

# **THE FINNEY SERMON COLLECTION, VOL. 1-3**

*by Charles G. Finney*

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# THE FINNEY SERMON COLLECTION

## VOLUME I

**Editor's Note:** Collections of Charles G. Finney sermons have appeared in various forms over the last 150 years. The following collection comes from many sources, mostly from devotees who transcribed older works into digital form and passed them along to us. The majority of the sermons came from various republications appearing in the Oberlin Evangelist. Some appear to be duplicates but comparing the texts we note they were either notes prepared from sermons preached in different contexts or are the results of the transcribing by different editors sometime in the distant past. We present all of them to you for the sake of completeness.

# BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” —  
Matthew 5:3.*

In several of the first verses of this chapter, Christ states the distinctive features of the Christian character, and affirms the blessedness of those who possess them. The text gives one of them: “Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

In this discourse I shall show —

- I. WHAT IT IS TO BE POOR IN SPIRIT.**
- II. WHY SUCH ARE BLESSED.**

## I. WHAT IT IS TO BE POOR IN SPIRIT

- 1.** *To have a realizing sense of our spiritual state.* In this it is implied that we understand our own guilt and helplessness, and realize as a practical fact our own utter emptiness by nature of every thing good, and of any tendency to that which is good. It is one thing to hold this in theory, and another thing to be heartily sensible of the humbling fact. Most professing Christians admit in words that they are in themselves wholly helpless and destitute, but to know and feel as an abiding practical conviction that this is their true spiritual condition how few are able!
- 2.** Being poor in spirit implies that we see in its true light the tendency in us to every thing evil — that we understand that the habitudes of our minds, that our appetites and propensities, that nearly the whole power of the sensibility continually tends to selfishness.
- 3.** A realizing conviction of being shut up to the grace of God for help. I know people hold in theory that salvation is all grace, and suppose themselves not to doubt it; and I know too that very many of those same people do not believe it after all: they do not conceive it so as to realize the

fact. Ask them — do you expect to be saved by your own works? and they will say no, to be sure. Are you shut up to the grace of God? Yes. But to hold it as part of your creed, and to realize it as God's truth, are two vastly different things.

**4.** A conviction that we are shut up to faith in Christ as the only possible way of obtaining help. This too is held in theory, and many suppose themselves to understand it, who yet do not really apprehend it at all. And let me ask, who that has come to a realization of this fact has not been astonished to see how superficially he once held the truth on this point? Who in such a case has not been shocked to see in how loose and heartless a manner all the truths respecting the importance of man were held by him — to see that his belief was mere theory, without ever so much as reaching the heart at all? To be poor in spirit implies a right sense of the fact that we are shut up to faith in Christ as the only possible way of obtaining help in our helpless condition.

**5.** A conviction of being shut up to God for *faith* — to the sovereign working of God's Holy Spirit, and the sovereign grace of God as manifested through Christ, to produce this faith. Not that it is not our own exercise; it is indeed, and from its nature must be, but we must be sensible that without the Spirit of Christ we shall no more exercise this faith, than we shall get to heaven by our own works of obedience to law. It is one thing to hold this as the doctrine of an orthodox creed, and quite another to feel it in our inmost being.

My own experience speaks strongly here. I was led to contemplate unbelief as a distinct sin, and its infinite guilt and inexcusableness. The question came — do you believe God as you believe men? Do you take His word and trust in His promise as you take the word and trust the promise of men? The answer was unavoidable — no, I do not. I do not trust God's promises as I trust man's promises. Herein was revealed and laid open to me my infinite wickedness, that I would not trust in God's promises and rest in them, even as firmly as I would trust in the word of men. I saw it now clearly. I saw the God-dishonoring, damning (for so I viewed it) the God-dishonoring, damning fact, that while I knew, and confessed, and saw clearly that God would not and could not lie, after all I did not believe fully and with all my heart. I would not take the word of

the Mighty God as I would the word of frail and fallible man. And then, being led to perceive my absolute unbelief, I felt notwithstanding, that unless God pleased so to reveal Himself to me, that I could throw my soul upon Him — so to enlighten my mind and draw it to Himself by laying open before my soul His goodness and truth as to induce me to cast myself on Him by faith, I should sink. I felt that unless He would give me faith in Him, I was as certain to be damned as that I existed. Now this is what I mean by being sensible that you are shut up to God for faith. But moreover, we must be willing thus to be shut up to God. We must not merely see the fact, but be willing to be thus. We must see that we are condemned and that justly, for not being right; and hopeless, helpless in ourselves, shut up to the sovereign love of God to work that which is well pleasing in His sight, and thus shut up to the sovereign grace of God by our voluntary wickedness.

**6.** A deep and abiding sense of the absolute need we are in of a Savior from our utter wickedness, helpless and just condemnation. The mind must perceive and feel its guilt in such a sense as to be sure that its salvation is out of the question, except Christ shall substitute His death for ours, a ransom for our souls; such a sense of our own vileness as to lay hope out of the question altogether, except through the sacrifice of Christ. O it is easy to say we are helpless and that Christ is our only hope and dependence; it is easy to recite for our creed — “I believe that salvation is through Christ alone and wholly.” But how hard is it to see our vileness and guilt — our abominable filthiness, our loathsomeness, and our hopeless condemnation except Christ be applied to our souls in His offices and relations as Redeemer, Savior, Sanctifier, Teacher and King. How hard to know this as we know what we see and hear without eyes and ears.

**7.** Not only a sense of this dependence upon Christ, and helplessness out of Him is implied, but a willingness to have it so — a willingness to cleave to Christ in all His offices and relations, a setting aside self, a self-loathing, a self renunciation in all respects, a casting away all hope in ourselves, all dependence upon ourselves, all trust in our own wisdom or righteousness, or our efforts at sanctification, and every thing else which is our own. These things are implied in poverty of spirit in the text. In short it is a correct view of our utterly helpless state, a realizing sense of that fact, and a disposition of soul corresponding to such views.

I come now to show —

## II. WHY THOSE WHO ARE THUS POOR IN SPIRIT ARE BLESSED

- 1.** Because the kingdom of God is within them. The text says, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” They have already the first elements of the kingdom of God within them.
- 2.** Because flesh and blood has never revealed this to them. Before, they might have had it as mere theory after the flesh, but if they have come to feel and realize their state in its dreadful aggravations, flesh and blood have not revealed it unto them, but God has uncovered with His own hand the deep vileness of their souls and undertaken their cure.
- 3.** They have already surmounted the greatest difficulty in the way of their salvation. After Christ has provided a feasible method of salvation, so that God can be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, the greatest difficulty is to make mankind see their need of Christ. It is a great work to make men feel themselves hopeless, to humble them, to tear away their self-dependence and self-righteousness, and the notion of resources in themselves for any thing good. God is constantly engaged in bringing about this result. When a man has come to know himself and to renounce himself in all respects as to dependence and hope, then rely upon it the greatest difficulty is over come, and the chief discipline endured.
- 4.** It is the most painful part too. To slay him, to tear away the last fiber of hope in his own righteousness or efforts after righteousness, and burn in upon his soul a sense of his real abominable wickedness and hopeless ruin in himself — O this costs more trouble and patience and loathing of soul, and anguish of spirit than anything else. How many times must he be infinitely ashamed of himself — so sunk in the lowest pit of shame, as to abhor himself with unutterable loathing! How often be compelled in agony to exclaim — Infinite wretch that I was. How full of pride and of hell I was, and how little I knew it! To be mortified so many times in order to empty him of himself; he must weep, and agonize, and grieve, and despair so often; must undergo a perpetual dying — for it is indeed a perpetual

dying, while passing through this process of having himself shown to himself. He sees this sin and that sin, is ashamed here and ashamed there, is mortified at every turn; he dallies with temptation, breaks his resolutions, and falls into shameful sins, and is vexed and angry at himself, and ready as it were to spit in his own face; he stumbles, and plunges, and flounders and falls, till at last all hope vanishes, and the soul lies down, weary and worn out by vain struggles, and gives up in despair. All this is painful enough; but once gone through with, the man begins to understand himself thoroughly, becomes poor in spirit, glad to renounce all self, part with his own righteousness, his own wisdom, his self-dependence, because they are nothing. When he is thus thoroughly crucified the most painful work is done. If he falls from this, then he must do his first work over; but let him keep in this state of mind, continue thus poor in spirit, and the rocks and breakers are well nigh past.

**5.** Because he has now come to be prepared for the application of the remedy for his disease. He is in an attitude in which Christ is best pleased to see him. The thing is effected for which Christ has been laboring. Heretofore Christ has been trying to crown Himself upon the mind, but self has been a constant hindrance and this Christ has been belaboring with a continual stroke. Christ would knock and knock, but to use a homely figure, the mind has been brushing up, and brushing up, and putting things to rights like an untidy housekeeper, unwilling to admit Him, and trying to put matters in a little better trim instead of letting Christ in forthwith, and saying — “Lord, thou seest what filth and rubbish are here.” He is obliged to knock and keep knocking and to stand without till His head is wet with dew, and His locks are the drops of the night. The sinner is making preparations, and must become exceedingly righteous before he comes to be saved. But when Christ has convinced him of his own utter helplessness and that the more he tries to wash and cleanse his pollution, the more polluted he becomes, and that all he can do is only sinking him deeper into the horrible pit — then, then the soul is ready to receive Christ in all His offices and relations — to receive a whole Christ as presented in the gospel.

**6.** Because in a sense, such a person has already learned what the remedy is. He has learned to reject himself, and that his dependence must be utterly and forever on another than himself. He has learned how blessed it

is to be nothing, to know and do nothing of himself, to be universally dependent upon Christ for every thing — for breath, for grace, for faith, for every thing; to have Christ his “all and in all.”

**7.** Because they learn how blessed it is to trust Christ. They see such fullness in Christ, they do not wish any strength of their own. Their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption are in Christ, and they need and wish for none of their own. Christ is all they need, and they need nothing in themselves. They have them all in Christ, and they are willing and glad to have them in Him.

**8.** Because they have learned how to be composed in the midst of all kinds of trials. They neither have nor seek any resort in themselves. They know in whom their strength lies, and who is their strong tower. They can depend on Christ for all, and they know He cannot fail them. But let me say,

**9.** Because they have no self interest. They have seen themselves to be perfectly destitute and worthless. They have no reputation to build up, they have no appetite that must be gratified, no passion that must be catered for, none of these to contend for or hold on to. They are emptied out, and every particle of self value is gone entirely. They labor not for themselves, but for Christ.

**10.** Because to be poor in spirit is to be rich in faith. Then poor in the proper sense, emptied of dependence upon themselves, then they are rich in faith. But I hasten to conclude with several

## REMARKS

**1.** It is easy to see what Paul meant when he said “When I am weak, then am I strong.” Paul you know had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. He was at first very uneasy at it, and he besought the Lord thrice that it might be removed, but Christ told him His grace should be sufficient for him. As if He had said, “I shall not remove that thorn. I gave it to keep you under such a pressure of infirmity that you could never forget your dependence upon me.” Paul then gloried in his infirmity. He says he gloried in infirmities and tribulations and persecutions, because



they emptied him of himself, and made Christ his strength. They made him know his weakness and his strength. When he was weak in himself, he was strong in Christ. His trials kept alive a sense of his entire dependence, and thus prepared him to do all things through Christ who strengthened him.

**2.** To be poor in spirit, is to be in a highly spiritual state. Persons are often in a spiritual state without being aware of it. In my intercourse with Christians, I have often been struck with the sad mistake made in respect to what is a spiritual frame. Certain high wrought pleasurable emotions are often regarded as the highest spiritual states; whereas other states, which can exist only under a high degree of the Spirit's influence, are nevertheless not so regarded at all. Is this state, in which a man sees himself all empty and naught, shut up to God's goodness, shut up to God to make him as He shall please, a vessel of wrath or a vessel of mercy — sees how infinitely reasonable it is for God to deal with him thus; that it is just for God to consult wholly His own wisdom, and to consult the creature not at all, and that he lies in the hands of God as clay in the hands of the potter, for God to mold from the filthy lump a vessel of honor or dishonor as seems good in His sight; when he feels thus, and lies crucified and dead as to the least idea of self-dependence — is this a state of weak and low spirituality? Nay verily. Scarcely can there be a state of higher spiritual exercise than this. This poverty of spirit, total renunciation of self, is far enough from being a carnal state of mind.

**3.** This state of spiritual poverty is a very healthful state of mind. It is healthful to be laid in the dust, to be emptied, and stripped, and made naked and bare; to be laid in the dust and kept there. It is the only state of mind that is safe. Of a man who is kept in such a state, I have great hopes.

**4.** Certain forms or stages of this spiritual poverty are very disheartening. Individuals, when Christ reveals to them the depth, as it were bottomlessness, of their misery, and gives no such revelation of Himself, and of His intention to do all for them as to give them a firm hope, feel greatly disheartened. There is such a sinking away from all expectation in themselves, that unless Christ gives them an indication of His love, and opens a medium of communication between Himself and them, a state of great misgiving and anxious suspense will ensue. The mind comes into a state in which it does not rebel, it does not murmur or weary itself except

in this; it does not see at the time, its acceptance with God. It feels that God would be just in casting it out, and it lies there with the eye fixed on Christ, and cries, "If God does not take me up, and by His self-moved goodness sanctify and save me, I am lost to all eternity." While there is nothing in the mind upon which it can seize as a present evidence that Christ is his, this self-renunciation and self-emptying will leave the mind in a state of despondency. I do not mean of despair. I hardly know how to express it; the mind is not joyful, nor is it in that agony which is the accompaniment of clear light and desperate resistance; but it is in despondency, in a kind of mourning — and perhaps that is what is meant by the "mourning" in the next verse — "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." The mind mourns when thus completely emptied of all self-trust, while yet it has no such hold on Christ as to feel assured of its interest in Him. It mourns for sin, for its own madness; it mourns at the thought of being separated from God, it mourns over its lost condition. It is a state of most perfect mourning. If you have experienced it, you know well the state to which I refer. If you have experienced what it is to be driven out of self, and torn away from self, and crucified to self, before you had faith to lay hold on Christ and feel yourself set upon the rock; if you have every been emptied of self, having no longer any expectation of helping yourself, no more than of creating a universe, having no more thought or intention of trying to save yourself, or of doing any thing effectual for yourself, than of walking in mid air, or than of stepping upon the boiling waves, (for if you have been in the state, you no more thought of helping yourself than of going a journey to Europe across the Atlantic on foot,) having it well settled in your mind, that you will no more succeed in doing any thing in your salvation, than you would succeed in walking from the top of a house into mid air, if you have been thus, and at the same time the offices and relations of Christ were not so revealed to you as to enable you to avail yourself of them, then you know the mourning which I mean. It is any thing but a worldly sorrow, any thing but an ungodly sorrow. It is a sorrow after a godly sort which worketh life. And remember — a man needs to be thoroughly emptied of self in order to come into the state of mourning above described. Most have so much self reliance, so much complacency in self, and know so little of themselves, that they cannot have this state. It can be produced in no other way than

by showing a man his character and nothingness as they really are. But I remark

**5.** Such seasons as these very commonly precede and are the prelude to great spiritual enlargement. Where you witness great spiritual enlargement, inquire and you will find that in proportion as it is deep and abiding, the season of spiritual poverty was thorough and complete. If the sense of poverty be slight, the enlargement will be so, and the opposite. If the enlargement be great, the man can tell you what none but spiritual minds can tell; such experience as “none but he that feels it knows;” and the things that he will tell you will be any thing but unreasonable. He sees what common eyes never saw. He has found out what all men ought to know, but what few have seen. If his enlargement is abiding, he will have a rich history to give. He may not be communicative, but fish him out, get at the bottom of his heart, and he will drop his eyes and tell you what he found in himself, how he found himself out, how he sank, and kept sinking from one depth to another still lower, till it was like sinking into the bottomless pit itself. He was driven from the last hold upon himself, the last link was broken, and he fell into the arms of Christ and was saved. And O, the salvation! Such a salvation is worth the having! But again,

**6.** Christ has no pleasure in causing this poverty of spirit only as it is the only way to get Himself before the mind. In no other way than by revealing to us by bitter experience our own weakness and sin, can He make us renounce ourselves and cast our all upon Him: and so He takes this way. And I tell you that no man can have a more important revelation from God, than this same revelation of self by the Spirit. And no man sees God in Christ, or apprehends Christ as He is for the soul, till he has seen himself — till he sees the old man and the necessity of putting on the new man.

