die, because he was made sin for us.

Made Sin

Our Saviour had no sin of his own. He was born without original sin, being even from birth *"that Holy One"* (Luke 1:35). Throughout his life he *"knew no sin"* (2 Cor. 5:21), *"did no sin"* (1 Pet. 2:22), *"and in him is no sin"* (1 John 3:5). But on Calvary the holy Lord God *"made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). Just as in the incarnation

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"the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), in substitution he who was made flesh "was made sin for us."

I do not know how God could be made flesh and never cease to be God; but he was. I do not know how the eternal God could die and yet never die; but he did (Acts 20:28). I do not know how all the fulness of the infinite, incomprehensible God can dwell in Christ bodily; but it does (Col. 2:9). And I do not know how Christ who knew no sin could be made sin, and yet never have sinned; but he was.

These things are mysteries beyond the reach of human comprehension. But they are facts of divine revelation to which we bow with adoration. Hard as it is for many to realize, our God is "slightly" bigger than our puny brains!

*"I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean*

*Oh, how marvellous! oh, how wonderful!
And my song shall ever be
Oh, how marvellous! oh how wonderful!
Is my Saviour's love for me!*

*For me it was in the garden
He prayed: "Not My will, but Thine"
He had no tears for His own griefs
But sweat drops of blood for mine*

*He took my sins and my sorrows
He made them His very own
He bore the burden to Calvary
And suffered, and died alone"*

"Mine Iniquities"

*"Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me."
(Psalm 40:11-12)*

Commenting on Psalm 40:12, John Trapp wrote, "If this be taken of Christ, he is the greatest of sinners by imputation (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:6), for our sins (which here he calleth his) he suffered; and here his bitter agony in the garden is graphically described. Neither is it absurd to say, that as he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree, he was first redeemed by himself, and afterwards we."

Here we are again allowed to hear the agony of our blessed Redeemer's soul, when he was made sin for us. Here his language is even more specific in declaring that our sins were made his. Here, again, the Lord Jesus Christ calls our sins his own, because *"He hath made him sin for us."*

The One Speaking

The One speaking in this Psalm is, beyond all doubt, our Saviour. We know that because God the Holy Spirit tells us that it is Christ who is speaking here in Hebrews chapter 10. Our Saviour knew that being made sin for us, he would be brought into a horrible pit and filled with distress. Yet, his love for us was and is so great that in verse 7 he declares his readiness to assume a body, and to accomplish his Father's will in the salvation of his chosen, according to the ancient settlements written in the Volume of the Book, saying, — *"Lo! I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God."* Then in verses 11 and 12, he prays for deliverance from his deep distresses.

This is exactly the same thing we read in John 12:27-28. — *"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but*

for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

The Reason

Why was the Son of God brought to such sorrow and grief? Here is the answer. — *"He made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!"* Indeed he could never have suffered the painful, shameful, ignominious death of the cross as our Substitute had he not been made sin for us. Justice would never have allowed it. The Lord God declares, *"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD."* (Pro. 17:15; Ex. 23:7)

Worship Him

Hear the Saviour's words in Psalm 40:12, and worship him. — *"For innumerable evils have compassed me about."* He was beset on every side with evil. Countless woes compassed our great Substitute and Sin-bearer. "Our sins," wrote Spurgeon, "were innumerable, and so were his griefs." All the accumulated sins of all his people, for all time, in all parts of the world were made his! The Blessed One of God, who knew no sin and did no sin, was made sin!

He cried, *"Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up."* He had no sin, but our sins were laid on him, and he took them as his own. *"He was made sin for us."* Again, I quote Spurgeon, "The transfer of sin to the Saviour was real and produced in him as man the horror which forbade him to look into the face of God, bowing him down with crushing anguish and woe intolerable."

What would our sins have done to us eternally if the Friend of sinners had not condescended to take them all upon himself? Oh, blessed Scripture! *"He hath made him sin for us!"* Oh, marvellous depth of love that made the perfectly immaculate Lamb of God to

stand in the sinner's place, and bear the horror of great trembling, which sin must bring upon those who are forever keenly conscious of it in hell!

Broken Heart

“They are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.”
— In dark Gethsemane, even as he anticipated being made sin, our Saviour's holy soul shook within him; and his holy heart broke. Anticipating the pains of God's holy fury against sin, his unbending justice and unmitigated wrath beyond imagination, our dear Saviour's soul was so crushed within him that he was sore amazed, and very heavy, even unto a sweat of blood. His strength was gone, his spirit sank, he was in an agony.

Then, as he hung upon the cursed tree, bearing our sins in his own body, he cried, as we read in Psalm 22:6, 14-15, — *“I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people...I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.”* It was the thought and anticipation of being made sin for us, not of simply paying the debt due unto our sins, but of being made sin, that caused his bloody sweat in Gethsemane. It was this fact, the fact that he was made sin for us, that caused him to be forsaken of his Father as he hung upon the cursed tree on Golgotha's hill (Ps. 22:1-3).

"Innumerable Evils"

“Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.”
Psalm 40:11-12)

Many tell us that these words cannot be the words of God's darling Son. Indeed, some, in their foolish arrogance, assert that it is blasphemy and heresy to declare that these words are the words of our blessed Saviour. In doing so they dare to defy God himself, for it is God the Holy Spirit who, in Hebrews 10, tells us that these are our Saviour's words. Robert Hawker wrote...

"These things, so far from being unsuitable to the holy Jesus, are the very things we might reasonably suppose he would speak of, and consequently his holy soul would feel so painful. And when we consider that as our Surety he bore our sins and carried our sorrows, how very reasonable it is to expect that these cries of the Son of God should be at the very time in which he is set forth as a Sacrifice for them."

Foolishness and Perversity

There can be no question that the One speaking in Psalm 69 is our blessed Saviour. Throughout the New Testament, the words of this Psalm are attributed to him (v. 4 - John 15:25; v. 9 - John 2:17, Rom. 15:3; v. 21 - Matt. 27:34, 48, Mark. 15:36, Luke 23:36, John 19:28-29; vv. 22-23 - Rom. 11:9-10; v. 25 - Acts 1:16, 20). Just reading the opening verses (vv. 1-4) of this Psalm identifies the One speaking as the Redeemer. Verse 5 cannot, with any honesty, be attributed to someone else. Hear the cry of him who was made sin for us. — *"O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee."* The word "*foolishness*" means "perversity." The word "*sins*" means, as it is translated in the marginal reference, "guiltiness." Our Saviour owns our perversity as his perversity and our guiltiness as his guiltiness, because it was made his.

The first Adam hid his perversity and guilt. The last Adam owns ours as his own and does it before God. It is as though he were saying, "Here, lifted up upon the cross I suffer without the gate for my people, as their Substitute, in such a way, that I desire that my sins be conspicuous to every creature in heaven, earth, and hell, —

my sins, the sins of my people, all now and forever blotted out and washed away by my blood." What condescension this is! What grace is here revealed! What unparalleled love! What mystery there is here! The Son of God takes to himself our shame! Yes! When the Lamb of God was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, it behoved him thus to suffer and thus to cry! — *"O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee."*

Intercession

Yet, in his soul's utmost agony, the Son of God remembered and interceded for us, as our great High Priest. — *"Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel"* (v. 6). In answer to his prayer, the gospel promise is, *"Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed"* (Rom. 10:11). *"He that believeth on him shall not be confounded"* (1 Pet. 2:6).

Then, our sin-atonement Saviour again claims our sins, our reproaches as his own, as if to tell us that our sins were not merely pasted on him, that he was not simply treated as though our sins were his, but that when he made his soul an offering for sin, he was made sin for us. — *"Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face...Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none."* (Psa. 69:7, 19-20)

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!"

Do you understand what we have read? Do you here see Christ as your Surety, your sin-bearer, taking all your guilt and sin, assuming total responsibility for all that you are? — Made a curse for you? Do you see him as your Substitute, your Surety, your Saviour? Do you

trust him as such? If so, let your soul be ravished by his great love for you. Adore him! Praise him!

O, blessed Lord Jesus! How I thank you for bearing my sin! And how I thank you for allowing me to hear your soul's agony as you bore my sins in your body upon the cursed tree that I might go free! You, blessed Saviour, are exactly what this poor sinner needs — A Complete Substitute! — A Real Substitute! — An Effectual Substitute! Never, my Saviour, have I had such a sweet, such a glorious, such a comforting, such an encouraging, such a humbling, such a precious view of you as my Redeemer as this. — Bearing my sin in your body upon the cursed tree, made sin for me, suffering all the hell of God's holy fury against sin for me, to the full satisfaction of justice, that I might be made the righteousness of God in you! Born down with the weight of my sins and guilt, made your own, by a transfer that no mortal shall ever comprehend, you gave your life for me; and by your precious blood put my sins away! Truly, your name is as ointment poured forth to my soul!

Because of his infinite, immeasurable love for us, our blessed Saviour became everything we were in such a real way that he owns as his own our sins before his Father and our Father! — *“Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.”* Either he was made sin for us, or that which he confessed in these three Psalms is not true. There is no in-between ground. Either our Saviour here spoke the truth or he did not. Blessed be his name, his word is truth! He made our foolishness his foolishness! He made our sin his sin! He made our perversity his perversity! He made our guiltiness his guiltiness!

Christ's love for us is so infinitely great that he made our sins his very own. And by the same wondrous, amazing mercy, love, and grace, he makes his perfect righteousness our very own (Jer. 23:6; 33:16). Yes, my brother, my sister, yes, every poor sinner who trusts the Son of God, we are the very righteousness of God in Christ. With Jacob of old, we say, with confidence, as he did to Laban, to every accuser, *“So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to*

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come” (Gen. 30:33). With Job, we say, *“My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live”* (Job 27:6). Because Christ is the Lord our Righteousness, because he is made of God unto us both redemption and righteousness, we have assurance of everlasting salvation (Rom. 8:1-4, 33-39).

LED BY THE SPIRIT

"But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:18-21).

WHAT a horrid warfare rages in our souls between the flesh and the Spirit! "But" — how good it is to read that word! It means the Apostle has more to tell us about this matter — namely, that if we are led by God the Holy Spirit, as children are led by the hand, and taught to live by faith in Christ, we "are not under the law".

This is another way of saying what Paul teaches earlier, in verse 16: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh". That believers are "not under the law" means (among other things) that the law no longer has the ability to stir up the sinful tendencies of the natural man.

Romans 7:5 says: "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins which were [aroused] by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death". This is no longer the case for those who are "led by the Spirit".

The works of the flesh

What are these "motions of sins" or "works of the flesh"? Verses 19-21, quoted above, tell us. Indeed, we do not have to look far to see these vile 'works' — we find them in our own hearts. This we must confess if we are honest before God.

When Paul uses the term 'flesh' he does not mean the physical body, but rather the fallen nature of man. As natural men, our thoughts, our affections, our consciences, and our wills are all governed by sin.