**7.** These seasons of spiritual poverty are indispensable to holding on to Christ. See a young convert — young converts know little of themselves or of Christ. They run well for a time, but they must be taught more of Christ, and this they can learn only by learning more of themselves. Well, Christ begins the work in a soul. The convert was all joy, but his countenance falls. Poor child! do not scold him. He is sad; he dares hardly indulge a hope. What is the matter? He desponds. You encourage him to

trust in Christ and rejoice in Him. But no, that will not serve the turn, that does not remove the load. Christ has undertaken a work with him — has set about revealing him to himself, and the work will cost the poor soul many prayers, and tears, and groans, and searchings and loathings of heart. He prayed before for sanctification and he is astonished out of measure. He receives any thing in the world but sanctification. He prayed for the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, and he verily expected some beatific sight. He thought he should see the heavens opened as Stephen did. But instead of this, what a state! he seems given over to the tender mercies of sin. Every appetite and lust is clamorous as a fiend; his passions get the mastery; he frets, and grieves, and vexes himself, and repents and sins again; he is shocked, ashamed of himself, afraid to look up, is ashamed and confounded. Poor thing! he prayed to be sanctified, and he expected Christ would smile right through the darkness, and light up his soul with unutterable joy. But no! it is all confusion and darkness. He is stumbling, and sliding, and floundering, and plunging headlong into the mire, till his own clothes abhor him, and he is brought to cry — “Lord, O Lord, have mercy on me!” He expected — O what a fairy land! and he finds — what a desert — barren, dark, full of traps, and gins, and pitfalls; as it were the very earth conspiring with all things else, to ruin him. Child be not disheartened; Christ is answering your prayer. Cold professors may discourage you, but be not discouraged; you may weep and groan, but you are going through a necessary process. To know Christ, you must know yourself; to have Christ come in, you must be emptied of yourself. How will He so this for you? If you would but let go of self — if you would but believe all that God says of you, and renounce yourself at first and at once, you might be spared many a fall; but you will not, you will believe only upon experience, and hence that experience Christ makes sure that you shall have to the full. And now, mark: whoever expects to be sanctified without a full and clear and heart-sickening revelation of his own loathsomeness, without being first shown how much he needs it, is very much mistaken. Till you have learned that, nothing you can do can avail aught; you are not prepared to receive Christ as He is offered in the gospel.

# THE EYES OPENED TO THE LAW OF GOD

*“Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.”  
— Psalm 119: 18.*

In this discourse I shall show —

- I. IN WHAT SENSE THE TERM LAW IS USED IN THE TEXT.
- II. THE MEANING OF THE REQUEST — “OPEN THOU MINE EYES.”
- III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN MAKING THE REQUEST.
- IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF RECEIVING AN ANSWER TO THE REQUEST.
- V. THE CONDITION OF AN ANSWER TO THE REQUEST.

## I. WHAT SENSE THE TERM LAW IS USED IN THE TEXT

The term ‘*law*’ is used in various senses in the Bible. Sometimes it means that which was written on the two tables of stone; sometimes the ceremonial law given to Israel by God through Moses; sometimes the five books of Moses in distinction from the books of the prophets and the Psalms, etc.; and sometimes it means the *whole revealed will of God*. This last is its widest sense, and this I suppose to be the meaning in the text; to wit: the whole Old Testament Scriptures — that is, the whole revealed will of God. The prayer of the Psalmist is as if he had said — Open Thou mine eyes to behold wondrous things in the *Bible*.

## II. THE MEANING OF THE REQUEST — “OPEN THOU MINE EYES.”

1. It does *not* mean create new eyes for me. Nor,
2. Does the Psalmist pray for any physical operation as removing a cataract, or taking away a film from the surface of the eye; for it is not the natural eye with which we see spiritual things. But,
3. The Psalmist does intend to pray for spiritual light. A man may have good eyes, bodily and mental, and yet he will perceive nothing if light be wanting. I suppose the Psalmist to pray for spiritual light, the medium of spiritual vision, by which, supplied by the in-dwelling Spirit, he may apprehend the wondrous things really revealed in the Bible. Many will inquire — What is this spiritual light? I answer, that I cannot tell what it is, any more than I can tell what natural light is. Ask me what natural light is, and I cannot tell. I can tell what philosophers speculate about it, and that is all. I know this, that in its absence I cannot see, and that in its presence I can see. So there is spiritual light. What it is I know not, but that there is such a thing I do know, (and what Christian does not know it?) Every man enlightened by the Spirit of God knows the fact full well. He may be ignorant of its nature of the manner of its operations, as we doubtless are of both natural and spiritual light, but of the fact of the existence of both we may be perfectly sure; and of the existence of spiritual light, he upon whose eyes it has shone, is as certain as any man can be of the existence of the sun in the heavens. He knows that in its presence he can discern spiritual objects, and that in its absence they are hid from his eyes. Now I say, that the Psalmist in the text, expresses his desire to have spiritual light — his desire for the Spirit to shed his light upon the Bible, without which, he could not see and apprehend the truth of the Bible, and by which, they might be made to stand forth as actual realities to his soul. I pass to show

### III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE REQUEST

1. It is implied that we possess the faculties requisite for the perception of spiritual objects. The Psalmist prays for no change or new creation, and there needs no change in the nature or organization of our faculties.
2. That our spiritual eyes are useless without light — that they are of no avail till God opens them, or till He supplies the light by which alone we can see — that we shall not and cannot behold the wondrous things in God’s law, only as the medium of vision is supplied.
3. That the Psalmist knew very well that there were wonderful things concealed from his spiritual eye in the absence of spiritual light. He knew some of the things contained in the Scriptures doubtless. His eyes had been opened perhaps, and more than once. Indeed, no spiritual man can read the 119 Psalm with any good degree of attention, and not feel that he who wrote it had drunk, and that deeply, into the spirit of God’s holy law. Every verse almost, any every verse but two, expresses in some way his love for God’s law, the importance of God’s law, or the glory of God’s law. And the knowledge he already had gained had ravished his heart and made him cry out more earnestly to have his eyes *fully* opened, that he might be able to see clearly the glories of the Scriptures. The Psalmist had without doubt been enabled to get in some degree, behind the veil of types and shadows of the Old Testament, he had taken a peep beneath the drapery, and had seen Christ revealed and the wonderful things of salvation; he had looked through and beyond the outward types and shadows and the sight had so enraptured his soul, that he prayed with agonizing earnestness and importunity — “Open mine eyes. O Lord open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.” The wonders are in the Bible if we could only see them. We might be walking in the midst of the splendors of nature, and see nothing if there were not light. What are the glories of vision to a blind man? He may encircle the globe, go over its mountains and through its valleys, cross its oceans and its continents, pass among all its beauties and its luxuriance, and yet see nothing. Without eyes they are nothing; or with eyes if there be no light, all is midnight darkness. It is so as to spiritual things. Read the Bible, pass through its paragraphs, go over its pages, and you may after all see nothing

of its beauties — like a man traversing a country in a stage-coach at midnight, he can get nothing of its scenery, how picturesque so ever it may be. When men with eyes not opened in the sense of the text read the Bible, they do not see its beauties, do not behold the wondrous things which are nevertheless contained therein, and they should with all earnestness make the prayer of the Psalmist. He prayed because he felt there were things in the law of God which he had never seen.

**4.** It is implied that we need to know the wonderful things which are spoken of. It is not to be supposed that the Psalmist wished to gratify a vain curiosity. Did he utter this inspired prayer, I ask you, merely from idle curiosity? No. He needed to know, and he felt it; he perishingly needed knowledge, and he cried in view thereof, and not for his own benefit alone, but that he might teach others also, that he might declare the praises of God in the great congregation.

**5.** It is implied that none but God can open our eyes. The Psalmist knew that a mere knowledge of language, of grammar and philology could avail him nothing. He understood the language of the Scriptures well enough. He did not pray to be taught the language of the Bible, to have the ability to decipher all the philology thereof — he would not pour contempt upon these, but value them in their place. But after all, with all his knowledge of the language, he felt that not any man, not even the wisest, not an angel, could give him the light. No, none but God, none but God by the Spirit which indicted the sacred pages could open his eyes, and hence his prayer to God — ‘Open Thou mine eyes.’ It should never be forgotten that the Bible is a mere dead letter except to those to whom the Spirit makes it a personal revelation. Do you understand me? What did the Psalmist pray for? To *read* the Bible? He could read it. To understand the *words*? He could define them. To become acquainted with the literature of the Bible? No, he knew all these things well enough. What then? That God would make the Bible a special and personal revelation to him. Not through Moses and the prophets, not by having the Scriptures in his hands, but to *him*, for himself — not by giving light to others, but directly to him — by opening *his* eyes. Lord ‘open Thou *mine* eyes.’ People are mistaken who think that the Bible is a revelation to them in any such sense as to save their souls, except their eyes are opened by the Holy Ghost. The Psalmist himself could not see without this, and he prayed God to supply to him



that light, by the aid of which he might apprehend the truths of God's word. He sees the words — he reads the sentences — but what is the *meaning*? What are the things said? Open my eyes that I may see them. His prayer was to God for he felt that none but God could supply his need. But I hasten to notice,

## IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING OUR EYES OPENED IN THE SENSE OF THE TEXT

**1.** *Ourselves* will be revealed. We shall see our own portrait drawn in a manner that will convince us instantly that the pencil of the Omniscient has done the work. It will be as if you had been sitting in the blaze of the Omniscient eye. The clearness and exactness will be startling. You will seem never to have seen yourself before, you will be astonished at the fearful fidelity with which every feature will be sketched. Sinner, let your eyes be opened, and you will have another view of yourself altogether. Though it never entered into your heart to sit for your portrait, yet there is drawn every lineament, there you are, your face blazing right out, staring upon you, every feature and lineament blazing from the page of inspiration. Look where you will, there you are — a vile sinner, and you will wish to flee and get away from the horrible picture of your own face.

**2.** *God* will be revealed. God and yourself — and this in proportion to the degree of light. If the light be obscure, you will see indistinctly — ‘men as trees walking’ — like moon-light or star-light. In the star-light you can see the fences, the trees, and the houses; in moonlight you can distinguish more; but yet things are not clear. As the sun approaches, as it puts out the stars and makes the moon dim, as it rises more and more till it appears in perfect day, your view grown fuller and clearer till the whole landscape is bathed in a flood of light. God is revealed — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — but especially the Son, Christ, is revealed. You will find Christ in places without number, in passages where before you never dreamed Christ was to be found. The more I read my Bible and pray the prayer of our text the more am I convinced of the spirituality of those who find Christ revealed every where in the Bible. Once I thought differently. I remember a few years ago reading Edward's Notes on the Bible, and that I

thought him visionary because he found Christ hinted at so often. He saw Christ every where. I saw no such thing. So some writers will find clear proofs of the divinity of Christ, where others can see no reference thereto at all. Now the difficulty with me was, I lacked spiritual light, so that I was unable to see what was really revealed in the Bible. The Jews, the great body of them, could not see Christ in the Jewish law, they did not see the drift and bent of the Scriptures. Why not? They were carnal, sensual, they had not the Spirit. Where persons' eyes are thus opened, they will have revelations of Christ such as to surprise them exceedingly; such a fullness and glory as will astonish them greatly. O what love! And in proportion to the clearness of the light of the Spirit, you will see that the design of the Bible every where, is to reveal Christ directly or indirectly. Christ is the subject, and the end — in history, in prophecy, in poetry, the Old Testament and the New — every where, Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the sum and the substance, the beginning and the end. Let your eyes be opened, and Christ is every where — our righteousness, our wisdom, our sanctification, and our redemption.

**3.** We shall differ very much in our views from all those whose eyes have not been opened. Impenitent young men, you sympathize with each other, you are alike self-wise and vain, you meet and scoff at religion and religious men, you agree in your notion that all piety is superstition and beneath your notice. But let the Spirit open the eyes of one of your number, and how changed his tone. How he will differ from those with whom he so perfectly agreed but just now in his views of himself and of them, of his works and their works, of his relations to God and of theirs. He can no longer sympathize with them, and join their wicked scoffings — he sees with a strong light, and is astonished at their darkness and his former darkness — he shuns them as the gate of hell. Why? His eyes are opened to behold eternity, and the judgment, and his sins. He sees himself, and them, standing upon the slippery steep, and fiery billows rolling beneath, and he cries out, and flees in terror. All this may be true while he is impenitent. But suppose he is converted; then he differs from them still more. He goes farther and farther and farther from them, and as he progresses in grace, and the light of the Spirit's illumination beams stronger and brighter upon his soul, he presses on to the perfect day, while they remain where they were or plunge into deeper darkness.

This difference in views is true moreover of the different stages of Christian experience. As a man's eyes are opened more and more, he differs more and more from those who are below him; he sees things which they cannot see, and has a clear view of what they see but dimly. His view differs from theirs, as a view in the bright noon-day differs from one at evening twilight. Their experience will differ from his, as the description of a village, or a mountain, or a landscape, seen in the evening, would differ from a description of them as seen under broad day-light. Just as far as we get our eyes open we view the Scriptures differently, as naturally as cause produces its effect. As our light increases, our views must enlarge and expand of course. We must see more and better surely, when we stand with the great sun pouring upon our heads his flood of light, than when in the dim star-light we cast our eyes abroad.