The flesh is the 'carnal mind', which is enmity against God. It will not and cannot please God (Romans 8:6-7). It asserts itself in works that are clearly opposed to the Spirit of God. They are manifestly the works of the flesh — manifest before God, manifest by the law, and manifest in the consciences of men.

What Paul describes here are not things learned from bad company but evils arising from the corrupt hearts of fallen men (Mark 7:20-23).

Sins of passion and profanity

Paul first mentions sins of passion. Passion is a disease of the heart that betrays itself in constant restlessness. It is never satisfied with what it possesses. Sins of passion include (but are not limited to) what we commonly call 'sexual sins' — adultery, fornication, uncleanness and lasciviousness.

Society (and often even the religious world) tolerates and even promotes these evils. But they are things in direct opposition to both the law of God and the gospel of the grace of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Next, the Apostle speaks of sins of profanity — idolatry and witchcraft. 'Idolatry' certainly includes covetousness (Colossians 3:5), but here it has specific reference to the worship of false gods and images. Idolatry is the substitution of anything, or any person, in place of the love, adoration and desire of the true God as he has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. 'Witchcraft' is the use of magic to accomplish real or supposed superhuman acts. The carnal mind turns to the absurdities of witchcraft (fortune tellers, horoscopes, etc.) and rejects the revelation of God in Holy Scripture.

Sins of pride

Next, Paul names a long list of what might be called sins of pride. 'Hatred' is murderous intent. 'Variance' is fighting and quarrelling. 'Emulations' are a rising of temper because of the honour or happiness enjoyed by someone else. 'Wrath' is the violent passion that seeks revenge.

'Strife' is the disruption of peace and harmony, causing discord (James 3:14-16). Strife is always the result of pride: "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife" (Proverbs 28:25).

'Seditions' are factions and divisions — whether social, domestic or religious. 'Heresy' is the result of that miserable pride which sets itself up as a judge of God's Word.

'Envyings' are those uneasy, grieving vexations of the mind that arise because we resent the good others enjoy. Envy destroys the soul (Proverbs 14:30).

'Murders' destroy life to gratify hatred and wrath. 'Drunkenness' is intoxication of the mind and body with drugs, alcohol or other means. 'Revellings' are the uncontrolled riotousness of drunks.

Unregenerate

At the end of verse 21 the Apostle tells us plainly that people who "do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God". They are unregenerate people, utterly without grace and life in Christ.

Henry Mahan writes: "Understand that these sinful practices are characteristics of the flesh, and though we have done these things — and the potential to do them is still present in our flesh (as evidenced by Abraham, David, Lot and Peter) — yet this is not our pattern of life. This is not the practice of the believer!

"Our tenor of life and the bent of our wills is holiness, righteousness and peace. Those who would still live by these principles and practices of the flesh are not redeemed and shall not inherit the kingdom of God".

So then, declares Paul, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die. But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God" (Romans 8:13).

Life implied

"Led by the Spirit" implies that God has given us life in Christ, that we are born of God. A dead person cannot be led. "It also supposes some strength," wrote John Gill, "though a good deal of weakness. Were there no spiritual strength derived from Christ, they could not be led. And if there was no weakness, there would be no need of leading".

All who are led of the Spirit are led *out of* the paths of bondage and sin, ruin and destruction — away from Sinai's fiery mount and all trust in works and personal righteousness — to Christ.

We are led to him for shelter, safety and salvation. The Spirit of God leads us to Christ's sin-atoning blood for pardon and cleansing, to his righteousness for justification and sanctification, and to his fulness for every supply of grace.

The Spirit guides us into all truth and causes believing sinners to walk in the paths of righteousness, looking to Christ alone as our hope before God. He leads in grace through all our pilgrimage and leads at last to glory.

Not under law

Being led by the Spirit, living by faith in Christ, we have nothing to fear from the law. Those who are born of God, who live by faith in Christ, are no longer under the law (Romans 6:14,15; 7:4; 10:4)

Read it again: "Ye are not under the law". Led by the Spirit of God to Christ alone for righteousness, sanctification and redemption, we are free from the law — both in fact and in our consciences.

Trusting Christ, we possess the comfortable knowledge and experience of freedom from the law — from all possibility of condemnation — because we are assured of our indestructible acceptance with God through the merits of our Redeemer.

Believers do not need the law to force them to the performance of legal duties and religious activity. They *delight* in the law of God after the inward man because it is written in their hearts and on their minds (Hebrews 8:10). Constrained by the love of Christ, they cheerfully serve their Saviour and one another.

God's saints are not mercenaries but volunteers.

Life in the Spirit

What is Paul describing? Is it a 'deeper' life? Is it a 'higher' life? Is it a life that some believers enjoy, while others live as 'carnal Christians'? Are there class distinctions in Christ's kingdom?

The answer is an emphatic "No!" The life Paul describes in this passage is the life of faith in Christ: "The just shall live by faith". God the Holy Spirit imparts this faith to us and creates life in us by his omnipotent grace.

We do not make ourselves alive by faith. It is God's Spirit who gives us a life of faith in Christ. Just as the natural man lives by breathing, so the children of God live by believing. Those who do

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not live in the Spirit but in the flesh — who are led not by the Spirit but by the lusts of the flesh — are yet dead in sin (Romans 8:1-14).

To "walk in the Spirit" (v. 16) is to be "led of the Spirit" (v. 18). And those who so walk bear fruit by the Spirit, having "crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (vv. 22-25). The whole emphasis here is the work of God the Holy Spirit in us, not a work we do for God.

Chapter Fifteen

HENRY MAHAN

HENRY MAHAN

Henry Mahan is the former pastor of 13th Street Baptist Church, Ashland, Kentucky, where he ministered for many years. He continues to preach extensively and has also written a number of books including a set of New Testament commentaries. His ministry is characterised by its Christ-exalting nature and its clear testimony to the sovereign grace of God in salvation.

SAVED BY GRACE ALONE

By Henry Mahan

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Galatians 2:20-21.

I'M going to speak on the subject "Saved By Grace Alone" and it is one of the most important messages I shall ever bring to you and I want you to give me your undivided attention. I'll begin the message with a question and that question is this: **DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING FOR A SON OF ADAM (a human being), TO DO?** The most difficult thing, and I'm not talking about something foolish in the material or physical world, I'm talking about something that pertaineth to life, that which pertaineth to God, that which pertaineth to the spiritual life, that which is real life. The most difficult thing for any human being to do, that which an unbeliever cannot possibly do – and that which a believer finds most difficult? Do you know what it is? **IT IS TO BELIEVE IN, COMPLETELY TRUST AND LOOK ONLY TO JESUS CHRIST FOR JUSTIFICATION.** I will guarantee you that it is the hardest thing you will ever be called on to do. To believe only, to trust only, and to look only to Christ. – I didn't say to look to Christ or believe in Christ – I said only – only so that nothing else enters in to the slightest degree. Nothing else affects your look, your trust, or your confidence, only to Christ and Christ alone, not only for your justification, but for sanctification and for a full acceptance with God. The Galatians couldn't do it. The Colossians had trouble doing it. The Philippians were rebuked for not doing it. This is what I am talking about, what we were just singing 'other refuge have I none, hangs my (what?) helpless soul on thee' – helpless soul on thee. 'Leave (ah leave) me not alone, still support and comfort me. All my trust on thee is staid'. (We sing it, that's what I'm talking about – all of it – all my help, most of it? – No! all of it from thee I bring.) 'Cover my defenceless head, with the shadow of thy wing'. That is what I am talking about. 'Thou O Christ art all I want, more than all in thee I find. Raise the fallen, heal the sick and lead the (what?) – blind'. Not the nearsighted or the dim-sighted but the blind. 'Just and Holy is thy name. I am all unrighteousness'. Not I was, but I am. 'False and full of sin I am. Thou art full of grace and truth'.

My friends, man by nature is religious. If you are religious, you are no more than a fallen son of Adam who is carrying out your

nature. Man by nature is religious. Every man is religious by nature to some extent and natural man is married to a covenant of works. He is married to it, enslaved by it, to the law and to his own works, and the most difficult thing in the world for him to do, is to pronounce that the law and his works are totally dead, once and for all, and to become married only to Christ. The most difficult thing that anybody ever tried to do is to put that old man and that old law in the grave, bury it, consider it totally dead with all relics, all souvenirs, and all mementos and cover it up and live only in and for Christ Jesus. That is so very difficult. You may say I have! The person who says, I have, is the one least likely to have done it. Now the Scripture is very plain on this. First we're going to the book of Galatians. I know exactly what I'm preaching tonight. I have given this a lot of consideration and a lot of thought and I am saying, that which is impossible with an unbeliever is also most difficult for a believer, and that is to look to, trust in completely, rest in, and believe in Jesus Christ for justification, sanctification, wisdom, and redemption, of which God says he is made unto us.

Read with me Galatians 2, verses 20 and 21 – "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I," (not I at all) "but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." That is how I live – I live in the faith of the Son of God, through the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Christ is my life. "I do not frustrate the grace of God: if righteousness come by the law, if sanctification comes by the law," if holiness comes by the law, "then Christ is dead in vain." Jesus Christ actually gave His blood in vain, if righteousness comes by law.

Look at Galatians 3, verse 11 – "But that no man" (no man) "is justified by the law in the sight of God." Our Lord said, 'You are they which justify yourselves, among yourselves, comparing yourselves with yourselves, but in the sight of God no man is justified by the law. It is evident; for the just shall live by faith and the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them, he will live in them.' But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being

made a curse for us: for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree". Why was Christ made a curse for us? Verse 14 says, "That the blessing of Abraham", what are the blessings of Abraham? Imputed righteousness! That is what the blessings of Abraham are; "might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ". Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. This is the blessing of God.

Read Galatians 3:23 – "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus". Now Galatians 5 verse 1 – "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." In other words, if you are doing your works for acceptance with God, if you are doing this ritual or keeping this day or going through these motions, or having this special thing done to you, in order to gain favour with God, Christ is no effect to you at all. "For I testify again to every man" who does in order to gain God's favour, "that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace."

Read Colossians 1 verse 19 – "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell". In Christ, that is where all fulness is. All of the fulness in God is in Christ. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you" – He did it, He accomplished it – "to present you" in Him, "holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight: if you continue in the faith."

Read Colossians 2, verse 3 – this speaks of Christ – the mystery of God, of the Father and of Christ – "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:9 – "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." There isn't a word you could choose that would more ably describe the absolute sufficiency of the person and work of Christ on behalf of a believer than that word complete. I am complete in Him. All that God requires, all that the law commands, all that the justice of God demands, all that God expects, we have complete in Christ.

Read Colossians 2:20 – "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments" (or elements) "of this world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;)" . Why are you subject to ordinances "after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed" (these touch not, taste not, handle not, observing days and rituals and all these things in the flesh) "a show of wisdom", a show of spirituality. But I'll tell you what they show – will worship and a false humility and a neglecting of the body for approval before God.