And here let me remark — it is unspeakable folly to stereotype religious opinions, as if men were of course to agree in all their views. A young convert just born into the kingdom, wishes to be admitted into the fold of the Good Shepherd. Well, the whole system of religious doctrine is read over. Do you subscribe to this? the whole of this? And then not a step farther may they go, at the peril of heresy. How strange it is that men should imagine that here can be such a thing as for Christians to be just alike in their views of religious truth. They may be alike as far as they go. They may each be correct, while one may be far in advance of his fellow. And as a new truth comes to view, it always sheds its light over all the rest, and modifies the form in which they appear. And while the Spirit continues to throw its light upon the sacred pages, we may expect to modify and enlarge, and in some degree change our view of truth. How absurd to nail down our system and say — There, never change more. I have heard persons reckon it a virtue that they had never changed their views of truth. But I ask, have such persons prayed the prayer of the Psalmist? Have their eyes been opened?

**4.** The Bible will become to us a new book. Converts say so, and with truth; but it is not true with them alone. Old men, men who have long known God, are made by their experience to say the same thing. A few years since I was laboring in a revival with an elderly minister, a man sixty years old. I shall never forget how that man would say to me time after time, with deep emotion — “I have a new Bible. How striking the

promises are. It seems to me as though I had never read them before. So *rich* they are, so full, so precious!" Ah, yes! Nor is this a singular nor an uncommon case. In many, very many instances have persons who have long been Christians, thus found their Bible a new book, and growing fresh and new as it were every day. It has become so precious, so glorious, so sweet, they could, so to speak, devour it, as the hungry soul devours its needful food. In my own case, let me say, beloved, within the last year the Lord has given to me such views of the Bible, that I have found it difficult to realize that I had ever known before any thing thereof at all. Many a time have I cried out, as the light poured upon the truth — "Lord, I never knew this before," — and I could scarcely for the time believe that I had ever seen the thing at all. I do not mean I had not, for I know I had before seen great beauties in the Bible, but the light was so great that the spots that before seemed bright, were now hidden in the added splendor, as stars are lost in the light of dawn. Whole trains of passages would crowd through my mind with such glory and freshness — passages which I had preached from again and again, would come in review under a light so new and striking, and with a meaning so full, that it would seem as though I had never known anything of them before, and the thoughts would crowd, and roll, and swell like an infinite tide, till it would appear as if I could preach and preach, and never be done preaching from almost any one of them.

**5.** Persons will be astonished at their former ignorance of the Bible when God opens their eyes. They will see so much that is new where they thought they knew all before, that they will be forced to exclaim in amazement — how could I have passed these things and not see them. I have read the passages a hundred times, why have I not seen these things before? As if a person should pass through a village in the dark, not knowing it was night, but supposing it was day, and then should go through the same village in actual broad day, and see the houses, and streets, and gardens, and wonder (as he would) why he did not see the village before. Without spiritual light, persons fail to see almost every spiritual truth in the Bible. They are like persons in the dark, while yet they say "We see;" and when God does indeed open their eyes, and they really see, they are astonished above measure that they had never seen before.

**6.** Those whose eyes are opened will see a great multitude of things in the Bible which others do not see, and which they will not believe are there, even though you tell them of their existence therein. Read the Bible under the illumination of the Spirit, and you will see myriads of things, which if you tell to others, they will smile at you for a crazy man; they will declare no such things are there, and suspect you to be a little beside yourself. Well let them alone. Let them have their say. They cannot see what you have seen, till they stand in the like strong and clear light. Let two persons pass through a place one in the night, and one in the day, and let the one who passed in the dark think that it was day, and that he saw all that was to be seen. Can he convince him? Wait till he goes through in the day-time, and then talk with him.

And here let me remark, as I said a little ago of the doctrine of Christ's divinity, so it is of the doctrine of Entire Sanctification. Once I could not see that doctrine in the Bible, and now I wonder much why I did not, for now I see it every where, almost. It is true with me as a good sister said of herself — when I first heard of the doctrine of Entire Sanctification, I thought it was no where in the Bible, but now I see that it is *everywhere*. I can adopt that language myself. It is not strange however, that persons whose eyes are not opened cannot see that doctrine in the Bible. The Bible, much of it, is so written, and perhaps from the necessity of the case, that the soul must be in a certain state, in order to see at all what was in the mind of the Spirit. 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost,' says Paul. That is, no man can see Christ as He is — the Lord of our salvation — but by the light of the Holy Spirit spread upon the sacred page. It is curious to see how many notions and conceits men will have of the meaning of the Bible, or how dull of apprehension they will be, and then how clear it will seem when the Lord has opened their eyes. Before, nothing could convince them, now they need nothing to convince them. If a man should pass this meeting-house, supposing he could see when he could not, you could not convince him of its presence; but let his sight be restored or the light shine upon his eyes, and there needs no more — there it stands before his own eyes. The doctrines of Atonement, of Christ's Divinity, of Sanctification — when the light from heaven bursts upon the page, you need no voice to tell you; all silent, you gaze upon the revealed wonders, as when from the deepest midnight the

sun breaks from the darkness and the whole landscape lies before you in an ocean of glories. Now Christian friends, I mean what I say; there is a spiritual illumination, a supplying the spiritual eyes with light, in which light the mind sees with a power of demonstration, like that which attends natural vision, the spiritual truths revealed in the Bible. Before this light is supplied, the mind may doubt, and reason, and cavil, and deny; but O, when the sun rises and pours forth its glorious blaze, then everything is revealed, every cavil is hushed, every doubt forgotten, and the soul gazes in silent rapture on the wondrous scene.

**7.** Our views will become a *wonder* to others, and just in proportion as our eyes are opened. Our views will be reckoned peculiar. Yes indeed, peculiar light will produce peculiar views of course. As far as the Spirit gives us light and we see thereby, our views will be modified, and those who have not the same light, will think them strange, and will wonder at us. How is it, they say, that they find such and such things? We find nothing like that. The Jews think the Christian doctrine blasphemous; they cannot find our Jesus in their Old Testament Messiah. We shall surely be regarded as heretics by those who have not our light. If God gives us light, if the revelations of His word be made to our souls, and especially if we proclaim them to the world, who shall be thought heretics. Let any man push his prayer before God, ‘Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law,’ and let an answer be granted, and his eyes be really unsealed, and the presbytery will begin to watch him, the whisper will begin to go around, “The brother has a *good spirit*, but his *views* are dangerous” — they must have an eye to him, a committee must be appointed, and they must confer with him to rid him of his strange and peculiar views. What is the matter? Nothing, only the Spirit sheds light upon his mind, and he has got a step or two beyond the stereotype form, that is all. He understands the Bible better than before, has a richer insight into the richness of its promises; the Spirit has anointed him for his work — that is all. And if he ventures to say meekly to his fellow-servants, “Brethren, the Lord hath shown me such things in His word,” their counsel will be — our brother seems to have a sweet, heavenly spirit, but his views are peculiar and dangerous, and they must be pronounced heterodox, and he be silenced. This has always been so, and men who are led in

advance of their fellow Christians, must be content to be suspected of heresy.

**8.** Those who are enlightened, will be counted *mystical*. The most spiritual have in all ages been reckoned mystical. There are real mystics to be sure; there are extremes and delusions, and men think they see when they do not; but that does not alter the fact that spiritual men are reckoned mystical by those who are in the dark. Why? Because the former have spiritual eyes, they have spiritual light, and they see and understand things that are entirely invisible, and a complete mystery to others.

**9.** Those who are enlightened will be considered deranged by those whose eyes are not opened. Christ was thought to be mad. Festus said to Paul, ‘Thou art beside thyself, much learning hath made thee *mad*,’ you have studied so hard, have gone so deeply into philosophy and theology that you are deranged. Paul indeed answered him most solemnly, ‘I am not mad most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.’ But now wherein lay the difference? Paul had met Jesus by the way and had seen a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about him. The light of God had fallen upon him, and now people thought him mad — Festus thought him mad. And why should it not be so? It will be so. It will surely be so. When do we judge a man deranged? Suppose a man’s eyes should really be opened as Elisha’s were, and those of the young man who was with him, and he should behold the angel of God encamped about him, which is in fact true, or like Stephen’s, so that he could look into heaven and see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God, could behold the realities of the invisible world — would he not be pronounced deranged? Yes indeed. “Put a strait jacket on him — do hear him” they will cry, “he says he sees angels, and chariots, and horses all round him — he sees heaven opened! Blasphemy — away with him — stone him to death!” Why? He tells what he really sees. Let a man but speak out what he sees, and surely he must be deranged. Now men do become deranged — surely they do; they do sometimes become visionary — most certainly; but men’s eyes may really be opened too, as Stephen’s and Elisha’s were, and then others will imagine they are deranged. Those who think so may be honest in their opinion too.

**10.** Such will almost certainly be persecuted. Why was Paul persecuted? Because his eyes had been opened to see the fullness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and because he was constrained by his love to preach the cross. He had been a persecutor and injurious; he had many friends; but Christ's love had ravished his soul, and he would joyfully pour out his whole being for his Master. And what did he say? Hear him. 'As I came nigh to Damascus, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me, and I heard a voice saying unto me — Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?' and he went on and finished the story of his conversion. They bore impatiently with this, but soon he began again — 'while I prayed in the temple I was in a trance, and saw [the Lord] saying unto me, make haste and get thee out of Jerusalem,' and they could bear it no longer. They gave him audience till this word, and then lifted up their voices and said — 'Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live.' And 'they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air.' And why? Surely Paul was beside himself, and a horrid blasphemer, and to kill him would be to do God service. They persecuted him. Why? He could see and they were blind. And those who are thus blind often will think that they ought to do many things contrary to those who are spiritual, and whom they regard as dangerous fanatics. I am very far from believing that all persecution arises from mere malicious wickedness. Many in high places and in low, oppose and persecute because they are in the dark, and think they see, and they persecute 'in all good conscience.' They may be, (as indeed they are) wicked for being in the dark, but in the dark, they think their spiritual brethren are mischievous, and must be put down and put out of the church; and think to do God service when they use the excising knife. But are they innocent? With all the light around them which God has proffered and now proffers, are they innocent while they remain in the dark? I think not.

**11.** The illumination of the Spirit will make us *cease* from *man*. We shall cease to expect any such instruction from human lips as shall suffice to qualify us to be useful. Not that God may not use creatures to instruct us in a degree. He does so. But we shall cease to *rest* in them, and we shall go to God feeling entirely sure that from Him alone cometh our help — that He alone can supply the light by which we are to see the things which lie hid in the Word of God.



**12.** In proportion to the light we enjoy, we shall find ourselves dwelling in the spiritual instead of the natural world. Let a man see as with open vision, the realities which we all believe to exist in the invisible world, let him apprehend them as we now do the objects of this visible scene, and with which world think you will he be most conversant? With God, heaven, Christ, and the eternal world, or this gross and earthly clod on which we tread? As the mind is opened, it dwells in and communes with the spiritual world, it loses sight of earthly objects — there is a state of mind in which persons can feel the light shining broad and deep upon the soul — God draws near — the soul withdraws from all the outward senses, and retires into its inner sanctuary — God approaches and comes into the inner-most chamber of the mind, and there is silence, far, far from all the world of sense and sight, the soul communes with the eternal God, and if all the world were to throng around and clamor for a hearing, still the soul, withdrawn far within, would heed them not, but in bliss ecstatic drink draughts of ineffable joy from the presence of infinite love, and God be all in all.

I remember well how once I read with astonishment the account of such men as Xavier, where they would have such communion with God as utterly to drive from them all thoughts of earth, and every object of sense. Xavier, you know, on a certain day, was to have a visit from a prince — the viceroy. He went to his chamber, directing his servant to call him at such a time. When the servant entered his room to call him at the hour, there was his master kneeling on the floor, his eyes upturned, and his face shining like that of an angel, wholly insensible to outward things — the servant dared not disturb him. At the end of an hour he came again, still he was so — again, there he knelt. The servant spoke, no answer — he spoke again, no reply — he shook him and succeeded in awakening him from his trance — “Is the viceroy come?” inquired he, ‘tell him I have a visit from the King of Kings today, and I cannot leave it’ — and he sank back into insensibility, and was shut up in the presence of the Living God. Time was when I could not understand how Paul could be in such a state of mind, that, speaking as an honest man, he could not tell, as he says, whether in the body or out of the body. But now I can see how he could say so. The mind is so absorbed with spiritual views, as to be insensible to natural objects entirely. The senses are all swallowed up, laid aside. The senses

you know are but the organs which the mind uses; but she can do without them; she can retire from the touch, the hearing, the sight, and in the deep sanctuary of the soul sit alone with God. And this occurs when the light of the Spirit shines broadly and fully on the mind. Speak to him he does not hear you — touch him, it does not arouse him — he is gone — gone to the spiritual world; and when he returns and his soul comes back to earth, whether I was in the body I could not tell.

You remember a case among ourselves some years ago. A beloved sister — the Spirit came upon her, and she thought she was in heaven; her heart *was* there, and she thought *she* was there; she forgot she was in the body, the glories of heaven were around her, and she literally leaped for joy. I heard of a case, I think it was in the state of New York. It was that of a deacon. He was sitting in the “deacon’s seat,” facing the congregation; as the minister was preaching, the Holy Ghost fell upon the deacon. He rose up unwittingly, stretched out his hands upward, his face pale and gazing as it were into heaven, and his countenance radiant as an angel’s. The assembly were amazed, the Spirit of God ran like fire through the whole congregation, the arrows of conviction flew like lightening, and the whole body were convulsed with emotion, and many were broken down before the Lord.

**13.** He whose eyes are opened, will be *solemn*, but it will be a *cheerful* solemnity. It is related of Xavier, that his cheerfulness was so great, that those who were not familiar with him thought him *gay*. David, in his joy, danced with all his might before the ark, when he brought it up from the house of Obed-Edom. There will be nothing like levity, but a deep and solemn cheerfulness, such a cheerfulness as we may suppose God to possess — a broad, universal smile; the mind smiles in its deepest being; to the very bottom of the heart, there is one deep, broad smile — as God looks forth over His whole creation with a smiling face — the soul is cheerful, peaceful as an *ocean* of peace.

# HARDNESS OF HEART

*“For they considered not the miracle of the loaves,  
for their heart was hardened.” Mark 6:52*

These words were spoken of the disciples. The occasion of their utterance was this — the evening of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, Christ walked out upon the water and met His disciples, who were crossing the sea in a boat. They were much surprised and astonished to see Him walk on the water; they had already forgotten the wonderful miracle which was performed before their eyes, but a few hours before, and being ‘sore amazed in themselves, beyond measure,’ the evangelist properly says of them, that ‘they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened.’

Again,

Mark 8:17. ‘And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them — Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your heart yet hardened?’

These words were addressed to the disciples, who did not understand Christ when He warned them to ‘beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.’ They supposed that He alluded to the fact that they had come out without bread. He, perceiving their mistake, said unto them, ‘Why reason ye because ye have no bread? Perceive ye not yet, neither understand? Have ye your hearts hardened?’ In other words, “the fact that you can so greatly mistake as to the meaning of my instruction, is sufficient proof that your hearts are very hard.”

Again, Mark 16:14.

‘Afterward, He appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.’

Without stopping to expound this text, I shall endeavor to show,

## **I. WHAT HARDNESS OF HEART IS.**

## II. THE INFLUENCE OF HARDNESS OF HEART ON THE STATES OF THE INTELLIGENCE AND SENSIBILITY, OR IN MORE COMMON TERMS, UPON THE OPINIONS OR JUDGMENTS AND FEELINGS OF MEN.

### I. WHAT IS HARDNESS OF HEART?

The above, and many other texts which might be advanced, show that hardness of heart is a voluntary state of mind. If it is a voluntary state, it must be the will in a state of choice — a will committed, for the time being, to some form of selfishness. The term hardness is appropriately used, because when the heart is in this state, it is stubborn, and will not yield to the truth, and prevents the intelligence and sensibility from perceiving, and being duly impressed by the truth. But I must pass rapidly on and show,

## II. THE INFLUENCE OF HARDNESS OF HEART UPON THE SENSIBILITY AND INTELLIGENCE, OR UPON THE OPINIONS AND FEELINGS OF MEN

1. We know by consciousness, that the heart controls the attention of the mind. In other words, the intelligence is so completely under the control of the will, that its action, or attention, is directed to whatever point the heart or will pleases.
2. We also know by our own consciousness, that the attention affects the sensibility. If the attention is directed to a particular object, the feelings are of necessity excited by that object. If the attention is from any cause diverted from that object, we at once cease to feel for that object. The *kind*, or nature, too, of our feelings, depends on the view which the intellect takes of its object of attention. If it views it in one aspect, we are moved to certain states of feeling; and if it views it in another, we are exercised by very different feelings. The feelings then, are dependent on the perceptions of the intellect, and the intellect in turn, is controlled by the will, according as the will is more or less given up to any object, so will the attention of

the intelligence be more or less directed to that object, and consequently the feelings will be more or less excited by the same object.

**3.** When the heart is hard, we do not consider the truth as we otherwise would. This must of necessity be true; for if the will is given up to the indulgence of any form of selfishness, of course it cannot pay a calm and dispassionate attention to the truth. Such a thing would be an impossibility, and could never be. Suppose for instance, that the mind is committed to money-making for selfish purposes; of course, all the feelings will drift in that direction, and it would be absurd to say, that while such is the case — while the will is committed, the intelligence can give serious and candid attention to the great truths of religion.

**4.** When the heart is hard, we do not understand truth — of course, if we do not pay attention to it, we do not understand it. Hence, in the parable of the sower, Christ represented impenitent men as ‘hearing the word of the kingdom, and understanding it not.’ The fact is, wicked men do not *consider* the truth, therefore they do not *understand* it, they do not perceive it with their intellects, therefore it does not move them, it does not take hold of their feelings, and go down to the depths of their emotions, and so rouse them to action.

I wish now to illustrate this proposition — that hardness of heart affects the opinions and feelings of men — by several familiar examples; for it seems to me that the proposition is one which needs *illustration* rather than *proof*. I say then, that the truth of the proposition is illustrated,

**(1.)** By the case alluded to in the first text. Now the disciples of Christ were surrounded by many peculiar trials. As yet, the Holy Spirit had not descended upon them, they were comparatively ignorant of all truth, they were sorely tried by temptation, and their faith was very weak. Hence they had fallen into a state of hardness of heart; therefore little impression was made upon their minds by the miracle of the loaves. You well know the history of that transaction; how that, when the disciples asked Christ to send the multitudes away, in order that they might procure provisions, He refused to do it, and wrought a miracle for the feeding of the great company. But as I before said, the hearts of the disciples were so hard, that the miracle seemed to get but little hold upon them. That same night, as they were rowing hard upon the boisterous sea, Christ came to them,

walking upon the water. From the evangelist, it appears that they were much surprised and sore amazed. This fact showed that the truth of His divine nature had not been fixed in their minds by the miracle, as it ought to have been. They should have remembered, that Christ would, of course, have power to walk on the water, if He possessed sufficient creative power to feed five thousand miraculously. Instead of being surprised at the event, they should have looked upon it as a thing to be expected. The fact is, their hearts were so hard, that they did not infer from the miracle, what they ought to have inferred from it, they did not understand it as they should have understood it. So too, in the 8th chapter, 17th verse, the same truth is brought to light. Christ had warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. By this, He designed to put them on their guard against their peculiar doctrines, which doctrines were, as He well knew, particularly liable to prejudice their minds against the truth of His teachings. He warned them to beware of that leaven, which would diffuse a pernicious influence over all their opinions and feelings. But the disciples, misunderstanding the import of Christ's warning, in the hardness of their hearts, 'reasoned among themselves,' saying, 'It is because we have not bread.' And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, why reason ye because ye have no bread? Have ye your hearts yet hardened?' In other words, 'have ye so mistaken the meaning of the miracle which I wrought yesterday, that ye cannot yet understand truth? Is it possible that ye have so misinterpreted my instructions that ye cannot understand the plainest truth which I make known to you? Again, in the 16th chapter, 14th verse, we have another striking instance of the effect of hardness of heart upon the perception of truth. Here we are told that Christ appeared unto the eleven, as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen.' Yes, the minds of the disciples were not so fixed and grounded on the truth, but that they could even doubt the testimony of those who had actually seen their risen Lord. What must have been the state of their hearts? Alas! this is another instance of the influence of hardness of heart upon the perception of truth.

**(2.)** The case of the Jews generally, affords another striking instance of the blinding effect of hardness of heart on the intelligence. Such was the state

of their hearts, that no evidence which Christ could give them could convince them of His Messiahship.

(3.) The case of careless sinners illustrates the same truth. Their views and feelings are a living illustration of the influence of hardness of heart on the intellect and sensibility; for mark, if their hearts were not hard, and they had the same light which they now possess, they would be full of the bitterest agony instead of coldness and indifference in respect to religious truth.

(4.) Cases of difficulty among brethren in the church, illustrate forcibly, the influence of hardness of heart upon the opinions and feelings of men. How many times when brethren have fallen into difficulty with each other, and have come to lay their complaints before me, as their pastor, have I thought to myself — now the only difficulty with these brethren, is, their hearts are hard. Why is it that they do not understand truth alike? Why, plainly for no other reason, than because their hearts are hard; that is, they are, for the time being, so much under the influence of selfish motives, that each looks at the object of controversy in a different light; therefore, their opinions upon the subject *do* really differ, and each thinks the other to be in fault. How often have I heard contending brethren, when in this state of mind, say, each of the other, “Why he is so entirely wrong, that it cannot but be, that he knows he is an arrant hypocrite, and that he lies outrageously.” Now such things often arise among brethren in the church, and they may almost invariable be traced to the hardness of heart of the contending parties. The same brethren will see the subject of controversy in the same light, if their hearts are only softened. How many cases of difficulty have I known, where nothing could convince either of the parties of his fault, and so great was the contumacious obstinacy of the disputers, that the church would be obliged to take up labor with them, and would send committee after committee to them, to endeavor to prevail on them to come to an amicable adjustment of the difficulty, but all to no purpose. Quarrel they would, in spite of all that could be done to prevent it. But when prayer, earnest, effectual prayer has been offered for these brethren, and the Spirit has descended and softened their hearts, then there has been no more difficulty between them; the one who has been to blame, confesses more than he has been charged with, and each sees the subject in dispute, in the same light as the other.

**(5.)** Cases often occur in the business transactions of life, which forcibly illustrate the effect of hardness of heart upon the intelligence and sensibility. How often do men adopt and employ principles in their business matters, which they would utterly condemn, if it was not for their hardness of heart. Yes, they will do things in their business, for days, months, and even years, which they would abhor if their hearts were not hard.

**(6.)** The manner in which the providences of God are regarded by the mind, illustrates the same principle. When the heart is hard, God is not seen in His providences; however striking they may be, they are looked at with a cold eye, and regarded as mere common occurrences. But if the heart is not hard, they make a deep impression of it; they are regarded as blessings sent from God. If the heart is hard, they do not inspire praise; God is not looked to and thanked as the author of them. Oftentimes, affective providences occur — friends, perhaps relatives, are torn away, but we do not observe in the subjects of the affliction, any evidence that they feel their bereavement. They do not seem to realize their loss, or if they do, it is only to murmur at the dispensation of providence. Now why is this? It is because their hearts are hard; they do not see the hand of God in the providence, as they would if their hearts were not hard.

**(7.)** Of course the heart is not moved by the providence of God, to gratitude nor repentance, when the heart is hard.

**(8.)** Even miracles may not produce much impression on the mind, if the heart is hard. This was the case with the Jews. They stood out against all the evidence of miracles which Christ could produce. This was especially the case with the Scribes and Pharisees, who were hard-hearted, even above the most of their nation. Consequently, the miracles of Christ made but little impression upon them; they did not fasten conviction on their unbelieving minds; and with all their weight, they could not break down their stubborn wills.

**(9.)** Persons in a hard-hearted state, will justify the most palpable wrong doing, they will have some excuse for their misdeeds, their will be some reason, which in their estimation, requires them, as an act of duty, to perform the iniquitous deed. Yes, they will even imagine that they are doing God service, when in fact, they are committing the most flagrant acts



of wickedness. This was the case with Saul of Tarsus. His heart was hard, and he ‘verily thought he was doing God service,’ when he hunted the disciples from place to place, and delivered them over to judgment and death. So too, of the persecutors of the Church in every age — they have thought that they were doing God service. Yes, their hearts have been so hard, that they have really imagined that they were called and taught of God to do their work of death and blood, yea of hell. Nothing has been more common in the Church than this state of mind. How does it come that Papal Rome has been so zealous in the cause of hell, that she has been so busy in persecuting and destroying those whom she regards as heretics? It is because her heart has been hard, and she has been entirely mistaken as to the nature of her zeal, and misled as to the true means of promoting the glory of God.

**(10.)** Again, look at the slave-holder. See how sanctimonious he is. Perhaps he is a Church member, and it may even be that he is a doctor of divinity, and yet he has slaves. Oh! but he does it because he considers it his duty so to do; he does it in the fear of God, and with due regard to the highest well-being of the slave. Yes, he will dare to justify himself in his hellish business, and will even call it God-service. Now how can this be? I tell you it is because his heart is hard. How do you suppose he can think as he does? How can he go to the communion table, how pray in his family while he continues in this nefarious business? I say again, it is because of the hardness of his heart. The murderers of Christ did the very same thing. When Jesus was standing before the judgment bar of Pilate, they cried out with one accord, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’ “What” you say, “could they be guilty of so great wickedness and blasphemy?” Yes, they were so certain that Christ was an impostor, that they were ready to take the responsibility of His murder on their own shoulders. They did not hesitate to cry out ‘His blood be on us, and on our children.’ What higher evidence could they give of their deep delusion, than this? Now what was the matter with them? Why were they so perfectly besotted, so lost to all sense of right and justice? Why plainly, because they were so hard-hearted, that all the evidence of His Messiahship which Christ could give them, fell to the ground, and they pursued their course of wickedness, buried in the deepest darkness of ignorance and self-delusion.

**(11.)** Persons whose hearts are hard, will often embrace the grossest errors, and be very zealous in defending them. Not a form of error has ever been preached, which has not found some zealous, and even self-denying advocates.

**(12.)** Persons in this state of mind, will often mistake the most bitter, and even ferocious zeal, for true religion. This was the case with the crusaders, and with the Catholic Church in the dark ages. Now how does it happen that people can make such an egregious mistake? We often see men in such circumstances, or in such a state of mind, giving the highest evidence of sincerity; they are willing to lay down life itself, in the accomplishment of the most nefarious plans. Yes, they are ready to become martyrs; they will rush headlong to the stake in the maintenance of error, or in carrying out unholy plans, which they call the work of God. Now, I ask, how can this be? I answer, it is because their hearts are so hard that they are really deceived, and mistake for true religion, what is nothing more than bitter, ferocious zeal. I have often been struck with the case of the “come outers,” as they are called, who go about the country, railing at the law and the priesthood, and who imagine they have a perfect right to get up in churches, and disturb the congregations in their worship. Now these persons seem to be as certain that they are right, and that they are doing God service, as they would be if they should receive a distinct revelation from Heaven. How does this happen? Why manifestly, it is because of the hardness of their hearts. It is on this account, that they have fallen into so deep and strange a delusion.

**(13.)** Persons in a state of hardness of heart, often mistake the spirit of fanatical impudence for Christian faithfulness. How often do we see people going about, talking to their neighbors and others in the most outrageously impudent manner, and all under pretense of being governed by a spirit of Christian faithfulness.

**(14.)** Persons who are in this state of mind, often mistake the most shocking irreverence, for true faith and filial boldness. We often observe it in the prayers of such individuals, and in their conversations about God and holy things.

**(15.)** The entertaining of false hopes, is another manner in which the influence of hardness of heart is illustrated. People often “indulge a hope,”

as they call it, when the very fact that they can entertain a hope under the circumstances, shows conclusively that their hearts are very hard.

Probably there is not one of you, who has not known many individuals professing Christ, whose lives have been such, that you have been struck with wonder, that they could dare to call themselves Christians. But very likely their hearts have been so hard, that they have sincerely believed themselves to be accepted of God, notwithstanding their foul deeds. This was the case with the Scribes and Pharisees who persecuted Jesus. They doubtless thought themselves to be true saints. Paul, while he was breathing the very spirit of hell, deemed himself a real servant of God. The reason why people make this mistake is, because their hearts are so hard that they are mistaken as to what Christianity is — they are utterly in the dark as to what the true spirit of religion consists in, and as to who and what Christ is.

**(16.)** The influence of hardness of heart is illustrated by the great difficulty which exists in overcoming false hopes. How remarkable it is, that the same persons to whom I have just alluded, are the most difficult persons in the world to be convinced that they are not Christians. Christ in his parable of the wise and foolish virgins, alluded to these individuals, when he said, “afterward came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us.” Yes, those very persons who are influenced by the spirit of the devil, will often imagine that they are influenced by the Spirit of Christ; and they will not give up their delusion, but will soon in blindness, and at last cry, “Lord, Lord open unto us.” Yes, they will not be put down by preaching, or by anything else; until at last Christ will say unto them, ‘depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ Think how hard their hearts must be; they will not yield their false hopes, even if an angel from heaven should warn them so to do; they will cling to them, till Christ will banish them forever, to the lake of everlasting torment.