Now my friends, man was created in the image of God. Let me take you back to when God created Adam and placed him in the garden of Eden. God created one man, but God made that man holy and upright, perfect, in the image of God and that man loved God. That man loved holiness. He loved righteousness and truth and beauty and that man walked with God. He walked with God in purity and perfection. He had to be pure, holy, and without sin, or he couldn't have walked with God, God could have no communion with him. He was perfect and without sin. And God provided the earth for that man's habitation, and that man's comfort. That man was a man like I am, like you are. That man drank water, juice, whatever was provided by God. He slept, he laughed, he talked, he had a companion, he enjoyed all that God had made. He lived on the same earth that we are living on today, apart from the paved sidewalks and the power lines and the airplanes and all these things that man has brought forth from the earth. But he lived on this

earth. He had a mind, a heart, hands, feet, flesh, thoughts and all these things. He was totally naked and was not ashamed. He knew no fear. He knew no guilt and he knew no depression and he knew no hate. And God said to this man and to his companion: Multiply and replenish the earth, subdue the earth. You have dominion and power in this earth. You have authority over this earth. You have authority over the birds, over the beasts of the field, over the fish of the sea, over everything upon the earth. Here was a man who was a king, who was a prince. Here was a man that was truly a man, in blood, flesh and bone, just like we are, who loved God, who knew God, who walked with God, who lived and inhabited an earth which God had made and provided for his comfort and his habitation. But one commandment God gave to that man: You are not God. I'm God. There must never be any question about who is God. One basic law of this universe, God says, is that I am God. That's what God is saying over here in Genesis 2, verse 16. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat". That's pretty wide permission, pretty lenient, anything you want, every tree. The whole garden is at your command, for your comfort, your enjoyment, there it is. "But", He said, "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." I don't know what that tree was, and nobody else does. But I do know what that tree said. When that tree stood untouched, as Adam left it alone, he recognized one thing, that though God put everything in his hands and gave everything at his disposal, for his use, he's recognizing that God is still boss, that God is God in this universe. I know a lot of people say it was an apple, some people say it was sex, some say it was something else. They don't know any more about it than you or I know, but I just know that it was a tree of some sort. God called it a tree. And that tree was a token. As long as Adam never ate it, or partook of it, it was saying this – though Adam was high, God is higher. Though Adam is powerful, God is more powerful. Though Adam has authority, God has authority over him. Though man has power, still God is the head of every man. God is God! And that's the issue with this whole world today – who is God? Our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed and accused

before Pilate of being a king. That's what they said, "He made himself a king." Our Lord Jesus Christ was mocked and ridiculed in the soldiers' hall in the character of a king. Our Lord Jesus was nailed on the cross and over His head were the accusations and charges for which He was dying – the **KING OF THE JEWS**. And our Lord Jesus Christ reigns and will return as a king. That is the whole issue. They said we'll not have this man reign over us. They said we have no king but Caesar. That is the issue between you and God right now – who is God? This whole Arminian, freewill generation is not willing for God to be God. They want a road to heaven which bypasses God's lordship and crown rights. That's exactly right. They are not willing for God to be God! Or Jesus Christ to be King.

Alright stay with Genesis 3. There is the man, no shame, no fear, no guilt, no hate, walking in the flesh, flesh and blood and bones, partaking of all the good things God made. But man, like Satan, rejected God's way and God's authority. Adam did not get drunk, did not steal a man's wife, did not kill anybody, did not do any of these things that we talk about that are so obnoxious (and they are), but that which plunged man into darkness and death was: He rejected God's authority. In Genesis 3 verse 5 Satan said, "God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods." This is what men want. You will be your own boss. You will be God. That is what destroyed Lucifer. This was the first sin of the universe. In Isaiah chapter 14 you read the sin of Satan – the sin of the fallen angels. In Isaiah 14 verse 12, God said, "How art thou fallen from heaven O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Well, when man did that, when Adam partook of that forbidden fruit, the scripture says he died spiritually. God said, "in the day

you eat thereof you'll die". Man is now an alien. He's now an enemy. He is now full of shame and fear and hate and self-esteem. He is now blind. He is not partially blind, he is totally blind spiritually. He is deaf, he's dumb, he's dead, dead in trespasses and sin, dead to God. In this world he is without hope, without help, without God. And he's subject now to all that sin brings. God said, "your sins have separated you and your God". Hell is separation from God, and man is now a subject of hell. He is under the wrath of God. Men must bear the consequences of their rebellion and not only did Adam bear the consequences of his rebellion but the whole creation bears it. The whole creation is subject to vanity because of the Fall of Adam. The whole creation was plunged into darkness, disease, and the death of sin, and death and evil and darkness reigns over all that we see and all that we don't see. We don't know how dead we are by nature, totally dead, lifeless. The natural mind is now enmity against God. It's not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be.

There's Adam, created with divine favour, divine presence, divine communion, intelligent, free from guilt, free from any fear, free from any disease, anything that would taint or mar or scar – free! And he rejected one point, one principle, which is the primary principle of Almighty God's universe. I'll be like God, I will not bow. When he took that fruit, he died spiritually. By one man's sin, death passed upon all men. We are now in the same condition Adam was when he died. In fact, there's no improvement, there's no evolving concerning us. We've got a few more inventions, a few more luxuries and comforts, we're more adept in hiding our meanness, but we're in the same shape Adam was in – an alien, a foreigner, separated from God, dead in trespasses and sin.

Now grab hold of your seat. L.R. Shelton used to say grab your seat we're going to jump a creek; I'm going to tell you the truth! You can talk all you want of God's love and God's favour being upon this world and its inhabitants. But you might as well talk about God being in love with devils, as to talk about God being in love with the sons of Adam. He is not now, and since the Fall, has never been.

That's exactly right. He's not in love with Satan and the fallen angels and He's not in love with Adam's fallen race who committed the same sin. "God is angry with the wicked", that's what the Bible says. "God hateth all workers of iniquity." Sin is under God's wrath, and all creatures and all creation is under the judgment of God. That is right, I'm telling you the truth, man is under the wrath of God. This generation and this world has latched on to some kind of hope that God loves everybody that false teachers and preachers have given them in emotionalism, and sentimentalism and traditional religion (like the Jews of old, who said, "We be God's children". They weren't God's children). When Adam stood in holiness, he was the subject of God's love. But not after the Fall – God can't love sin. I know we use this little foolish adage and cliché, "Well God loves a sinner but hates his sin". They're one and the same. We are sin. There's no way that God can love us in our sin. But you say the Bible says God is love. Certainly, God is love. God loves holiness! God loves pure, immaculate holiness. God loves righteousness and the only true holiness and true righteousness is in Himself. That's the truth. It's in Himself, it's in His Son. God loves His beloved Son. He that believeth not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth upon him – the wrath of God, not the love of God. Christ is called the Son of His love and we're told in Romans that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ. Yes sir, God is love. But His love is a love of holiness, He cannot do anything contrary to His holiness. He cannot do anything contrary to His righteousness. There's nothing in me, about me, or upon me that can merit God's love, attract God's love, or claim God's love. That's right, only in Christ can God love us. God can only love holiness. Alright, does He love the devil, does He love the fallen devils, does He love the demons in hell? Well, we did the same thing they did. We defied God. We challenged God. We dared to try to replace God with ourselves on the throne. The same wrath that fell upon those angels who fell, fell upon men who sinned.

But God, who is rich in mercy, commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God made a covenant in Christ in which He could love sinners, forgive sinners,

accept sinners in the righteousness and blood of his Son. A covenant of grace, an everlasting covenant, with the Son of his love before the foundation of the world, in which He gave Christ an eternal kingdom; in which He gave Christ a new heaven and a new earth; in which He gave Christ a people from every tribe, kindred, nation, and tongue under heaven; in which He gave into the hands of Christ all things. His love and grace and mercy upon that new heaven and that new earth and that new world, that new generation of people and that new kingdom and world of believers was all in Christ from the beginning.

When Satan and the angels (and somebody said a third of the heavenly host) fell, they were immediately confined to the darkness. Isn't that what the Bible says? Immediately! Reserved in chains of darkness until the day of judgment. That is the wrath of God. "How art thou fallen from Heaven, oh Lucifer, son of the morning? I saw Satan", Christ said, "fall from Heaven" immediately. Why didn't God put up with him for 6000 years like he did man? Because there was no covenant of grace for the angels. He took not on Him the nature of angels. There wasn't any surety, there wasn't any provision. There wasn't any grace to hold back the wrath! Only God's unparalleled, pure wrath! When Satan sinned and said, I will, God said you won't. And that's the end of it. When Adam said I will, he was not cast into darkness. The earth didn't open up and swallow him, chains of darkness didn't wrap around him. The fires of hell didn't breathe on his back. He walked out of the garden and begat a son. That son was a killer. He begat another. He had sons and daughters and kept on living. Why? The covenant of grace, made before the foundation of the world in Christ, held back the judgment of God and holds it back today. Now you can walk down the aisle, and shake the preacher's hand and give your tithe and sing "Just As I Am", whenever you want. But that does not hold back the wrath of God. It's His promise and His love to Christ. That's what held it back then and that's what's holding it back right now. It postponed God's judgment until one day when Almighty God will say I'm going to burn this planet to a crisp. That's exactly right – I'm going to burn it to a crisp. Everything is held in check,

even the final doom of Satan, by that covenant. He's not in hell yet. He's still running around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Going to and fro upon the earth, even appearing in the assembly of God's sons, even coming unto a disciple like Peter, sifting him.

Everything is being used of God as it is until He brings through the door that last sheep. Until He brings through the door that last one of the elect for whom Christ died. Until His Holy Spirit through the Word breaks the last rebel and brings him to Christ to kiss the feet of the Son of God. Everything is being used of God until all that the Father giveth him has come to him, has seen the Son and embraced the Son. Even evil does what evil wills on this earth. Yes it does, it does what it will. You smell it, you see it, you hear it, you taste it, you are exposed to it – evil is everywhere. Men do what they will on this earth. God has given them the will to do evil and they are going at it 100 percent – rebels in heart and mind. God Almighty restrains evil and constrains evil and controls evil while letting men and devils do what they will. He controls it and sustains and restrains it in such a way that He is not the author of sin, yet His will is done. I will give you an example. Here's Joseph, God's man, and his 10 brothers (Benjamin wasn't around). God wants Joseph in Egypt. He wants him on the throne. How is He going to get him there? He is going to get him there using evil men – evil brothers. These fellows hated Joseph and they were going to kill him but one of them had a little bit of compassion on him and he said, let's not kill him. Let's sell him to these Egyptians. Let him go down to Egypt and work as a slave. In this you have the evil ones wanting to kill him and you have the more compassionate ones not wanting to kill him but to sell him (all this plotting and planning) and yet God Almighty's eternal will is done in everything they do!