**(17.)** The wonderful delusion of many in respect to their spiritual state, illustrates the influence of hardness of heart. But I will not dwell upon this head, but will remark —

**(18.)** The same truth is illustrated by the change of views and feelings, which every Christian has experienced, when his heart has been thoroughly subdued. How remarkable this transformation often is! When the heart is

softened by the love of Christ, how differently does everything appear — how greatly are our views changed on every subject! This change extends to almost every duty, relation, and act of life. Why, let a man turn from the service of self to the service of God, from a course of sin to holiness, and he looks back on his past life with perfect horror. He sees that his past deeds have all been wrong, and he detests them as he would if they had come from the bottomless pit itself. So too, a professor of religion often passes through a course of hardness of heart, and when he comes out into the light and liberty of the gospel, how different are all his views of what he has said and done, and of the influence which he has exerted, and of the manner in which he has used the talents which God has given him.

**(19.)** The influence of hardness of heart, is seen in the different effects which the same truth produces on the mind at different times. How striking is this difference? Perhaps a truth which has been heard an hundred times without any conscious effect, comes, of a sudden, to absorb the whole soul; and why is this? It is because the heart is softened and then the intellect is placed in the attitude of attention, and the truth pours its focal blaze upon the sensibility, and warms it, and melts it, and makes it as liquid as water.

**(20.)** Another illustration of the same truth is found in the different views we take of the Bible at different times. If the heart is hard, we take but little interest in the Bible, unless we read it for the purpose of criticism, or to gather historical facts. Its truths do not strike us as being very affecting; they do not interest us sufficiently to make us wish to devour them. But let the heart be softened, and at once how changed does the Bible seem. Why, its truths strike us so powerfully, they contain so much light, and power, and love, that they seem to set us afloat, and carry us with omnipotent energy towards God, and heaven. If a man's heart becomes thoroughly softened, he becomes so enamored of his Bible, that he sits up nights to read it: he carries it with him wherever he goes, and whether he is walking or riding, or engaged in business, he is ever pondering on its sacred truths. Yes, when his heart is hard, his Bible gets no hold upon him; but when Christ comes and softens and subdues his proud spirit, then his Bible is a new book to him; at once it introduces him into a new state of being, and makes the way of holiness light and clear before him.

## REMARKS

**1.** Persons often attribute the blame of their wrong doing to other things and other persons besides themselves. For instance, you will hear them complaining that the Bible is a very mysterious book, written in a very mysterious manner, notwithstanding God has said of it, that it is so plainly written that “the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein.” It is strange, they will say, that I cannot understand it; why did not God make it so plain that it could be easily understood? And so they shove the fault of their sinning off their shoulders, and lay it on the Bible. Their hearts being hard, they cannot see how plainly the scriptures are revealed, especially in the doctrinal portions of them. The same is true of the manner in which the preached word is received. You will often hear people complaining of the preaching. The very preaching which at one time takes a strong hold upon them, and goes down to the very bottom of their souls, I say, this same preaching, you will hear them complaining of, at another time, “as being very dull, the same thing over and over, nothing new, out of place, etc.” Now let the spirit of God come and soften their hearts, and the preaching sounds entirely new to them; it is, as it were, a divine unction to their souls every time they hear it. They will be hard to say of it, “Ah that is just what we needed — very instructive — just in the right place, and just in the right time.”

**2.** A man may be very sincere in believing a lie, and he will be so much the more sincere as his heart is the more hard. If his heart is very hard, he will lay aside all candor and will settle down in the belief of a lie so firmly that no evidence of any truth, however palpable, will in the least, move him from his falsehood. It will not be impossible for him to believe any lie, however palpable; and he will not only believe it, but he will give himself entirely up to its control; and the harder his heart is, the more confidence will he have in it, and the fewer misgivings as to its truth.

**3.** When a person believes a lie, and gives himself up to its influence, however sincere may be his belief, yet he is without excuse; for he creates his delusion by his own voluntary wickedness — it is forced upon him by no one.

**4.** It is only when the judgments or opinions are formed in a right state of heart, that a person is justified in acting in conformity to them. Many people seem to suppose that a person is pursuing a virtuous course when he acts in conformity to his real opinions, whether they are right or wrong, provided he is only sincere. Now sincerity itself may often be an evidence of great wickedness. For a man could not be sincere in pursuing a wicked course of life, or in holding on to a wrong sentiment, if his heart was right. Therefore, a man is without excuse, who does wrong, however sincere he may be in the wrong he is doing.

**5.** Men are the more apt to settle down and be confident in their wrong opinions and actions, in proportion to the hardness of their hearts. Perhaps when error is first broached in their minds, they have some misgivings about receiving it, but as their hearts become more hard, they are more firmly convinced of its truth, until at last, they lay aside all doubt, and come to believe the lie most sincerely. We have a striking illustration of this truth in the case of the persecutors of Christ. Doubtless when Christ first began to preach, the Scribes and Pharisees had many more misgivings as to the truth of His doctrine, than they had at the time they put Him to death. At first they listened to Him with attention, but soon their hearts grew harder, and they waxed more bold, until at last they, with the whole Jewish nation, assumed an outrageous tone, set at naught the holy Jesus, and denied all His claims to the Messiahship.

**6.** We often find the greatest confidence where there is the most delusion. Of all the persons that I ever met with, or heard of, I think the “come outers,” are the most self-confident. They seem to think that they ‘are the people, and that wisdom will die with them.’ Now perhaps in the whole world there are not seven men to be found, who are so entirely wrong in all their principles of action, as these very “come outers.” I have often been struck too with the assurance of many of the antinomian perfectionists. Why, you might as well call in question the fact of their existence as to deny any of their positions. If you attempt to reason with them, and lay the axe of truth to the root of the tree of their faith, they will laugh in your face, and all your arguments will fall to the ground — so blind has their delusion made them.

**7.** Persons often wax more confident in the belief of a lie, in proportion as the evidence of their error thickens around them. This was the case with the Jews. In proportion as Christ heaped miracle upon miracle, and appealed to His works, to scripture, and to reason, for proofs of His Messiahship, just to that degree did the Jews wax confident in the belief that He was an impostor. Yes, such was the hardness of their heart, that in spite of all the light that Christ brought to bear upon them, they became steeled, and, as it were, case hardened against the truth, until at last, they were wrapped up in a delusion as fatal as can be conceived.

**8.** Millions, no doubt, die with a hard heart, and a firm hope of everlasting salvation. I recollect being called in my early ministry to visit a woman who lay at the point of death. Though she had been a very abandoned woman, yet she had the idea that she was a Christian; she supposed that in her youthful days she had seen Christ in a dream, and that she gave herself to the Lord at that time. Her friends tried to convince her of her error, but all to no purpose. She insisted on declaring that she was accepted of God, and that she enjoyed religion very much. With a knowledge of this fact, I went to see her. I conversed with her sometime, endeavoring to tear her from her delusions, but all in vain; my efforts were entirely unsuccessful; at last I kneeled down and prayed, I will not say with the effectual prayer, but at any rate, the Spirit of the Lord descended, and tore the veil from the wretched woman's heart — and oh! what a wail of agony burst from her lips — so shrill and piercing was it, that it was heard even to the neighbors. And she continued shrieking and shrieking, and her last mortal breath was spent in shrieking a note of bitterest agony. But the most remarkable case of the kind that ever came under my observation, was one which occurred in the city of New York, while I was preaching there. A man by the name of S — —, came into the city, and married a lady who was one of my church members. She persuaded him to accompany her to Church. He appeared to be a serious man, and disposed to listen to the truth, and before long, he was hopefully converted, and from what little I saw of him in inquiry meetings, I thought he appeared very well. I soon lost sight of him, and would occasionally inquire of his wife how he was getting on in spiritual matters. “Well, I don't know,” she would say, “he is a very mysterious man — he is so constantly engaged in writing, that I see but little of him, and therefore do not know what to think of his religion.”

Why, what is he writing? I asked. "Well, I hardly know," said she, "he keeps his papers so closely locked up, that I hardly ever see them, but he says that he is writing a church history." Things ran on in this way for two or three years. The man continued to profess religion, and for ought I knew, his outward walk was consistent with his profession. At last he was taken with consumption, but he did not appear to be at all alarmed, indeed he seemed to be happy at the near approach of death. Finally he inquired of his physician how long he thought he would live, and whether it was probable that he would hold out till a certain day. The physician observing his calm and happy state of mind, did not hesitate to tell him that it was not likely that he would live till the day which he named. The man seemed to be very joyful in view of the fact. He continued apparently to enjoy religion, and as the day of his death drew near, he seemed to grow more and more spiritual. His conversation soon came to savor so much of heaven, that many people visited him on purpose to enjoy it. He seemed to delight in prayer, and in singing praise to God. By the way, all this time, he was frequently asking whether it was probable that he would live to the day which he had mentioned to his physician. At last the morning of the day arrived, and it was evident that he was just on the eve of death. He called his friends around him, requested them to sing a hymn, bade them good-bye, telling them that he hoped to meet them in heaven, and then died. Now mark, while he was lying there, yet a warm and quivering corpse, the sheriff entered the house with a warrant for his arrest on the charge of forgery. The officer brought with him the most clear and convincing proof that the charge was well founded, indeed it was soon discovered that this very man who had just left earth to go as he hoped to heaven, had been engaged for years in a system of the most daring forgeries, which extended through this country, and even through Europe. As soon as the dreadful fact was announced, the horror stricken wife went to the bed side of her dead husband, and turning down the cloth from his cold and pallid face, she cried out in unutterable anguish of spirit — "*You wretch*, how could you deceive me in this manner?" Think of that, you who are wives — think of looking on the marble face of your dead husband, and calling him a wretch. This was the most wonderful case of self-delusion that I ever met with, and it taught me this good lesson — to inquire frequently whether my opinions were being formed under the influence of a hard heart.



**9.** We see why confession always accompanies a true revival. When persons have become really converted, and their hearts have become softened, they are ready to say that they feel that they have done wrong in past time. So too, when professors of religion get their hearts softened, and receive new views of duty, they do not hesitate to make ample confession of past transgressions.

**10.** No one can be truly revived or converted, without feeling the spirit of confession. The heart is not really softened if the person is not willing to confess frankly all his past sins.

**11.** The manner of confessing often indicates the state of the heart. How often in my ministry have I wanted to say to people, whom I have heard attempting to vindicate themselves, even while they were pretending to confess, — “Your hearts are not yet softened, they must be hard else you would not attempt in this manner to vindicate yourselves.”

**12.** People are often mistaken as to the real sources of difficulty in religious matters. They lay the blame of it to every one but themselves — they look for the cause of it everywhere else besides just where they ought to look. If religion is at a stand, they are very apt to look through community and ask, “who is in the way of the work of the Lord?” They forget that this is the question which they should ask — “Is not my heart hard — am I not indulging in wicked practices and feelings, which the hardness of my heart does not permit me to regard as wrong?”

**13.** It becomes each one to inquire for himself — “Is not my heart hard?” This is the duty of the minister of the gospel. He may see that religion is in a decline in his church, but before he looks around for the cause of the coldness, let him ask himself, “is not my heart hard?” Let professors of religion do this, let each one ask himself, “is not my heart hard?” Now why is it that the precious truths of the gospel do not take a deep hold of you? Why is it that your souls are not all liquid and glowing with the love of Christ? Is it not because your hearts are hard?

Beloved, shall I not ask myself, “is not my heart hard?” and will each of you ask yourself, “is my heart hard?”

# FEARING THE LORD AND WALKING IN DARKNESS

*“Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” — Isaiah 50:10.*

In discoursing from these words I shall show:

- I. WHAT THE DARKNESS SPOKEN OF IN THE TEXT IS.**
- II. WHAT SORT OF FEAR IS HERE MEANT, “WHO FEARETH THE LORD, ETC.”**
- III. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE EXHORTATION “LET HIM TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD.”**
- IV. WHY PERSONS UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE TEXT, SHOULD TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD.”**

## I. WHAT DARKNESS IS HERE MEANT

**1.** Not the darkness of nature, or of an unconverted state. This is evident from the fact that it is in the text itself spoken of as being consistent with obedience. “Who is he that feareth the Lord, and *obeyeth* the voice of His servant?” Who does this, and yet “walketh in darkness?” It is not therefore a darkness produced by guilt and condemnation.

**2.** Nor is it the darkness of a state in which the soul is under condemnation and guilt, for the same reason as before. The Prophet describes the state as that of obedience. But condemnation can come only from disobedience. It is not therefore a darkness produced by guilt and condemnation.

**3.** It is not the darkness spoken of by John, in his first epistle (Jn. 1:6.) “If we say we have fellowship with Him, and *walk in darkness*, we lie and do not the truth.” This is the darkness of unbelief, or of an unconverted state

— the darkness of sin and disobedience; whereas the darkness which the prophet speaks of is entirely consistent with obedience, and existing at the same time with obedience and the fear of the Lord. But,

**4.** The darkness in the text does result from the absence of special divine manifestations to the soul. An illustration of the condition described by the prophet may be found in the circumstances of Job, (23:8 and onward). “Behold” says Job, “I go forward, but He is not there; and backward but I cannot perceive Him; on the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand that I cannot see Him: but He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” Observe, Job was in great darkness, he could not comprehend the dealings of God with him, he was in agony, he was struggling with his calamities; he could not find God to know the reason of the sore trials heaped upon him. Yet his obedience was constant and he held fast his integrity, and his confidence in God. He could declare he had not gone back from His commandment, and that he did esteem the words of His mouth more than his necessary food. He was in a state of obedience and integrity; yet in a state of darkness. There was an absence of the divine manifestation. He was searching after God, feeling after Him on every side, looking where he worked, but not divine manifestation was vouchsafed. God hid Himself in thick darkness, and Job could not find out His way. Yet Job was holding fast to his integrity and to his confidence. “When He hath tried me I shall come forth as gold,” are his words. He was in a state of obedience. Now this same thing often occurs to Christians. They are often in great trials and under powerful temptations. They have, sometimes great inward struggles against temptation, and these are accompanied with great outward difficulties. And Providence itself seems to be all against them. All their prospects darken, their way is shut up before them, their sky is covered with clouds, their undertakings fail, and their expectations mock them, and at the same time comes the withdrawal of the light of God’s face, which before had shined upon them. They are left in darkness. This apprehension by our minds of the withholding of the special divine

manifestation, the absence of divine presence, while we still hold fast to our integrity, is the darkness of the text.