Our Lord said men delivered Christ to be crucified. Men with wicked hands crucified him, but they did what God willed to be done from the foundation of this world. The wrath of man will praise the Lord. I am saying that when man fell, it was a fall out of favour. It was a fall out of light, into darkness, out of life into death,

out of a heavenly communion into a separation-like hell. Men are aliens, they are unclean. They are flesh under the judgment and wrath of God just like their predecessors, the devils. But God, in His eternal mercies, for reasons known only to Himself, according to the pleasure of His own will, back before this world began, before He laid its foundation, before the morning stars sang together, purposed and provided a covenant, made it with Christ, and He gave Christ a people. He loved them in Christ. Christ is the first elect. We are chosen in Him. He is the first born. We are regenerated in Him. He is the first born from the dead – we have life in Him. God's love is upon Him, all fulness of grace and love and truth is in Christ – everything else is under the wrath of God. That is what John said – he that believeth not on the Son, the wrath of God abideth on him. I'm telling you the truth. Go on out there and tell all men God loves them – you are lying if you do. And while you tell them God loves them, tell them God loves the devil too. And God loves the demons of hell. God doesn't love evil – God loves holiness! God doesn't love men apart from Christ – never has and never will. That is exactly right. He doesn't love anything we have ever done or anything we have ever said because it is all polluted with our sinful nature. We are accepted in the Beloved if we are accepted at all.

Back yonder, after the Fall, certain men found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Abel found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He knew God and he proved it when he offered the blood sacrifice. It wasn't that Abel was not a sinner. It wasn't that Abel was any less evil than his brother. Abel came out of the same daddy as Cain. But he found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Enoch walked with God. He knew God and he proved it by his testimony and God took him. Job found grace in the eyes of the Lord and he knew God and he proved it by his testimony and patience. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Abraham was called out of idolatry. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God wasn't looking for volunteers and Abraham raised his hand and said pray for me. God called Abraham, God loved Abraham. God sought Abraham. God Almighty gave the grace of the living God to Abraham. God promised Abraham that He would raise up of him and out of his

loins a nation of people through whom he would send the Messiah. That nation wasn't saved. Only two of them entered the Promised Land of all that came out of Egypt (over 20 years of age) – Caleb and Joshua – and they were men of grace who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. This nation was a picture, a type of spiritual Israel. And to that nation God gave His law through Moses and He said in that law this is what men ought to do but they won't. This is what men ought to be but they aren't. This is what God demands and what God must have which no man can produce. The nation of Israel was a physical, materialistic, fleshly nation which was blessed materially when they obeyed God and punished materially when they didn't – strictly material things. Keep my statutes and judgments and I will prosper you. I'll make your wheat to grow and other things to grow. Disobey me and I will send enemies down to whip you and take you into captivity. And to that nation God gave a ceremonial law. That nation came from the loins of Abraham who was blessed of God. They said "we are sons of Abraham". He said, "if you were sons of Abraham, you would believe me. Your father Abraham saw my day and rejoiced to see it".

To that nation God gave His ceremonial law which pictured Christ and His redemptive work. He gave them sacrifices, the passover and the atonement. He gave them holy days, such as the Sabbath, the feast days, the worship days. He gave them the tithe. It was a tax to support the temple, to support the ceremonial government, to support the priesthood, to support the tribe of Levi. He gave them circumcision as a mark of Israel, as a token. But none of these things had any saving power. None of these things could make a man holy. None of these things could make a man acceptable to God. Some understood this – very few of them – most of them did not. Moses did. He wrote of Christ. And when Christ came to this earth that same nation held to their material sacrifices, their material days, their worship, and they rejected The Messiah. Turn to John, chapter 1, verse 10. "He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" – didn't have eyes to see Him or ears to hear Him or hearts to understand Him. "He came unto his own", His own nation – Israel, the people

who for 2000 years had these types and holy days and all these things that were supposed to point them to the Messiah, "and his own received him not." They said we have our ceremonies and tradition, we don't need you. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power," the right, the privilege "to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born," – not proselyted, which were born, not persuaded, which were born, not volunteered, which were born – "not of blood," that is not of a fleshly genealogy and heritage, "nor of the will of man," not of the will of the flesh, "but of God". They found grace in the eyes of the Lord. They were born of God. They were begotten of God. They were children of his love. Paul saw that. He saw Christ as the end of the law for everyone that believeth. He said, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth"! Paul saw Christ as all we need. He said, "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him". He, of God, is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He said, "I count all these things" – my heritage, ancestry, accomplishments, traditions, ceremonies, custom, self-righteousness, "but dung that I may win Christ and be found in Him."

Let me tell you something. I am totally dependent on Christ and his obedience and righteousness and blood and intercession and mediatorial work right now. God sees me in Him the same as He did before the foundation of the world when he put me in Christ in that covenant. I haven't added anything to that covenant. I haven't added anything to God, not by my preaching or by my faithfulness or by my diligence or dedication. I have not acquired one ounce of favour with God that wasn't already mine in Christ. And I haven't lost one ounce of it by anything I have ever done. I told you it is the hardest thing a man ever had to do – to trust Christ. I hear them tell me it is simple – nothing to it just walk down the aisle and shake the preacher's hand and say I am believing Jesus. Believing totally in Jesus is impossible with men, it is a gift of God! There is no-one in this world who can believe in Christ apart from divine aid. You can say you trust Him. It's a whole lot different saying it and doing it.

You can say I am saved – but it is another thing for God to say you're saved. You can say I believe the Bible – it's another thing to actually believe the Bible. I am resting in Christ – but it is another thing to rest **ONLY in Christ**. God won't let you hold on, even with your little finger. Any man who can still reach up and clutch the ledge with just his little finger, is not resting in Christ. The man who is resting in Christ is totally resting and he's ceased from his labours. You say he doesn't labour at all any more? It doesn't take anyone but a fool to ask a stupid question. That's what they ask Paul. They said, "well, shall we sin that grace shall abound?" He said, "God forbid." God's children are not looking for a way to sin. They're looking for a way to obey God by grace. Somebody said, if I believe what you believe, I would sin all I wanted to. I sin more now than I want to, don't you? God's people delight to obey God, to serve God, and to walk in holiness, not to be saved, but because they are saved.

Here's the problem everybody's confronted with: God is not going to honour anyone but Christ. You're going to slip off the ledge of self-righteousness, into the arms of Christ, or you're going to perish. There's one song in Heaven. It's not the Baptist song, it's not the Catholic song, it's unto Him who loved us and loosed us from our sin in His own precious blood. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and glory, both now and forever more. He has always been the Son of God's love and He will be the Son of God's love in Glory. The feast of the marriage supper will be to honour the Son, not you. He's going to gather together all things in Christ which are in Heaven and Earth. He's going to show the riches of his grace. He's not going to show the riches of your faith. He's not going to call you up on the platform and praise you and crown you and laud you. You're going to be at His feet and we're all going to worship Him. That's right. I tell you this, no one in Glory will talk about God loving them outside of Christ – nobody, because it's just not so.

Here's the problem we all face. We're confronted with it today, we'll be confronted with it tomorrow. It's so difficult for us not to

feel somehow lifted up when we pray, and depressed when we don't. It's so hard for us not to feel spiritual when we're obeying God, and unspiritual when we're not. You're either in Christ or you're not. Our salvation is in Christ, through Christ, of Christ, for His glory. Our acceptance is in Christ, through Christ, of Christ, for His glory. Our sanctification is of Christ, in Christ, through Christ, and for His glory. The believer is not in bondage, he's a son. I don't care how weak he is, how frail he is, he's a son. And sometimes the frail son gets more attention than the strong son. He needs more.

The believer is not forced to obey. He wills to obey. Any other obedience is not worth a snap of your fingers. I wouldn't give you two cents for a tithe so don't bring one down here. Keep it at home, buy a car. God never commanded the church to tithe. God's people quit tithing when God saved them and they started giving. The believer's not looking for ways to sin, he's looking for grace to glorify God. The believer is never at any time, under any circumstances, judged, accepted or loved, because of what he gives, what he does, or what he did. It's only in Christ. That's the truth. I know people right now will say, "well, what's the use of me giving or working?" See there, you're not resting in Christ. You missed Him. You see, when Christ comes in, He gives a new nature. He says I'll write my law, not in a book, but in the heart. So you will love it. And I'll write it on your minds so you'll appreciate it and think of it. That's what you want to do. Not what you ought to do but what you want to do! Love from a new nature and a new heart springs up just as spontaneously as hate did from that old heart. I heard a man say, "I don't love my wife." I said "You're not saved then." A saved man doesn't hate anybody. He loves people. That's exactly right. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God." He's lost. How do you learn this? Well it's not easy. The law says do this and live, the gospel says live and do this!

I hear preachers say, "lay down your shotgun." After we lay down our shotgun, we start praising God. Lay down your palm branches too. Sometimes it's easier to repent of your sins than it is to repent of your righteousness. "My sins are ever before me." Yes and

my righteousness, filthy rags, are too. Sometimes it's a lot easier to say "oh wretched man that I was," than to say, "oh wretched man that I am." "Lord, save me from the devil." That's easier to say than to say, "Lord save me from myself." I'm as great an enemy to myself as the devil is. Do you know that? Most of my meanness didn't come from him anyway... I'm the author of it. Let me look only to Christ in time of trouble. That is not too hard to say, where else would you look? Let me look only to Christ in time of blessing. I'm just as much destitute when I'm on the mountain as I am when I'm in the valley. I need Christ at all times.

Yes sir I know whereof I speak. The most difficult thing I've ever had to do in all of life is to look only to Christ, to lay hold upon Christ and to rest in Christ. I tell you I get depressed with my flesh and I think, oh God doesn't love me. And then I hit a high note and preach a sermon, God saves somebody and then I think He loves me better than anybody. Just remember, when you're at the highest point of your spiritual experience and feel as near to God as you've ever been, there's a good possibility you're further away than you've ever been. And when you feel so naked and ashamed and such an outcast, unworthy of the least of His mercies, and you feel like you're on the back row of the whole congregation of the righteous, peeking through the bars, just trying to get a little glimpse of the hem of the garment, you just might be closer to God than you've ever been before. He loves sinners. That's right, He loves and accepts sinners in Christ.

Can you do it? I tell you this, if you can praise Him here like He ought to be praised, you can praise Him there. If you can rest in Him here, you'll never be lost, I promise you. You may find the right church, you may find the right doctrine, you may find the right ceremony and may find the right mode and form of worship and find the right all this, that, and the other and perish with all the other Pharisees. But if you can come to His feet, like the harlot, if you can come to His feet, like the publican, if you can lay hold upon the Lord, like the thief on the cross – "false and full of sin I am, thou art all righteousness", you're going to find favour with the Lord

SOVEREIGN GRACE – PAST AND PRESENT

because He did the work. Stripping sinners is His work. Killing sinners is His work. Bringing men to the dust is His work. Exalting His Son is His work. I can't do that. If I ever come to rest in Christ, I'm saved – saved forever by the Sovereign Grace of God!

Our Father, for your glory, oh for your glory, and that's all that shall be served is your glory, and for the glory of your dear Son whom you have determined to glorify, "glorify me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, that the world might behold my glory", is what he said. "For thou lovest me before the foundation of the world." And Father, we believe, by your grace, according to your good pleasure that your love was upon us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Bring us, by your grace, to trust Christ, rest in Christ, to be honest with thee and ourselves and know ourselves as we are, but to love Him as He is. For Christ's sake, I pray. Amen.

Chapter Sixteen

DON BELL

DON BELL

Don Bell is the pastor of Lantana Grace Church, Crossville, Tennessee, USA. He writes of the Lord's dealings with him that "God in His sovereign mercy revealed himself to me after having been very zealous in religion and going about to establish my own righteousness. He blessedly crossed my path with the gospel of free and sovereign grace by one of His preachers Pastor Henry Mahan. I bless God for not leaving me to myself, but that He called me by His grace and revealed His Son in me. I have been pastor of the same body of believers 27 years."

THAT I MAY WIN CHRIST

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" Phil. 3:8

WHAT does it mean to WIN CHRIST? It doesn't mean that we can win His favour, or win His blessings by some act that we do, nor does it mean that we can win His special attention and get Him to do something special for us because we have done something to receive special treatment from Him. That can't possibly be what it means; for that is earning not winning Christ. You may say, *"Well, preacher, if it doesn't mean these things, what does it mean?"*

When the apostle talked about his desire to WIN CHRIST, I believe he meant mainly one thing. It was that Christ Himself was the prize; Christ Himself was the goal for him. Christ became all in all. In the light of our Lord's glorious Person and His accomplished redemption, Paul counted everything else but dung and rubbish; willing to lose all, his own ambition, opportunities and attainments in the world. He counted anything that would detract from Christ's glory, that would hinder his conformity to His Lord, as loss.

Our Lord Jesus Himself said it like this, *"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* (Mark 8:35-36).

If you don't count all loss for Christ in this world, it will be your eternal loss.

IS IT FAIR?

THE Bible teaches that God chose a people and that He gave those people to His Son. It also teaches that He came into the world to live and die for those people. The Bible doesn't teach anywhere that Christ died for everyone. Whenever this truth is proclaimed, we hear this cry: "It's not fair for God not to give everyone the same chance, to not make the death and blood of Christ 'available' for everyone!" Salvation is not based upon fairness or chance, but upon justice.

God's justice demands that He punish sin (Heb. 1:13; Ezek. 18:4). The eternal, immutable God of heaven and earth made a way whereby He could punish sin and at the same time save the sinner. He made a way where He could be a just God and also be a Saviour. How? By Christ, the Lamb of God! Christ our Lord willingly came into this world to become a sacrifice for sin. He lived under God's holy law and rendered perfect obedience to it; which you or I could never do. Christ offered Himself up as a sin-offering for those God had given Him. As the sinner's Substitute, God made Him to be sin (Who knew no sin), that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21).

What does this mean? It means that Christ willingly suffered the penalty of sin, He willingly took the place of His people and became what they were and are in God's sight, sinners, deserving of hell and judgment. When He took His people's place, God punished Him and forsook Him there on the cross. But after our Lord was taken down and put in the tomb, on the third morning He arose!

What does this mean? It means that God's justice was satisfied with His sacrifice. That sin was put away once for all (Heb. 9:26) and that God could now justly save sinners who believe on His Son. Now as to the question of fairness – if my sins were laid upon Christ

and He suffered for them - would it be fair for God to punish me for them also? No! He is a Just God. He can't punish sin twice. What is fair about Christ dying for my sin and me also dying for them? Would He accept the precious blood of His Son as payment for my sins and then require me to pay for them too? No, of course not. "Who art thou O man, that replies against God?" (Romans 9:20).

LEARNING CHRIST

IF in the few years I have been preaching there is one thing I have learned, it is this: we can never say enough, preach enough, think enough, exalt enough, Our Lord Jesus Christ. God's holy Word speaks to us about "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

There is a lot of learning going on in religion, men are learning about the gifts of the Spirit, but I want to learn of "God's Unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus". Many are being taught about the coming of Christ, but not learning about the Christ who is coming, they are being taught about a millennial kingdom, but what do they know about THE KING OF KINGS and His kingdom on earth NOW? Are you being taught how to work for Christ, but not being taught about Christ's work to satisfy God's justice by His substitutionary death? I am afraid that many are "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim.3:7).

Our Master told us to "take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." Beloved, what a glorious task Our Lord Jesus gave us. There is so much to learn about His person.

How much do we know about His person as the Eternal God? Oh, the glory of His Godhead. How could he be both God the Son and God the everlasting Father?

How could He remain God, control all things, uphold all things by the word of His power and yet at one and the same time come into this world He created, and come into the womb of a virgin, and become something He never was before, Man?

But Oh WHAT A MAN! Sinless in His thoughts, sinless in His words, sinless in His deeds, without sin before the Holiness of God Almighty. So Glorious in His sinless life, that the heavens opened one day and God Himself spoke and said: "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." I say, "Speak Lord, by your grace I will listen."

God helping us let us begin again to "learn of him, take His yoke upon ourselves, learn of his meekness, his lowliness, there is rest for our souls in learning of him".

The man who knows the most about Christ knows so little, the man who sees Christ the best will say "I see through a glass darkly". Just because I know so little, doesn't mean I'm going to stop learning; because I don't see all I want too doesn't mean I'm going to quit looking. Someday in the near future, you and I will see clearly what we now see so dimly. "We shall see Him as He is, and we shall be like him". But our seeing and our knowing start here. Do you know Him? Have you COME to Him? Are you learning of Him?

FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE

IN the matter of salvation we must go to the Word of God. There is no other source to tell us of God, man, sin, Christ, and salvation. The word "Grace" is of the utmost importance, the scriptures are full of this word "Grace"; 38 times in the Old Testament and 115 times in the New Testament.

Moses was interested in knowing if he had found "Grace in the sight of the Lord." Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Grace is what the New Testament is teaching us - "Salvation by Grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." To be ignorant of Grace is to be ignorant of the scriptures and of salvation. The meaning of "Grace" has been lost to most people, to most it's a word used to get a "celestial battery charge" when they go to church. The majority of preachers in preaching and religious people in practice deny God's grace and even frustrate it!

There is not a more urgent need today than for people to have a true understanding of Grace and what it means. What is the biblical definition of grace? Grace is God's undeserved favour, his unmerited love. It means the favour one finds in the eyes of a superior person from whom one cannot claim favourable treatment as a right! If you don't receive grace what can you say? You didn't deserve it anyway. Grace is free, the one who shows it is in no way obligated to do so. God is not "bound" by anything about us to show grace to us, "Being justified freely by his grace" (Rom. 3:24). Grace is entirely dependant on God's will, it is never deserved, if it were it would cease to be grace (Rom. 11:6). Men in the Bible were overwhelmed by the fact that God's love towards fallen men is a free gift (Rom. 9:16).

SOVEREIGN GRACE – PAST AND PRESENT

Grace is love, eternal, electing love manifested, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This electing love is unconditional, unevoked, undeserved. Grace is sovereign and unconditional. Grace is God spontaneously working out in a sinner what he purposed to do from all eternity, "grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). Grace is God loving the unlovely, covenanting himself to them, forgiving their sins, accepting their persons, revealing himself to them, causing them to respond. God gives them a knowledge of Himself, bringing them to enjoy Him. God in his sovereignty overcomes every obstacle to fulfil his purpose towards them. God has, God does, and God will continue to show grace to his elect people.

Grace is not an impersonal energy automatically switched on by prayer, ordinances, or works; it is the heart and hand of the living almighty God manifested to an innumerable company of sinners, whom he calls his own, his children. Grace is a wonder and it is amazing. To know man's corruption, to know our absolute uselessness to add anything to God. To know the reality of God's justice and wrath against sin. When and if you ever know these things, you will stand in amazement that there would be such a wondrous thing as Grace at all. Grace that God shows sinners at the expense of the death of his dear Son on Calvary's tree!

With all the "wonders" of the world, the wonders of nature, of science, of space, these are nothing as they are compared to the Wonder of the Grace of God. Nothing we can say can do it justice, all words fall short of describing it, it is God's "unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

Chapter Seventeen

GARY SHEPARD

GARY SHEPARD

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CHRIST, THE SAVIOUR OF SINNERS

"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." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

TO say that Christ was not actually made sin for me would be to say that I am not actually a sinner. To say that He was not really made sin for me would be to say that God unjustly killed Him for it is the "soul that sinneth" that "shall surely die." To say that He was not truly made sin would be to deny what is represented in the Old Testament sacrifice when the priest actually laid his hands on the head of the sacrifice and confessed the sins of the people.

To say that Christ's identifying with me, the sinner, was only legal and not actual would leave me only legally righteous and therefore not righteous so as to be able to enter God's heaven personally. Death was as foreign to the Son of God as sin was, yet, He died. Why? Because "the wages of sin is death."

What He suffered in His humanity did not alter His deity. Rather, He sacrificed His humanity on the altar of His deity. When He died, that death was the clearest evidence that He had been made sin for us. The death that He died was the death that I deserved to die, not only as one who has sinned, but as one who is sin.

WHAT WILL WE HAVE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE?

"The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee" (Psalm 20:1)

SOUND doctrine is absolutely essential to knowing the true God in Christ. We know Him only if we know Him as He is revealed in the scriptures and we have hope of eternal life only through His life and death as declared in the Gospel.

Yet, correct doctrine and a clear head understanding of these things, as vital as they are, often become very hollow and empty in the time of trial. When tragedy comes, when life-threatening afflictions come, when grievous family circumstances come, the Lord's people would trade all for a moment of God's felt presence. Their desire is to know the blessed Holy Spirit as the "Comforter." To feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by Him would bring a ray of sunlight on an otherwise dark day. Oh to hear Him say to our broken spirits from His word, *"I will never leave you, nor forsake you"* is the greatest delight.

The facts of many precious things mean nothing in that hour unless God makes us to experience the comforting joy of them. In those moments, they are not found disputing from the book of Romans but running to the book of Psalms for words of comfort. When the enemies of God and of our souls besiege us, then, we are like the Psalmist, *"Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation"* (Psa. 35:3). What emptiness is found in the words of God unless they are spoken by Him to our souls! How cold glorious truths are in those hours unless we feel the hand of Him who is the Truth.

Someone always says that feelings do not matter, only what God says. But God is not an impersonal God but God in our nature, sin excluded. *"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the **feeling** of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb. 4:15,16). If our relationship to the living God in His Son is viewed and considered only in its legal aspects without the experimental aspects of that relationship, what a cold and hollow thing it is, especially in the "day of trouble."