## II. WHAT THE “FEAR” OF THE TEXT IS

It is not a *slavish* fear, nor a *legal* fear, for it is accompanied by obedience. But it is a filial fear — a fear to offend and displease God, proceeding from love to Him, the fear of love and veneration such as affectionate children have for their beloved parents. That state of mind which good children have toward parents whom they greatly love and venerate, is which they cleave affectionately to obedience, and cannot endure the thought of offending, and bring upon themselves merited displeasure. You know how keenly good children feel the frown of a kind parent. If a cloud gathers upon his countenance, they are agonized, they cannot bear the sight, and must inquire beseechingly, “Dear Father are you displeased with us?” They have the greatest dread of the displeasure of their parents. So the child of God, fears to offend his Heavenly Father — to know above all things to sin against Him. This is the “fear” of the text.

## III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE EXHORTATION — “LET HIM TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, AND STAY UPON HIS GOD.”

**1.** A confidence in the goodness of God, in the goodness of His character. This is not at all strange, is it? You can conceive how such a confidence can consist with the darkness already described. A child might be under the hidings of his father’s face, in the absence of his smile, and yet be able to say “I know my father, I know there is some good reason for him to do as he does.” And in it all, he might confide in his parent’s goodness in general, and kindness towards him in particular.

It is well for the child to be able, when any thing mysterious in his parent’s conduct takes place, thus to confide, and if the matter is for the time inexplicable, to be able to say, I have unwavering confidence, — I know He does all things well. Such a trustful spirit will sustain his soul in

his obedience, and preserve that love without which obedience is no obedience. If you lose your confidence in the goodness and the holiness of God, your obedience is no longer the obedience of love.

**2.** An exhortation to confide in the wisdom of God — not only in His benevolence and truthfulness, but in His wisdom also. It is an exhortation to lay hold of the promises, to lay hold of all that is said in the Bible, of His moral character, in application to all cases wherein His conduct is to us unexplained or inexplicable, and to rest assured that in respect to what He does to us in particular, He is good and wise and that even the darkness in which we are left, is among the ‘all things’ that work together for our own good. While we search in vain, and fail to find God — when He hides his way in a great deep, we are to trust His wisdom and love, and expect Him to bring us forth at length into the light. ‘He knoweth the way that I take’ says Job, ‘when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.’

In all that God does, we are to believe that He does it for our good, as He says He does, to feel that what God does is *well* done, and in all places, even in the midst of the deepest darkness, to repose the soul in unwavering faith in the glorious perfection of His wisdom and power and love. But I come now to show,

## IV. WHY WE SHOULD THUS TRUST IN THE LORD. WHY WE SHOULD ACQUIESCE IN ALL GOD’S DEALINGS, AND BELIEVE THAT ALL IS FOR THE BEST

**1.** Because this darkness is designed, on God’s part, to develop and strengthen our faith. Observe, the darkness is not that of unbelief and worldly-mindedness, but it is consistent with obedience to God. In all such cases, it is designed by God for our good, we may be sure that it is designed by God for our good, we may be sure that it is designed to develop and strengthen our faith and confidence in God. He thereby gives us occasion to try the reality and genuineness of our trust and the firmness of our faith, and occasion to strengthen it by exercise, and unless we believe God, and hold fast our integrity as Job did, and say with him,

“Though he slay me yet will I trust in him” we defeat the great end for which these seasons are suffered to come upon us. Job’s darkness was of ultimate benefit to him, and glorified God in many ways. After he had gone through the trials, and come out safe, after he had held fast to his assurance of God’s love and mercy and goodness and had been confirmed in that assurance by the event, answering fully his expectation — did this not teach him to trust God in the future? Surely he could. Before, he knew God was holy and good, and now he has the additional witness of his own most solemn and protracted experience on the point, to wit, the goodness of the Most High.

**2.** We should trust thus in darkness, because such confidence is highly honorable to God, more honorable to God than faith in other circumstances. Job’s confidence, how honorable to God it was. How confounding to Satan! Satan pretended that Job served God for gain, and insinuated with a malicious impudence that if God should bring adversity upon him, Job would forsake Him forthwith. “Doth Job fear God for naught? But put forth Thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.’ And after he had failed at first, his malice and hateful suspicion are not yet silenced, he said again, “Touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.” And the Lord let Satan try Job to the utmost of his malice. He let him prove Job to his hearts content. And Satan found out to his confusion, that Job was proof against all his attacks. God let Satan and the universe know most unequivocally that Job’s religion did not consist in a selfish love for temporal prosperity, that the root of the matter lay deeper than this in Job, that his piety did not spring from riches, and could flourish not alone in the sun-shine. When Job maintained his integrity under the most dreadful attacks of Satan — the destruction of his worldly possessions, the ultimate death of his children, and last, the excruciating disease with which his body was smitten; when he stood firm, though his friends turned against him, and denounced him as a wicked hypocrite, when they refused to sympathize with and comfort him; when he held fast, though his own wife urged him to give up his confidence, and, his piety, and gave to him the awful advice, “Curse God and die;” when to this infamous advice, he gave the stern and impassioned rebuke, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” When

Job thus clung to his trust in God, what a testimony did he give to the goodness and faithfulness of Jehovah! When did Job honor God more than here? When, if I may speak, was God so proud of him? Methinks I hear him say to Satan, “Satan, what do you think of Job now? You said that he was selfish, and that take away his wealth, he would curse me to my face. But now see! You have stripped him of his wealth in a day, have slain his children, smitten him with sore boils from head to foot, and made him a loathing to himself, his friends and even his wife turn against him — and what does he say? ‘The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.’ This is what he says instead of the curse you predicted.” And what does he reply to his wife? Methinks if God ever smiled in complacency, it was then, to hear Job’s earnest reply, “Thou talkest as one the foolish women talketh. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?” When persons under outward discouragements or inward trials, plunged into the darkness of a mysteriously afflictive Providence, still maintain their integrity, and maintain their confidence in God, how much in so doing, do they honor Him! Many seem to suppose that they honor God most when their cup runs over with praise at the revelation of Himself to them, when their face glows with the glory of the divine manifestation. This is lovely, indeed, and desirable, and we ought to rejoice when God thus vouchsafes His presence in glorious beauty to the soul. But we do not so highly honor God by such rejoicing as we do when we can say, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.” When we can say, “I cannot give an account of God’s dealings with me. I cannot tell why He afflicts me thus, but this I know, God is infinitely wise and supremely good, and all things, even these light afflictions, and this darkness will work together for my good, and for His glory.” When we manifest this trust in God, we do honor to His faithfulness and goodness in a high degree.

**3.** Unbelief in such circumstances is highly dishonorable to God, and therefore persons when in darkness should trust in the Lord, and stay upon their God. What! must you have all the time the favoring gales of prosperity fill your canvass, and the gay sun-shine continually dancing on the waves beside your bark? Must you be thus, or will you be taken aback and begin to doubt whether God loves you at all? How dishonorable! Will you persist in judging the Lord by feeble sense, and still refuse to trust

Him for His grace? How disgraceful is such conduct towards your Almighty sovereign and friend! A fact occurs to me related by Krummacher in his "History of Elisha." It is that of Johannes a Bruce the founder of the order of the Carmelites, who though a Romish friar was yet a saint indeed, a man distinguished for his ardent love for the Lord, and for his child-like confidence in the word of God, and his unshaken faith in the letter of the promises of Scripture. The convent of which he was prior was poor, and depended on charity. Hence the fraternity were often destitute, "and the days did not infrequently occur" as our author beautifully expresses it, "when they were compelled to console themselves with the passage that "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." A day of this kind again occurred, and our hungry brethren on assembling for dinner found that the whole stock of food in their possession amounted to a piece of dry bread. This therefore they sat down to partake of, imploring the Divine blessing thereupon. But as they were about to dispatch their crust, Johannes, their prior, arose and poured from his lips such "words of encouragement and consolation concerning the love of God in Christ, and the great promises He has given His people that all of them rose up delighted and refreshed, and without partaking of their bread returned to their cells." They had scarcely reached their silent retreats, when the bell rang at the gate, and on being opened, a man entered with a large covered basket in his hand, and a letter to Johannes, the prior. The porter carried the letter to the prior, whom he found on his knees in prayer. He rose to take the letter, and began to read, but he had hardly reached its close, before "he dropped the letter from his hand, cast his eyes upon the ground, and began to weep bitterly. The porter surprised, said "Father, why do you weep? Have you not often said that we ought not to weep and be grieved at any thing but our sins?" To which Johannes replied, "Brother, I do not weep without reason, think how weak the Lord must see our faith to be, since He is unwilling to let us suffer a little want, even for a single day, without sending visible aid. He foresaw that before evening, we should become confused and despond unless He sent immediate help to our faith by means of this charitable gift. It is because we possess so little confidence in the rich Lord, in whom we are encouraged to trust, that my tears flow." Thus far our author, our friar wept at the unbelief, at the weak confidence God's people possess towards Him. God must send deliverance so soon



or they will not believe He cares for them. We should murmur in distrust, thought he, if food should be delayed for a single meal, and at this thought of the little faith of God's people he could not refrain himself and wept aloud. Now who does not see that when God places us thus in straits to develop and strengthen our faith, unbelief is highly dishonorable to God? Who does not see that we greatly abuse Him, and do injustice to His Fatherly love? But again,

**4.** Faith in such circumstances is the condition of subsequent divine manifestation. If you will read the Bible through with your eye on this point, I think you will find that faith, in the absence of divine manifestation is every where made the condition of that manifestation. Christ says, "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him." Manifestation is conditioned upon obedience and faith in the absence thereof. These manifestations are to be obtained by us through faith in the promises while we are under the hidings of God's face, with no divine manifestation. Once more,

**5.** That faith is the most valuable, which can trust God with the least Divine manifestation. Abraham is called the "father of the faithful." Why? It will be well for us to consider what there was in Abraham's faith that give to him this honorable distinction.

Observe then, that God's manifestations to him were few and far between, only at distant intervals. There is no account of God's appearing to him but a few times in all his life. The fulfillment of the promises was long delayed. God said, "Get thee out from thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee, and I will make of thee a great nation." Abraham departed forthwith and went to Canaan, trusting in the promises of God. He is promised a *land*, yet he never to the day of his death, inherited a foot of the soil, but was obliged to buy a portion for a burying place for his family. God told him He would make of him a great nation, yet twenty-four years after, he had no child except Ishmael. Where then was the promise? God did not come. But Abraham held fast, he hoped against hope, and believed the naked word of God. By and by, when Abraham was past age, his son was born. And then after that, God commanded him to give up his son, the child of promise, to sacrifice him, to slay him with his own hand, to offer him a burnt offering

upon the mountains. What was this? It is the child upon whose life hangs the truth of God's promise, from him the "great nation" is to arise, and now he is to be slain. God has contradicted His own promise, besides the requirement is surely and absolutely wrong. It was most prodigious, Isaac must die! a human sacrifice!! by the hand of his own father! to the God of mercy. Can the thing be? But in the midst of all this darkness, for a strange thing indeed had come, in the midst of this darkness without and darkness within, he held fast, he set out to Mt. Moriah, said nothing to Sarah, this her only son was to be slain, told not his servant, but in the strength of his faith in God, he went on — the stern old man! He built the altar, and laid the wood, and then, he bound Isaac, and stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. No wonder the Lord said, "Now I know that thou fearest God." No wonder God declared to him "Surely blessing I will bless thee and multiplying I will multiply thee for thou hast obeyed my voice." No wonder Abraham is placed at the head of the whole family of the faithful ones upon the earth. His faith was in the highest degree conspicuous. Consider the little light he had, the nature of the command, and see the touching and dreadful circumstances in which he stood and his faith and obedience are wonderful indeed. Well might Paul say of him, "He staggered not through unbelief." Great grace was upon Abraham.

Take the case of the Syrophenician woman. The circumstances were forbidding. She came and cried, "Have mercy on me O Lord thou son of David, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But to this Christ answered not a word. He did not deign to notice her it would seem. But she cried still. And then the disciples set in, and begged Him to grant her request and send her away because her entreaties were annoying. But to them He says, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she is not put off yet, she comes nearer, and still her cry goes up, "*Lord help me!*" And then He calls her a *dog*. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to *dogs*." But she was not to be shaken, she held on. Truth Lord, I do not ask the bread from the children, but 'even the dogs eat the crumbs from their master's table'. I ask not the *bread* but only a crumb. And she got her fill. How honorable to God was this, and how valuable was this her faith, it procured for her the great blessing which she asked. But,

**6.** Such faith will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And this is a reason why we should possess it. Satan will try to overthrow our faith. When he finds God withdrawing Himself, and wrapping His mantle of darkness about Him and retiring into the thick darkness, he will try us with doubts and fears, and forebodings. When he finds our expectations blasted, and our plans crossed, and our comforts stricken down, he will fall into and overthrow our confidence in God's goodness and favor, if he can. But brethren, hold fast to your *shield*, the shield of faith, and you will quench all his fiery darts.

**7.** Such faith will procure all needed divine manifestation, all the light will be thrown upon God's dealings with us, that it is well, and best for us to have. There can be no mistake here. Just as much light and love will be manifested as it is best for us on the whole, to have revealed to us. Once more,

**8.** It is often better for our health both spiritual and bodily, to be left to exercise faith in darkness, than to have copious manifestations for a season, and then have them withdrawn, and thus be subject to an alternate excitement and depression, which would often prostrate the mental and bodily powers, and leave the soul unstrung.

## REMARKS

**1.** The state of mind here described is entirely different from *apathy* or *worldly-mindedness*. If persons imagine themselves trusting in God, while they are worldly-minded, they are grossly deceived. This state of faith and trust is as far as possible from that, and where persons are lying in apathy let them not say, they are trusting in God, while walking in darkness, for this faith is always accompanied with obedience.

**2.** Sometimes a very great darkness, comes over the soul, and this immediately before a great divine manifestation.

One of Abraham's manifestations was preceded by "a horror of great darkness." This is more common than is generally supposed. Before God reveals his face in sunshine, He is apt to withdraw it, to veil it in a thick cloud, so as to try our faith and bring it into strong exercise, and if in this

withdrawment and darkness, our faith is strong and the mind holds on to its confidence we may expect the divine manifestation to succeed, and to be copious and refreshing to the soul.