Christ died on the cross and obtained eternal redemption for His people, but where is He now? What is He to me now? I married my wife 40 years ago and have the legal proof of it but my delight is in her embrace, in her fellowship, in HER... NOW ! What Christ did 2000 years ago assures the experience of His promises and words to us now, especially in what He calls, "the day of trouble."

If you are one of the Lord's chosen and do not yet know what I'm talking about, you will. May you have more than correct words then, may He speak to you. It is easy to say anything or defend anything or debate anything until that hour.

STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

*"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."
(Exodus 14:13)*

WHAT a word, this word "salvation"! Oh the length of it! It is from eternity to eternity. And the height of it! It reaches from the highest heaven to the lowest hell. And the width of it! From Jew to Gentile, male to female, rich to poor, crossing every barrier. Oh, to be able to "see" the salvation of the Lord! But we'll never "see" it till we "stand still"! God must stop us on our run to destruction, hell. God must stop us, bring us to an end of our "going about to establish our own righteousness" (Rom. 10:1-4). God must stop us in our busyness of the world and God must enable us to "see".

Moses said, "he will shew you." If and when He does, we'll see it is "of the Lord"! As Jonah: Jonah 2:9 "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay [that] that I have vowed. Salvation [is] of the Lord." If and when He does, we'll see it is "of grace"! "For by grace are ye saved," Paul says in Ephesians 2. If and when He does, we'll see it is "in Christ"! And we will see it is free, full and final, our sins being like the Egyptians, "ye shall see them again no more for ever." Only then will we "fear not"! That's why so many secretly fear in their hearts! Regardless of their profession of religion, their conduct, the assurances of men, their experiences, baptism...they've not seen the salvation of the Lord!

When we see the salvation of the Lord, we see the covenant. "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me

an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow" (II Sam. 23:5). All things ordered, purposed, planned and sure by the Lord in an everlasting covenant of salvation. When we see the salvation of the Lord, we see the cross. Not the wooden instrument of death but the death itself. We see the death of Christ by which He justifies sinners through and by the blood and righteousness of the One who bore our sins in His own body on the cross. And we see the Christ! Like Simeon we say as we behold Him by faith through the gospel, "mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Chapter Eighteen

TODD NIBERT

TODD NIBERT

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THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE church is called "*the body of Christ*" several times in the New Testament, and individual Christians are referred to as "*members*," different parts of the body of Christ. There are several things we learn from this beautiful description of Christ and his church.

1. How precious every individual believer is to Christ himself... a member of his body.

2. The way you treat a fellow Christian is how Christ considers that you treat him. How you treat a part of my body is how you treat me. In Christ's description of judgment day in Matthew 25, the ones who had heaven prepared for them from the foundation of the world were the ones who treated the least of Christ's people well. He said, "*inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*" Those who were sentenced to "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels", were those who did not treat the least of Christ's children well. "*Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me.*" Your own, personal commitment to Christ can be seen and proved genuine only by your commitment to "*the least of these (his) brethren.*"

3. We see from this how all of the children of God are to treat each other. Paul said, in I Corinthians 12:25-26, "*There should be no schism (division) in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.*" Take heed how you treat any child of God. Treat them all with love, honour, respect and tenderness. Remember, how you treat them is, literally, how you treat the Lord Jesus Christ himself! Be especially attentive to "*the least of these (his) brethren.*" Do not form a clique in

the body of Christ. That member that is needing attention is the one to whom you are to give your attention. What a joy it is to be a member of the body of Christ. Child of God, do not be a spectator. Get involved: be a friend! Give yourself: in doing this to *"the least of these (his) brethren,"* you actually do it to Christ!

GOD REIGNS

"The Lord reigneth" (Psalm 99:1).

"Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth" (Psalm 96:10).

"Say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth" (Isaiah 52:7).

HERE is the message of scripture: *"The Lord reigneth."* This is the message unbelievers need to hear: *"Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth"*. This is the message believers need to hear: *"Say unto Zion (the church), Thy God reigneth."* To say that the Lord reigns is to say nothing more than God is God. He is in control. This is what we call "the sovereignty of God." The definition of sovereign is in the word itself.....He reigns!

The sovereignty of God is a declaration that God is God. He reigns! His will must be done! *"Our God is in the heavens. He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased"*, Psalm 115:3. God is Holy, all-powerful, and all-wise. Whatever He does is right. He does not do it because it is right. It is right because He does it. He has the right, as God, to do His will, and He has the power, as God, to make sure His will comes to pass. It is impossible for His will to be thwarted! Nebuchadnezzar was taught this lesson. *"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the*

earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will among the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou?" Daniel 4:34-35. God is absolutely sovereign in all things. This is expressed by these three statements:

1. God is sovereign in creation. As an act of His sovereign will, He spake the world into existence. *"God said, let there be light: and there was light"* Genesis 13.
2. God is sovereign in providence. We read in Ephesians 1:11 of *"the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."* There is no such things as chance, good luck, or bad luck! God is the first cause behind everything that happens. Nothing can take place without His permission. If someone does not believe this, they believe in a very little god. But the child of God rejoices in the great truth that *"all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* Romans 8:28.
3. God is sovereign in salvation. The destiny of men is not in their own hands, but in God's hands. He literally chooses who He will save! *"Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth"* Romans 9:18. God's sovereignty is most clearly seen in the great truth of election, where He literally chose whom He would save before time began for Christ's sake. *"For the children, being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth"* Romans 9:11.

Men will agree that He is sovereign in creation, and many will agree that He is sovereign in providence, but that is where they usually stop. They do not love the God who is sovereign in salvation. But it is here that the true state of a man's heart is revealed. This is not merely an issue for theologians to debate! To reject the truth that God is sovereign in salvation is to refuse to bow to His authority. Did He not say *"Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?"* Matt. 20:15.

Do you rejoice that God is sovereign? *"The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice"* Psalm 97:1. Is this good news to you? *"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them.....that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."* This is the essence of true faith. In Luke 7:9, the Lord said concerning the Roman Centurion's faith, *"I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."* And what was so great about it? Listen to what he said to the Lord. *"Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and He cometh."* The centurion understood authority, and he knew he was speaking to the One with sovereign authority. God reigns!

MISERABLE OR CONTENTED?

I have observed many who profess to know Christ and believe the Gospel of grace, and yet they are unhappy and, generally speaking, miserable people. How can this be? I believe I know why. These people walk around with a dark cloud over their head because they are so taken up with the things of this world. They are always in a strait between Christ and the world, and feel bad because they fear they are not giving Christ their first priority. That is the problem. If Christ is merely "first priority," you have missed Him altogether. He is ALL to those who know Him, not merely "first priority." I once heard someone say, "Most people have just enough religion to make them miserable." That is the problem! Most people have religion but they do not have Christ!

BELIEVE YE?

"Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (Matthew 9:29)

THIS was a question the Lord asked two blind men regarding His ability to give them sight. Their answer was, "*Yea Lord.*" Here we are given an illustration of what faith really is. Faith is not believing you are saved, or believing that God loves you and Christ died for you, or believing that all of your sins are forgiven, or believing you are perfect in Christ's sight. These things belong to the realm of assurance. Faith is neither more nor less than believing that He is able to save you. Paul said in II Timothy 1:12, "*I am persuaded that He is able...*" Assurance that you are saved and all of your sins are forgiven will come out of that, but the actual act of faith is believing He is able. Believing He is able will lead to the assurance of these things, because you are relying on His ability, and not your own.

Chapter Nineteen

PETER L. MENEY

PETER L. MENEY

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THE GREAT DIVIDE

IN this world there is a great divide. There are those who have been chosen to salvation, in Christ, from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4) and those who have not. There are those who have been predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) and those who have not.

There are some, in this world, for whom the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7), whose sins are pardoned and who are justified by God. There are others who will themselves forever carry their own sin and its consequences (Matthew 25:46). Every person ever born from the beginning of the world to its end, is on one side of this great divide or the other.

On one side of this divide are the redeemed, the purchase of God (Psalm 74:2). On the other side are those forever sold under sin (Romans 7:14). There are some who are sanctified (1 Corinthians 6:11), and holy (Hebrews 3:1) and some who are reprobated (Jude 1:4) and condemned already (John 3:18).

This great divide runs all through history, touching every nation, every family, every person (Romans 2:11). It is the clear testimony of holy scripture (Romans 9:15,16). It perfectly reflects the purpose of God according to election (Romans 9:11). It embraces all for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died (Isaiah 53:11) on one side, and those He never knew on the other (Matthew 7:23). It encompasses all who are made alive by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:5) and those who remain dead in their trespasses and sins (John 10:3, Romans 2:5). Every single individual, chosen in Christ, redeemed by His blood, and called by the Holy Ghost, will most certainly and joyfully enter into heaven (Romans 8:30), and no one but the chosen, redeemed, and called will ever enter into that place, but must forever be separated in hell (Matthew 25:41).

Who are these blessed and chosen people, and why are they set apart? They are the people loved of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, with everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3), and foreknown in the everlasting covenant of grace (Hebrews 13:20). They are the Father's children (Galatians 4:6), the Son's bride (Revelation 21:9), and those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (1 Corinthians 3:16).

How shall we know these blessed, chosen people? What distinguishes them in this world? Three simple characteristics mark them out. First, they repent of their sins and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation (Acts 20:21, John 3:16). Second, they follow their Saviour, the great Shepherd of the sheep (John 10:27). Third, they bear fruit (John 15:16), in their love of God and of the brethren (John 13:34-35, 1 John 5:2).

"O LORD, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears"
(1 Chronicles 17:19,20).

GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN

SOME people insist there will be different rewards and degrees of happiness in heaven. They base their thinking upon the notion that God plans to reward us for our works, those who have been good securing greater rewards than those who have been not so good. Those who have tried hardest being preferred to those who have succumbed to temptation or stumbled in their Christian walk. These people talk of bigger mansions, brighter crowns, places nearer the throne where the brightest and best will get a better view

of their Saviour. Going back to 1 John 3:2, they suppose that when we get to heaven and see Christ in all His glory some will be *more* Christ-like than others. This cannot be.

Our eternal state as Christians in heaven is to be with the Lord and like Him. So much so, that even in this life we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 9:29). Accordingly, scripture provides some fine descriptions of what that state will be like and what we as believers will all alike enjoy.

The eternal state

It is heaven; paradise; a place of light. It is a house built by God and a city of God's preparing, its foundations are strong. It is a country of which God's people are the citizens. Heaven is our kingdom inheritance where we shall reign as kings with incorruptible crowns of righteousness and life. It is called glory; a place of peace and rest and joy. It is Abraham's bosom where tables are fitly spread that the redeemed may fellowship together and feast. It is beyond compare, the wealth of this world is nothing to it. It is enduring, never-fading and passes not away.

More, heaven is free from all evil; from temptations within and without; from the dominion of sin; from guilt because of sin, from fears, disease, sickness and suffering. There are no tears in heaven, nor sadness, no, not even for loved ones lost. Our pleasure is in God Himself, in communion with Him, Father, Son and Holy Ghost in the highest perfection and without interruption. We will see Christ and behold His glory with the eyes of our understanding enlarged to comprehend His beauty. We shall see Him in His flesh, crowned with glory and honour who was crowned with thorns, spit upon, buffeted, crucified, pierced and wounded for us.