**3.** It is a common but great mistake to suppose that great faith is inconsistent with great present darkness. It is indeed, with the darkness of unbelief, but not with such as Abraham had, and as Job had, and as that in the text. Or to suppose that such darkness is inconsistent with entire sanctification. The darkness of our text does not imply present unbelief, nor departure from God, and they mistake who think that it does. But because of this mistake, inquirers after light and divine manifestation, are charged often with unbelief and disobedience. When a man is under a cloud, and feeling after God, and sets his heart upon finding Him, God often for wise reasons, withholds His light from the soul, hides Himself, does not manifest Himself. The soul prays, and prays, and prays, and in faith too, but God withholds. He is preparing him in the best manner possible, to receive the light, before He gives it. The soul prays, and struggles, and searches, and tries to lay hands upon a promise, but the divine manifestation does not come. If in such a case the individual is told that it is certainly because of unbelief in his soul, that God reveals not His glory, that it must be so, that he is all unbelief and in sin, or God would have come long ago, it will almost surely bring discouragement. How easy thus to put out the light which is leading him, and cause him to give up, and lose the end to which the Spirit within him was drawing him, the great and joyful enlargement and manifestation of the divine presence.

**4.** Many think the darkness spoken of by John, to be all the darkness there is, that all darkness is that of unbelief, and they understand John to say, If we say we are Christ's and walk in darkness, no matter of what kind, we lie. Whereas men may be in a very high exercise of faith, and be in darkness, as they actually are when they cleave to God, as Abraham and Job did in the midst of darkness. I remark once more,

**5.** They are mistaken who promise instant light upon the exercise of faith. It is common to say, If you will believe, that moment you will have a flood of light poured upon you from God's throne. Now the text implies the contrary. The Bible nowhere, so far as I know, promises constant light to

faith. This is a world of trial, and there are innumerable reasons why there should not be constant light and divine manifestation. Again,

**6.** The text contains the direction that should be given to persons in such cases. “Who is among you that feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him *trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God.*” When we cannot see the way that He takes, we are nevertheless to confide in His faithfulness, and rest in the immutability of His wise counsel, as upon a firm rock. Read the chapter and you will see that Isaiah had been led to this experience — into this state of mind, by God’s dealings with him, and His people. It is remarkable how God qualifies His servants to speak a word in season, how He leads His children through darkness, and settles their souls upon Himself, so that they may be able to ‘speak a word in season to them who are weary.’ And here we have the word, the heavenly counsel to administer to all those who thus mourn the hidings of God’s face.

**7.** Many confound faith with divine manifestation and think there is no faith without it. They think they have great faith when the candle of the Lord shines around them, when they stand in the sunlight of the divine glory, so that their faces shine with the reflection of that glory. Now they may have faith, of course they do have faith; but their joy, their spirit of praise and thanksgiving is not to be mistaken for faith. Directly beside the man whose face shines with glory, and who is ready to shout aloud in the excess of joy, whose eye is open, and who can look like Stephen, into heaven, and see God upon His throne and the angels around Him, there may be one kneeling, a cloud around him. feeling after God with a confidence not to be shaken though the heavens thunder and the earth quake; and this second may be no less acceptable to God — nay, he may be more acceptable than the first. When did Job honor God more than when in darkness deep as midnight, in trials without and within, he planted his foot firmly upon God’s goodness — “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Never. Once more,

**8.** Many refuse to walk unless they can walk by sight, in the divine manifestation, constantly. They will not take a single step. They will not trust God out of their sight, and think themselves doing well to insist that God shall not let them walk by faith a single foot, but that all the time the

light of His manifestation must encircle them. They believe, when everything, without and within, is light and glory, then they do well; but once withdrawn, and they have no resource but faith, then they will not trust at all. They will exclaim as Jonah did when the gourd was blasted, ‘I do well to be angry,’ as if they were not to trust God unless all is light, and God’s countenance, all covered with smiles, is visible to them. But such persons are greatly deceived if they imagine they have faith, when, as a matter of fact, they dare not trust God a moment out of their sight.

**9.** It is not pleasant, but often very useful to walk in such darkness. Was not Job greatly benefited by the scenes through which he passed? What Christian has not been struck with the manner in which God turns for the faithful soul, afflictions into benefits? These seasons of darkness are among the afflictions which are not for the present joyous, but grievous, but which afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby. Persons in this condition should not be treated harshly, and those who treat them so, who snuff at them and call them to repentance, though they may do it from a good motive, are nevertheless very much mistaken. They may have sinned in doubting his love, but it is by no means certain because they are in darkness, that they have sinned. Such persons are like the bruised reed which must not be broken, and the smoking flax, which must be fanned rather than rudely quenched; they need to be encouraged, to be told that God is doing the best He can for them and for all — that this their darkness is among the ‘all things’ that shall work together for their good if they love God; and instead of telling them, you will have light if you believe, tell them to *believe, light or dark*. Point them to God’s truthfulness, insist upon trust, whatever the appearance is, whatever darkness is without, and whatever trials are within — do so, and you will help them. But denounce them, take it for granted they have fallen into sin, and it may be they will really and sadly backslide, and go away from God for months and months. To do so, is worrying the sheep instead of feeding them. It is setting a cruel dog upon the already jaded creature, instead of urging her to rest safely under the care of the Good Shepherd, and telling her that He will protect the flock and keep the raging wolves off, that He will gently lead the flock, that He will ‘gather the lambs in His arm, and gently lead those that are with young,’ that the weak and the weary are His special care, and that no fear

need be indulged in, either of His ability or disposition to keep all right and bring them safe home. His children should be assured that He hears them and will care for their good, though they cannot see Him, and that the cloud that has passed over them is only to quicken their faith, and make them honor Him, that He may honor them before the universe, for their strong faith in their fierce conflicts.

**10.** The life of faith in opposition to a life of excitement in manifestations is a calm and steady life, and greatly desirable.

**11.** God is trying to develop our faith, and confirm it so that nothing that can occur in His providence however inexplicable, can stumble us. He knows the end from the beginning, and He knows that many things happen which will seem strange, and exceedingly trying. He sees many trials ahead awaiting His people, and He would prepare them for those trials that they may pass them safely. He wishes to make their ship staunch and firm, so that they may weather the storms, and escape the fury of the angry surge. He would give us strength and ballast, so that we may outride the waves, and come safely out from the war of winds and waters.

**12.** He is the best Christian who can trust the most perfectly in God, in the greatest outward discouragements, and inward withdrawals of God's face. He is the best Christian, and manifests the highest degree of religion in that very hour of trust, amid all possible discouragements and trials. When he can say "I know my God, I can trust Him and I will, come what may," his faith is perfect. He is in the state of the highest virtue, that which is most acceptable to God.

**13.** Manifestations do much to develop the sensibility, and draw out the emotions, and soften and melt the soul, and they do much good if sought and used properly, but when sought as a luxury they do mischief. Faith must be drawn out and strengthened, as well as emotion quickened and deepened, and this can be done most effectually by throwing men where they can do nothing but hang on the naked promise and character of God.

**14.** Many persons seem unwilling to let God take any other course than to reveal His way continually; they envy those who do thus walk in the light, as though that were the only religious state, the only state in which they can do good, as comprehending the whole of religion in the heart. These

ideas should be put away, for they are false and hurtful, and are a great stumbling-block to any church where they gain a foothold, they set a people drifting in one direction, after a thing which is false, they will work a monstrosity Christian character, and will tend strongly to fanaticism. Let a professor of religion run away with one idea, and push it to the last link, and he is verging to a fanatical state of mind. If he is trying to lash his feelings up to the required point, rasping them into strong excitement, creating a whirlwind of emotion, and seeking for a flood of feeling to pour forth continually, he endangers his piety, and jeopardes the soundness of his faith. There are many stages through which we are to pass. I see a man in the light of God's face — the way of God all visible to him, and rejoicing in his Lord's presence, and I rejoice, for I love to see it. I love to hear him pour out his heart, to see the strong current of emotion flowing from the depths of feeling within, and to see his face shine like the face of an angel. But if I see the same man in darkness, and hear him say, Though God slay me, I will trust in Him, I rejoice in that too. Instead of denouncing him as a hypocrite or an unbeliever, I would say, Be of good cheer, God speed, you go on; darkness and light shall alternate with your soul — light to develop your sensibility, and darkness to exercise and confirm your faith. Keep your soul in all; they are all needful and beneficial, and in all your darkness, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon your God. Let us not be deceived by supposing there are not many stages of experience, but rather say, I welcome them all — I love to pass through them all — I will trust under them all. I will not fear, though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, for Thy rod and Thy staff, O God, shall support me. Let not Christians be afraid to pass then, — through the gate that unbars its doors, and bids us enter into joy unspeakable and full of glory. Once more,

**15.** Do not confound apathy and backsliding with that state of mind that trusts God in darkness. They are as much opposites as two states can be. One is a state of obedience, the other of disobedience — one of strong faith, the other of no faith at all — one of great and active love, the other of perfect stupidity and stagnation of soul like a putrid lake. In one, the soul rises above all the gusts and storms of doubt and fear into the calm blue sky of unfaltering trust; in the other, it sinks below both blue sky and



howling wind, as into the death damps of the grave. Do not, I beseech you, mistake apathy for trust in God. Beloved, will you trust in God?

# CHRISTIAN WITNESSES FOR GOD

*“Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord.” — Isaiah 42:10.*

In this discourse I shall show:

- I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN AN APPEAL TO WITNESS.**
- II. WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE COMPETENCY OF A WITNESS.**
- III. STATE SOME THINGS THAT AFFECT HIS CREDIBILITY.**
- IV. GOD’S CAUSE MUST DEPEND UPON THE FAITHFULNESS OF HIS WITNESSES.**
- V. THE CONDITIONS WHICH MAKE TESTIMONY FOR GOD AVAILABLE.**

## I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN AN APPEAL TO WITNESS

It is implied,

- 1.** That there is some question at issue, which can be settled by an examination of facts.
- 2.** That the parties, or one of them, will have an appeal to the facts in the case, to settle the question at issue.
- 3.** It implies an appeal to certain persons to establish the facts, as the vouchers thereof. The parties agree to appeal to persons to determine the real facts in the case, which persons are witnesses. Now all this is true with regard to God, and His cause, in this world. He has taken issue with men. The great question is concerning His moral character and government, and He has appealed to witnesses to set forth and establish the facts. His people are those witnesses. He has called them as witnesses and cast His

cause, as it were, upon their testimony. The issue is the moral character and government of God, and the appeal is to those who in this world know Him, who are best acquainted with Him, and who are therefore the most competent and credible witnesses.

## II. WHAT IS ESSENTIAL TO THE COMPETENCY OF A WITNESS

But few things are required for competency.

Witnesses must be of suitable age, and have the necessary qualifications to understand the circumstances to which they testify; and they must have been so situated as to speak from personal knowledge of the things which they state, and not from report or hearsay, or conjecture. These are the principle things which go to make a person a competent witness. So God's witnesses must be able to speak from personal knowledge, it will be of no great account to tell what others know, or what you have heard reported. You must speak if you testify at all, and do any good by your testimony, from actual knowledge; you must state facts which your own eyes have seen, ears have heard, and hands have handled.

## III. MENTION SOME THINGS THAT AFFECT THE CREDIBILITY OF A WITNESS

By credibility is meant the degree of credit to which a witness is entitled. It is very manifest witnesses may differ very much in the degree of credit which should be given to them. Some are entitled to the utmost confidence, and others to little or none at all. And a multitude of things must affect their credibility, must conspire to give them credibility or otherwise.

**1.** Substantial agreement with each other in the things to which they testify. If witness contradict one another on fundamental questions, they cannot be believed. But observe here, that some witnesses may be able to testify to things of which others can say nothing, and in this sense, there may be much difference in the testimony of different witnesses in the same case. One may speak of things which the other does not know. But this

will not invalidate the testimony of either, provided there be no contradiction in their statements. One may see what another did not see; one may be so situated as to learn what another has no opportunity to learn. The fact that one did *not* see a thing is no proof against the testimony of another who *did* see it. But there must be no contradictory statements. One witness must not contradict another. If one swears that a man was at New York on a certain day, and at a certain hour, and another swears the same man was at Buffalo on the same day and hour, both cannot be true, and neither can be taken. There must be a mistake because the testimony is contradictory. Moreover,

**2.** The statement of a witness must be consistent with itself throughout. He must not contradict himself. If his story is contradictory, if it is not consistent throughout, if the parts do not hang together, the witness' credibility is destroyed. There must be, moreover, an agreement with statements made at other times. If at one time, he contradicts what he says at another time, you cannot generally know which is true, and the testimony cannot be received. Or if a witness' testimony is inconsistent with his practice, this in God's cause is fatal to the credibility of the witness. If he says one thing and does another, it is most fatal to his credibility, since the testimony respects his regard for God and his fellows, and since it is true that actions speak louder than words, it follows that though a man say he loves God, yet if he hate his brother, he is counted, and justly too, a liar. Again —

**3.** The spirit and bearing of a witness taken as a whole, has much to do with his credibility. Where a witness manifests great prejudice and committal to one side or the other, where a wrong spirit is cherished, where he manifests hate to one party, and interested attachment to the other, where he is uncandid, where he has not investigated the subject, has not been candid and thorough in getting at the facts, in such cases the witness is plainly entitled to little credit.

**4.** The degree of acquaintance with the matter at issue. If it is clear that he is familiar with the whole subject, that he knows the whole question, and knows it perfectly, where it is manifest that he is qualified from character and position to be a good judge, and that he is perfectly at home in the whole question, he must be reckoned a credible witness in a high degree. A

witness must know what he professes to testify. Where it is plain that he does not know, that he is in doubt as to the principle points in dispute, he is entitled to, and will receive in court, very little credit.

#### IV. THE SUCCESS OF EVERY CAUSE DECIDED BY TESTIMONY MUST DEPEND ON THE CHARACTER OF THE WITNESSES AND THE TESTIMONY WHICH THEY GIVE

This is true of any cause. The case is brought — an appeal is made to facts — who are to establish those facts? The *witnesses*. If they do so, the cause is gained, if they fail, it is lost. And it is true also of God's cause. What is God's cause, now trying? God is endeavoring to sustain His government over men and bring them to obey Him. This can only be done by subduing their hearts. That can be affected only by the truth — that truth must be presented: and this must be done by witnesses. An appeal must be made to the intelligence, such an appeal as to carry conviction — a course must be taken such as to bring men back to God, and to induce men readily and heartily to submit themselves to God's authority. How is this to be done? In as much as the matter is a subject for investigation and knowledge, and as the facts in the case are the criteria on which it is to turn, and as God has made an appeal to the facts and to men as the witnesses to establish the facts according to which the issue is to be decided, — as the cause rests thus — the success thereof — the question whether He shall get a verdict in His favor-whether all hearts shall be given to Him or at least, whether the universal judgment of conscience and reason shall turn for Him must depend on the ability and faithfulness of His witnesses. This is no mere speculation; it is a simple matter of fact — God's cause in the court of this world has depended and does depend on His people; the witnesses to whom He has made His appeal. Moreover, the witnesses are God's people and none others. He appeals to no others. He appeals to *all* His people, makes no exceptions among *them*, but calls every one to the stand, “ye are My witnesses,” stand up before the whole world; arise in the court-room of the universe, give in your testimony on My behalf, testify what you know of Me, of My character, My government, tell what your eyes have seen, and your heart has known concerning Me and My cause. Take the

stand and bear witness in this case between God and the world, and let us hear what you know of these great realities.