We will stand with angels, walk with friends, sit down in the company of Abraham, Isaiah and David. We will talk with Paul and Adam. Rejoice with all the blood bought people of God and dwell eternally in perfect holiness beyond our present imagination.

All this is the inheritance of all the people of God. There will be no hierarchies or classes or degrees. We will see Him as He is. We shall know as we are known and we will be like Him every one.

Evidence to the contrary?

Arguments for rewards in heaven are based mainly upon the interpretation of a few verses in Daniel 12:2, Matthew 25:14ff and 1 Corinthians 3:14,15, 15:40ff. Examination will reveal these verses have rather more to do with the Church age upon earth than our ultimate glory in heaven. Their continuing strength as arguments for rewards in heaven, however, derives not from their context in scripture, but from the proud heart of man who wants to earn reward for good works and have his efforts paraded and applauded for all to see. Degrees of rewards in heaven is essentially an apology for works salvation and popery. Thus, Paul admonished certain foolish believers, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

Trophies of a great salvation

Consider the following grounds for our presence in heaven and union with Christ. Then ask yourself on what additional grounds might my supposed reward be greater or lesser than another's.

1. All the people of God are loved by Him with the same love. They are not loved one sooner than another for they are all loved with an everlasting love. They are not loved more than another for there are no degrees of love with God. The love He bears to His own dear people is unaltered by time and continues for all eternity.
2. All the people of God are chosen together in Christ. They are not chosen one earlier than another for all are chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world.
3. All the people of God are equally interested in the covenant of grace. All are in it as they are chosen in Christ before the world

began and all are entitled to the same exceeding great and precious promises and blessings of it.

4. All the people of God are equally redeemed with the same price which is the precious blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Peter 1:18, 19). Though redeemed out of every tribe and nation yet it is by the same blood (Revelation 5:9). The ransom price for the elect is the same for all, Christ Himself (1 Timothy 2:6).

5. All the people of God are justified by the same righteousness. Justification is unto all and upon all that believe. There is no difference between greater or lesser believers; great faith or little faith. No believer has more righteousness than another. Nor does the nature and object of the same precious faith differ from believer to believer.

6. All the people of God are equally the children of God. They are predestined to the same adoption, into the same family, by the same redemption by which they receive the same rights and authority to become the children of God. They are fellow citizens with the saints, equal members of the household of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

7. All the people of God are kings and priests unto God. They are made so by Christ. They are His workmanship. Their office and dignity are alike. They were all dead once in the depravity of sin and all raised by grace from a low estate to sit among princes and to inherit the same throne of glory.

Because there are no degrees of reward in heaven, our future glory and the blessings of our inheritance are invariably expressed in the singular. The *inheritance* of the saints is the same inheritance though the saints be many. The *inheritance reserved in heaven* is the same for all though reserved for many. The *kingdom* our Father gives, the *crown* of righteousness laid up and the *penny* given to the labourers, though some worked all day and some for only a short time, speaks of equality for all.

Hence we may say to every blessed believer, as did the Lord in His day without fear of contradiction, "Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12).

LIMITING THE ATONEMENT

ANY idea of limiting God ought to be anathema to a Christian. Our God is all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient) and all-pervading (omnipresent). There is nothing in this world or the entire universe that God does not see, know and control. There is nothing that God has willed and purposed to do that will be frustrated or fail. Our finite minds buckle at such immensity, but that is why our Lord is God Almighty.

Nevertheless, there are areas in which God has chosen to limit Himself and, we confess there is some knowledge He does not possess. For example, God does not know what it is to commit sin or act deceitfully. Our Lord is never confused or uncertain. God is never taken by surprise.

The Positive Attributes of God

Of course these examples are merely the downside of God's positive attributes of holiness, sovereignty and eternal purpose. Yet they do reveal the ways in which our use of language and particular words can give the appearance of limiting or restricting the power of God. This we can see even in scripture, on occasions, where we read for example, "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" Genesis 6:6.

Yet we must not suppose that such verses indicate variability of purpose within God. Rather they supply for us, by way of human comparison, an insight into the utter abhorrence God feels towards

the extent and degree of the sinfulness of man. Thus, while a cursory reading might suggest that God concluded that He had made a mistake and was sorry for creating man, in truth, the purpose and design of the description is to reveal God's absolute holiness and the affront caused by the wickedness of His human creation.

Limits within the work of Christ

Within the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ there is another example of men trying to shoehorn God into their own image by curtailing and misconstruing what He has clearly revealed of Himself. In the name of honouring God, these people actually try to set boundaries on God's purpose and limit the nature and extent of the redemptive work of Christ. They sneer piteously at the idea of any elective purpose in the eternal will of God while limiting the very essence of the plan of salvation.

The limitations of freewill atonement

It is amazing to read the output and hear the conversation of Arminian freewillers who accuse free grace believers of restricting the efficacy of Christ's death and limiting the scope of the redemptive plan. It is as though they say we limit God and His ability to save whomsoever He chooses. They fail to grasp that whatever limits apply to God apply precisely because He wills it so to be and they are no slight on His power to accomplish just whatever He desires.

Election is a great theme of the Bible

As free grace believers we accept that God has purposefully chosen to save only some of the men and women of this world (Romans 9:11, 1 Thessalonians 1:4). These individuals He calls His elect or His sheep (John 10:26, Romans 8:33, 1 Peter 1:2). These elect do not extend to the whole of mankind but are men and women of every kind and status in life who are saved by grace through faith. Upon

these particular individuals, and these alone, does the love and mercy of God alight savingly. For these blessed people alone are all the provisions of redemption, atonement and forgiveness secured. This is the proper, Biblical, limitation of Christ's death (John 10:11,14).

Professing themselves to be wise...

The irony is, however, that it is the mistaken Arminian view of Christ's redemption that truly limits the power and accomplishments of God. In rushing to extend the scope of the atonement to all men and women without exception, they limit the efficacy of Christ's death. This means that while they want to encompass all mankind beneath the merits of Christ's shed blood, they must needs limit what that blood can actually achieve. This is an improper limitation of Christ's death.

For example, they say that Christ died for all men yet acknowledge that not all men are saved. Therefore the death of Christ does not in itself achieve and accomplish what it set out to do. Its power to save is reduced and instead Christ's sacrifice is restricted to making salvation possible for those who later wish, of their own free will, to make it effective for themselves.

Denying the sinfulness of sin

Furthermore, freewillers limit the offence of sin. They say that Christ died for all sin of all men and women everywhere. Yet they acknowledge that hell is a reality and say it will be populated for eternity by those who reject the offer of salvation that God has provided.

But we enquire what sin are they to be punished for if Christ has died for all sin? What offence against the living God has not been atoned for by the blood of Christ? What act of rebellion and ingratitude still remains in man to be punished if Christ has already been punished for all? Is not unbelief a sin, too? (John 16:9) Is not

rejection of the Creator's will an offence against the living God? (John 8:24).

Treading underfoot the blood of Christ is rightly worthy of God's wrath and eternal punishment but it is to accuse God of the most heinous injustice to imagine that debts once paid for by Christ's suffering and death will remain outstanding and have to be paid for twice. This is an improper limitation of Christ's redemptive work.

Inflating the abilities of man

Thirdly, those who propose universal redemption and thereby deny that Christ died only for the elect, in full accordance with the purpose and justice of God, also limit the true depths of man's depraved nature. This is a most serious mistake, for it supposes that man is better and more able than he is and suggests that it is within the power and ability of all men and women to secure their salvation, an accomplishment which even Christ's blood was unable to do.

The Bible describes men as dead in sin and reveals that because men are natural and God is spiritual it is impossible for men to discern the things of God (Romans 8:8, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Hebrews 11:6). But freewillers must find the power within man to choose God, despite the clear testimony of scripture (2 Corinthians 4:4). They must allow for the ability of sinful human beings to make Christ's redemptive work efficacious. They must limit the Bible's teaching on depravity to allow man the choice to accept or reject the offer God wants them to receive. This is an improper limitation of Christ's redemptive work.

Proper and improper limitations

So you see that the very freewill believers who pride themselves in upholding a wide, free and all-embracing atonement actually limit Christ's death in a most improper way. Free grace believers uphold

the Bible truth that God has limited Himself to the accomplishment of the salvation of His chosen people.

Yes, we believe in limited atonement, or particular redemption. But we do not limit the power of Christ's blood to save and actually accomplish the reconciliation and deliverance from condemnation of all sinners who are brought by grace to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, we believe in limited atonement. But we do not limit the number or extent of the sins for which Christ died. We discover by the mercy of God that He saves to the uttermost all who come to Him believing, endowed with that divine gift of faith (John 6:29). We see that while in Adam all die yet in Christ all are made alive and we thank God that in His love for His chosen people He has been pleased to place us in Christ and utterly cleanse us from all sin—even the sin of unbelief.

Yes, we believe in limited atonement. But we do not strive to limit the depths of depravity to which our human nature has plumbed because of sin. We do not see ourselves better than we are, or imagine that some residual goodness or latent desire to please God causes us to accept Him while others reject (Ephesians 1:19, Philippians 1:29).

Instead, we see that Salvation is of the Lord. We see sinful men and women loved of God, saved by grace, redeemed, forgiven, reconciled and blessed with faith in Jesus Christ, their limitless God.

Chapter Twenty

TOM HARDING

TOM HARDING

Tom Harding has been the pastor of Zebulon Baptist Church, Pikeville, Kentucky, USA, for 12 years. He was "raised in false religion but redeemed by the blood of Christ and rescued from the pit of sin by the power of the gospel of Christ."

LORD, MAKE US SEE OUR NEED

*"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD
bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass." Isaiah 40:6-7*

UNLESS the Lord is pleased to teach us and reveal to us what we are by nature (Eph. 2:1-3), we will never see our need for Christ and the gospel of his free grace (Rom. 3:24). We will never understand our need of Jesus Christ and his great salvation, unless the Holy Spirit is pleased to move upon our hearts (John 6:44-45). Only when he reveals unto us our sinful condition, will we seek his salvation in Christ Jesus the Lord (1 Tim. 1:12). Only when he speaks to us about our righteousness as being filthy rags, will we seek his righteousness that is performed and provided freely by his grace (1 Cor. 1:30). Only when God reveals to us our total ruin, will we seek redemption through the spotless blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7). Only when God is pleased to show us how unworthy we are, will we seek him who is worthy (Rev. 5:12). Lord, make us to know and see what our need is, so by Thy Spirit and grace we can seek Thy mercy where it can be found, in Christ the Lord (Phil 3:9; 4:19).

RUIN, REDEMPTION AND REGENERATION

ONE preacher of the past has rightly said, "Every sermon should contain the three R's; **ruin** by sin in Adam, **redemption** by the blood atonement of Christ and **regeneration** by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit."

We rejoice in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:3). It is indeed the message of God to guilty sinners; how God can justly save His people from their sins through Christ's redeeming blood to His own glory (Rom. 3:24-26; Rev. 1:5-6). The gospel of Christ Jesus declares that He came to save sinners (Matt. 9:10-13). If all men are **not guilty** and can work up or work out their own righteousness and salvation, there is no need for Christ to come in the flesh (John 1:14) and to establish a righteousness and die for sinners (Gal. 2:21). All men are totally depraved, guilty before God and unable to perform any righteous action or notion (Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:9-12). To preach a gospel that denies total ruin is to deny the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ altogether (1 John 1:7-9).

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ declares that the Lord was absolutely successful in His priestly work (John 17:4-5). Christ died, not to make salvation a possibility for all sinners (Gal. 1:3-6), but rather to make complete atonement for the sins of His covenant people (Heb. 2:17; 9:12). Those for whom He died shall be saved in Christ (John 6:37; Eph.2:4-10). To preach a gospel that denies the effectual and particular redeeming work of Jesus Christ is to deny the gospel of Christ altogether (Gal. 1:6-10).

The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ also declares that those for whom He died to justify (Rom. 5:6-9), shall be in due time irresistibly called with the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 10:11-17; 2 Cor. 4:5-6; 1 Thes. 1:4-7). This is not reformation and education of

the old sin nature, but rather the revelation and exaltation of the glory of the person and work of Christ within us (John 16:9-15; Gal. 1:15-16; Phil. 1:6). This is the regenerating work of God the Holy Spirit making sinners new creatures in Christ, implanting within them a new sinless nature after the image of God (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:23, 3:4; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:1). To preach a gospel that denies the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is also denial of the gospel of Christ altogether (2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15).

To deny any part of total ruin by the fall in Adam (Rom. 5:12) and complete redemption by the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-20) and powerful regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:1), is a denial of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ altogether. *"But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 10:33).

HEAR HIM

*"And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying,
This is my beloved Son: **hear him.**" Matthew 17:5, Luke 9:35*

ON this occasion the Lord Jesus was glorified before the apostles. There also appeared with Him Moses and Elijah when He was transfigured. Both Moses and Elijah were occupied and discussing the Lord's death and exodus from this life. When Peter saw this glorious sight he thought that it might be good to build three tabernacles honouring them, Moses the great Lawgiver and Elijah the mighty prophet of God. About this time God was

pleased to overshadow them with a cloud and to speak out of heaven unto the disciple. The instructions of God were plain and simple, "**Hear Him.**" Peter, don't build, don't sacrifice, don't worship Moses and Elijah; "**Hear Him.**" The command of the gospel has not changed. The command of God is as appropriate today as it was then, "**Hear Him.**" God has given the whole testimony of scripture as an accurate record to bear witness to the glorious person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, "*And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself*" (Luke 24:27). May God give us grace to do these four things.

1. Receive with confident conviction the truth to which God bears witness. Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of the most high God, "*this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation (John 14:6). God is only well pleased with those in Him (Eph. 1:6). He is the only suitable and effectual sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:12).

2. Because of who He is we should hear Him with profound reverence, "*Holy and reverend is His name*" (Psa.111:9). His teachings are not the philosophy of men, but rather the doctrine of God, "*My doctrine is not mine but His that sent me*" (John 7:17). Therefore we should quickly receive His word as "*light*" and "*life*"; as the only foundation of faith.

3. We should hear Him with unconditional obedience. God told King Saul that it was better to obey than to sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22). We are commanded to repent and believe the gospel (Acts 17:30). Our Lord said, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:15-16). May God give life and grace to hear and obey Him.

4. Hear Him with joyful confidence. We can believe His word and trust His grace with certain expectation that the Lord Jesus

Christ: fulfilled and honoured God's holy law, made full and eternal redemption for our sin, entered into glory as our forerunner and is seated at God's right hand (Heb. 1:3; 6:17-20; 9:12).

SALVATION

IN many books of the Bible there is found a key word that sets the theme of the writing. The key word in the Philippians epistle is "*rejoice*" (Phil. 4:4). The key word in Hebrews is "*better*"; Christ is better, superior and greater than any angel, priest or sacrifice (Heb. 1:3-5). The key word that often appears in the vision of Isaiah is "*salvation*". In fact Isaiah's name means "salvation of Jehovah". Here are the references in Isaiah where we read about God's salvation:

Wells of salvation; *"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of **salvation**" (Isa. 12:3).*

Joy of salvation; *"This is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his **salvation**" (Isa. 25:9).*

Walls of salvation; *"We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks" (Isa. 26:1).*

Everlasting salvation; *"Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting **salvation**: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end" (Isa. 45:17).*

Day of salvation; *"In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of **salvation** have I helped thee" (Isa. 49:8).*

Prophets of salvation; *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth **salvation**; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"* (Isa. 52:7).

Spread of salvation; *"The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the **salvation** of our God"* (Isa. 52:10).

The arm of salvation; *"He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought **salvation** unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him"* (Isa. 59:16).

The helmet of salvation; *"For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of **salvation** upon his head"* (Isa. 59:17).

The garments of salvation; *"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness"* (Isa. 61:10).

The light of salvation; *"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the **salvation** thereof as a lamp that burneth"* (Isa. 62:1).

It seems most obvious that God gave Isaiah a vision of utmost and urgent importance. How shall we escape if we neglect so **great salvation?** (Heb. 2:3)

Appendices

Appendix A
In Closing

406, Gadsby's Hymns

*Hark! how the blood-bought hosts above
Conspire to praise redeeming love,
In sweet harmonious strains;
And while they strike the golden lyres,
This glorious theme each bosom fires,
That grace triumphant reigns.*

*Join thou, my soul, for thou canst tell
How grace divine broke up thy cell,
And loosed thy native chains;
And still, from that auspicious day,
How oft art thou constrained to say,
That grace triumphant reigns.*

*Grace, till the tribes redeemed by blood,
Are brought to know themselves and God,
Her empire shall maintain;
To call when he appoints the day,
And from the mighty take the prey,
Shall grace triumphant reign.*

*When called to meet the King of dread,
Should love compose my dying bed,
And grace my soul sustain,
Then, ere I quit this mortal clay,
I'll raise my fainting voice, and say,
Let grace triumphant reign.*

John Kent
(1766-1843)

SOVEREIGN GRACE – PAST AND PRESENT

Reign On, Great, Mighty, Sov'reign God

(Tune: *My Faith Has Found A Resting Place* #228 CMD)

*Great God! To worship You we've come, with reverent faith we pray
May God, the mighty Three-in-One His sovereign scepter sway.
Let grace triumphant o'er us reign, and Christ exalted be;
May sinners now be born again, and Your salvation see.*

*Father, make mercy, truth, and peace fill each believing soul,
And by the power of Your grace our raging lusts control!
May mutual love and harmony among Your saints abide,
Teach us to love and set us free from enmity and pride.*

*Reign on, great, mighty sov'reign God, and make Your wonders known,
Till every sinner bought by blood is made to trust Your Son!
Let Christ our Savior, God the Son, in saving power reign,
Till God's elect arrive at home, never to part again!*

Don Fortner

--ooOoo--

To the saints of God, who
have come to know His grace in salvation,

*"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting
covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in
you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom
be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Grace be with you all. Amen."

Hebrews 13:20-21,25

Appendix B
Further Reading By and About
The Authors

Provided below are details of various works written by, or about, the authors included in this book, some in print and some on the Internet. The list is by no means exhaustive, but will nevertheless point the reader in the direction where more works by each author may be found.

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*<http://gracetruthministries.com/fcovellpromises.html> and more works by Francis
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JOHN VINALL

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"Salvation is of the Lord" can be read online at

*<http://www.truegospel.net/Vinall/009.htm> and more works by and about John Vinall
are available at <http://www.truegospel.net/Vinall/>*

JOHN WARBURTON

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*"The Lovingkindness of God" can be read online at
<http://www.truegospel.net/Warburton/003.htm>. "The Mourner Blessed" can be read
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BENJAMIN A. RAMSBOTTOM

B.A. Ramsbottom is the present editor of the "Gospel Standard" magazine and has written a number of books, particularly biographical works including his excellent biography of William Gadsby and "Six Remarkable Ministers" listed above. Some other works of his include:-

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ON THE INTERNET:

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<http://www.truegospel.net/Ramsbottom/235.htm> and more works by

B.A. Ramsbottom are available at <http://www.truegospel.net/Ramsbottom/index.htm>

DONALD S. FORTNER

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ON THE INTERNET:

"Salvation by Grace Alone" can be read online at <http://sovereign-grace.com/418.htm>

and more sermons and articles by Henry Mahan are available at <http://sovereign-grace.com/hmahan.htm>

DON BELL

ON THE INTERNET:

Articles by Don Bell are available online at <http://www.lantanagrace.org/> and also at <http://sovereign-grace.com/bell.htm>

GARY SHEPARD

ON THE INTERNET:

"Christ, the Saviour of Sinners" and "What will we have in the Day of Trouble?" were published as Guest articles on the website <http://www.donfortner.com> and more articles by Gary Shepard including "Stand Still and See the Salvation of the Lord" are available at <http://www.freegrace.net/jax/>

TODD NIBERT

ON THE INTERNET:

"The Body of Christ", "Miserable or Contented" and "Believe Ye?" were published as Guest articles on the website <http://www.donfortner.com> where further works by Todd Nibert may be read, and further articles are also available at <http://sovereign-grace.com/nibert.htm>

PETER L. MENEY

"The Great Divide", "Great is your Reward in Heaven" and "Limiting the Atonement" were originally published as articles in "New Focus" magazine of which Peter L. Meney is the editor. Further details about "New Focus" can be found in the Colophon of this book.

ON THE INTERNET:

See <http://go-newfocus.co.uk>

TOM HARDING

ON THE INTERNET:

Articles by Tom Harding are available online at <http://sovereign-grace.com/harding.htm> and details of Zebulon Baptist Church of which he is the pastor are available at <http://sovereign-grace.com/zebulon.htm>

Colophon

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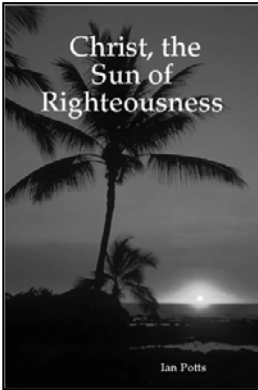
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By Ian Potts



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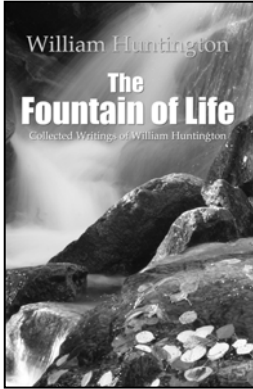
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