**2.** Inasmuch as God has thrown His cause upon an appeal to facts; He Himself perceives the issue depending upon the faithfulness of His witnesses. He has appealed Himself. He Himself has appointed His people to be His witnesses, and He sees His success in the eyes of men depending upon their testimony.

The success of God's moral government is conditional on faith. Faith depends on conviction that the things are true. But how is conviction produced? By evidence. Whence comes evidence? From witnesses. Who are the witnesses? God's real people, and the Holy Spirit giving weight to their testimony. His true children are the only competent witnesses, the only ones qualified to testify. They are of lawful age, and can speak from personal knowledge. They are the best of all witnesses, and the only competent ones. Their testimony will decide the question, and ought to decide it.

## V. THE CONDITIONS OF THE AVAILABILITY OF THE TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIANS FOR GOD

**1.** They must have personal knowledge, must be personally acquainted with God, so that they can tell, not what somebody else has said, not what they have heard reported, not what they have been told, that Paul said, that Peter said, that John had heard, that such and such things were thought to be so. They must tell what they *know*. When they come to the stand, the judge will ask, are you acquainted with the parties? Do you *know* any thing of the matter at issue? What do you know of this cause now in this court, pending between God of the one party, and wicked men of the other party? "I have heard" — you begin, "I have been assured by such a one," — But what do you *know*? You have heard — Where is he that told you? You have only *heard* — Stand aside then. Is there anybody here that *knows* aught of this question between these two parties? If there be, let him appear and truly give testimony concerning it.

**2. Consistency.** Consistency of statement among the several witnesses. If one swears to one thing, and another contradicts it, unless God's witnesses agree substantially with each other, all will go to confusion and end in defeat. Consistency too, is requisite in the story of each witness throughout, and consistency of his practice with his testimony. But observe as I said before, one may testify to what others know nothing of, and yet not destroy the validity of the testimony. And moreover it requires a deep, a rich experience of divine things, a high insight into the dealings of God; a deep apprehension of God and His truth and salvation, to testify to some truths of the first importance. Superficial believers are utterly incompetent to testify in regard to some of the higher, in which yet are some of the chief positions needing to be sustained on God's part. Again,

**3.** Truthfulness is a condition of availability. If the witness is known to misrepresent or pervert or falsify, of what worth is his testimony?

**4.** The indwelling of God's Spirit, and the revealing of God to the soul by the Spirit, so as to give them personal knowledge of God, is requisite to make persons available witnesses. They can testify to no purpose unless God dwells in them, and they in God, unless so to speak, they live and move and have their being in Him, in such a sense as that they have constant communion with God, are conversing with Him day by day; unless they are thus, they cannot bring such evidence as to bear down upon the unbelief of wicked men, and drive it away from them.

## VI. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE WITNESSES

**1.** Great interests are at stake. Suppose you are a witness in a case of life and death, suppose that on your single word hangs the life of a fellow-being, you would feel your real responsibility to be great. Think that upon your testimony is poised the life of a fellow-man, and how greatly would it affect you. How it would make your heart sicken and sink within you. How carefully would you weigh every word and should utter, and consider every sentence. How important that you bear just the true testimony. How great the injury you might inflict on the accused if really innocent on the one hand, or on the public weal, if the accused were really guilty on the

other. But advance a step. Suppose the temporal well or ill-being of a whole town was suspended upon your word or conduct. Suppose the lives of a regiment of men were thus pending, and you were called into the presence of the generalissimo, and your testimony would determine their doom, you would approach awe-stricken, all pale and trembling, and would inwardly, and perhaps audibly, groan out, how can I stand under such a weight — bear so heavy a load. O what if by an error of my tongue, the lives of all these should be sacrificed! But farther still — let the life, not temporal, but eternal, of a soul depend upon you — nay farther still, let there be all around you those whose eternal destiny hangs upon your words and deeds, those whose unbelief or faith, whose repentance or prolonged rebellion, whose submission or obstinacy, whose holiness or sin, whose sanctification or permanent purification, or deeper and deeper plunge into filth and pollution, whose everlasting good or endless ill, hangs upon your look, upon your words, your conduct, my friends, let this be the weight laid upon you, — and O, what angel can estimate the immensity of your responsibility, can reckon up the importance of your testimony. An immortal soul is arrested by God's Spirit, and enjoined to swear allegiance to God's throne; he turns to you a professed subject of God's kingdom, — he asks, What sort of a king is God? You have no testimony to bear for your sovereign, your mouth is closed, not a word to say — but only feeble and unintelligible, mumbling, or contradictory statements, and a practice that gives the lie direct to your words. What then? The Advocate is sad, no plea to make, His own witnesses have betrayed Him, His dependence has failed Him, and He is silent and confused. The judge charges the jury, he asks them, Have you agreed upon your verdict? They answer without leaving the jury-box. "We have," Gentlemen, what say you? worthy, or not worthy? And they answer, "Not Worthy." The Infinite God as lost His cause, it has gone by your perfidy, and the opponent makes his way from the court glad by the strength of the verdict, and the failure of the witnesses to stifle the voices disagreeable as they are, in his own breast, that say while they speak at all, false verdict! Treacherous witnesses! God is worthy! O, man be not deceived! But the case is decided against God, the soul is set, the course is taken, and it ends not till it descends down the sides of the bottomless pit. O, false witness, what hast thou done? Treacherous advocate see thy



work! Faithless defender, cursed by thy memory! Soul, witness, beware, you are on the stand, a word, a look, falter, stammer, and it is gone!

**2.** Not only are great interests at stake — the world's salvation, the glory of the Infinite God among men, the honor and success of His moral government, but it is true, that you may be as fully furnished as you please, as thoroughly qualified to bear witness as you desire. Every facility is afforded, every opportunity is given for acquaintance. God has spread out all the glorious facts in the case for your full and thorough understanding. He has invited you, and He urges you, to search with the utmost diligence — He throws His kingdom open to your eye for the most familiar knowledge — He lets you study, if you will, and gives you ample time and leisure, and all needful aids to examine and learn all the great facts upon the establishment of which His cause is to command a favorable verdict — He urges you to so complete a knowledge, and so deep, so rich and exquisite an experience, in all the parts of truth, in the whole great scheme of practical godliness, that you may stand up in the presence of the court as erect as an angel, and declare as with the tongue of a silver trumpet, from your own knowledge and great experience the wonderful things on which the world's salvation is hung. If you have such advantages, such facilities, such interests at stake, if you have such facilities for securing the requisite knowledge in the case, if you must be reckoned as a witness at any rate, and so much depends on your testimony, I ask you, what should you do? Ah, an angel might tremble under such responsibility.

**3.** It is impossible for any soul to tell how much may depend upon his own testimony — his own individual witness. When the judgment sits, and all the events of the world, and their causes and effects are spread out and laid open to the eyes of men, what wonders will there be revealed, what stupendous changes will be seen to have hinged, have turned on the agency of each child of God. What wonders will there be revealed! Once more —

**4.** God Himself feels keenly alive to the result of the investigation. Never did a person commit a cause to witnesses, who was so tremblingly alive to the issue, as God is in this very question. He is not selfish — does not seek His own ends — no self-gratification moves Him — His work is not

to crush and discomfit His opponents, but He is moved by love, He wishes to save His foes, to draw them over, to subdue their wills, and draw them sweetly by the power of the truth to the ‘wells of salvation.’ His whole soul is set upon this. And God is tremblingly alive to the progress of the great suit (great to us, and great in its results) now pending between Himself and men, and in which we must testify before angels and men. He is infinitely regardful of His own reputation, because His reputation is necessary to the best good of the universe, and He is infinitely regardful of the interests at stake in the controversy. He engages in the proof with all His heart. How does a man feel when engaged in an important matter, having brought it to trial, and having called His witness to the stand — how alive to every word the witness shall say. And how grieved and indignant will he be, if a principal witness should prove careless, or ill-informed, should be inconsistent, or worse than that, wickedly perverse. Be placed yourself in such a position, the advocate of great interests, and let your witnesses fail you in the hour of trial, how would it affect you! God is really and deeply interested in the trial, He has thrown the cause on an appeal to facts, and sincerely calls on witnesses therefore, and expects of them a full knowledge, and a clear and explicit testimony, and in consequence an honorable verdict in His favor.

## REMARKS

**1.** The world is now, and always has been stumbled with the contradictory testimony that nominal Christians give, for they intrude their testimony, though God has not called them to testify, and does not wish their witness. He calls His own people, and none others to bear testimony; but multitudes pretend to be God’s people, and perhaps sometimes think they are so, and set themselves up, and are reckoned by others as witnesses, who know nothing at all of God, and they bear false witness; for they think they know, and testify as if they do know; and by giving such testimony they overbear the true witnesses, and the minds of the jury and the by-standers are puzzled, and they are at a loss to know what to think, or else the verdict is given against God and religion.

**2.** The nominal Christians, mere professors, so greatly outnumber God’s real people, that their witness in the minds of men generally, glad to get rid

of an unwelcome subject, entirely outweighs that of the true witnesses, and the world taking the mass together say, There is nothing in religion. And if they were right in taking the mass of professors as the witnesses, they would be right in their decision. If the testimony of the great body is to be taken as the true Christian witness, what else can the decision be, what other verdict can be rendered? What in such a case must they say? Just what they *do* say. But observe, the evil lies herein, not that God loses His cause for lack of evidence, but that those come forward and obtrude themselves upon the stand who never have been summoned, and who know nothing at all of the matter. But I remark,

**3.** God will reject their testimony in the great court of equity and errors at the day of judgment, and with it both the persons who gave it, and the persons who have been blinded by it and have stumbled over it, and both classes together will be sent off to the eternal prison-house. For God has made no appeal to any such incompetent witnesses. To His true children He has appealed, and no others, and those who attend the trial should observe who are admitted and who are rejected from the stand. It is true indeed, that since multitudes press forward to bear witness, and it is not always decided on the spot who are competent, and who are incompetent, but they are allowed each to tell his story whether to the point or not, whether consistent or otherwise, there is great danger of deception, great danger of being stumbled, but it behooves by-standers to be on their guard, to be most particular whose testimony they receive, for if they carelessly rely on the testimony of a witness whom God does not call, they, and they only are responsible and must bear the consequence of their carelessness. It becomes men to understand well — what indeed they may fully understand if they will — who are true, and who are only pretended, and self-called witnesses. For their salvation hangs on their careful discrimination.

**4.** As the nominal Christians are a vast majority, the true are suspected of heresy, of fanaticism, of insanity. Those who know God, are so *few* among the vast many, (for sure “so many can’t be wrong,”) that their witness is counted false. They are declared not to know, to be presuming, and over-zealous, who are in fact the only ones who do know anything as they ought to know it. It is sad to think how the truth is perverted, and

pronounced false, for the hypocrisy and ignorance of professors, and carelessness of sinners.

**5.** How true this fact is of ministers, that even they are false witnesses of God. O, how many are crying out against the most precious truths of the Gospel, and thus leading others to doubt their truth and power.

**6.** The true witnesses themselves have often fallen into gross inconsistencies, and thus destroyed the weight of their own testimony, and greatly weakened the force of the testimony of others. And this is the special aim of the adversary. It is Satan's chosen policy to prevail over the real people of God, and thus to strike away at a blow what they have before done. If he can nullify the true testimony — the witness of those who do know, he is safe enough, for that of others only turns on his own account.

How often have real Christians fallen under powerful temptations, and then the force of their testimony is gone — its value is lost, it will not be believed. They have *fallen*, and who will credit what they said before? When a person of high religious reputation falls into sin, it emboldens scoffers to excess, and leads multitudes to turn away, and dispirits numbers of real seekers after piety. That's the way it goes — exclaims the scoffing crew. There is nothing real there — say the careless. O my God, he has fallen! Can I hope to succeed? — cries the timid inquirer. What influence does such conduct exert! When there is a traitor among the disciples, what havoc does his defection produce!

**7.** Many who are, perhaps, or may be supposed to be true witnesses, have very little to say. They seem to have their abode among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; they have tapered away and dwindled down in religion; they have grown almost none at all — or perhaps grown downwards; they know little more — perhaps no more than at first. The command, 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ,' has by no means engaged their attention. They do not seem to know what is meant by growing in the knowledge of Christ. Many seem to stop on the threshold — they appear to know next to nothing of Christ by personal experience — they have not grown up into Him, they do not go on and increase, learning first one and then another, and another of Christ's offices and relations. Instead of gaining new knowledge every day — of

being able to say, “There, I did not know that; I have learned something about God; I never thought of that before” — instead of learning something here and something there, of growing day by day in experience of the grace of Christ, they do not grow at all, but remain your babes, mere tyros in divine knowledge. And when they are called to testify, they have to say they know very little of the matter. And when a witness know but little of the case, when he stammers and hesitates, the jury get weary of hearing his pother, and the judge will say — “That man know not what he’s talking of. It is not worth while to waste the time in hearing him.” How remarkable it is that Christians can say so little from personal acquaintance with God. How exceedingly little they can say. Live with them for years, attend prayer and conference meeting with them for years — and what do you hear them say? Their experience is not more than an inch long — they will tell all they ever knew in ten minutes. Long ago they were converted, now and then they have a conviction, they feel compunction and sorrow for sin, a desire to do better, faint feelings of worship and adoration arise continually. But O, they have never gone within the veil, they have tarried without in the outer courts, and the glorious inner sanctuary, which was opened by the sacrifice of the great Atonement — the sacred Holy of Holies their eyes have never looked upon — those deep and flowing springs which rise beneath the very throne, they never drank of — they never have felt flowing through their enraptured souls, that deep, broad river of peace, which pours its streams through the channels of salvation — their eyes have never been opened to behold the great things of God, and with ever new revelations, brighter and yet brighter still, to sit entranced in joy so that they can tell and tell and never be tired of telling the things which God has done for them, and the beauties which He has showed them. No, alas! their story is soon told — the same oft repeated, mournful tale, alike dishonorable to God and disgraceful to themselves.

There is a great fault in these witnesses. With every facility afforded them to make them able to bear a most impressive testimony for God and His Christ, they neglect them all, and their mouths are shut. Impressive testimony? Hear a Christian, one indeed, one in a high degree, tell his story. See the tears start, see them trickle down the cheek all over the assembly. He will make more impression than 500 unfeeling sermons. His statements, how simple! His faith, how artless! His trust, how child-like! I

knew a young man, a sailor, converted on board ship. He had been brought up at sea, and was an infidel; or rather knew nothing of religion. On a voyage to China, in a most remarkable manner, he became convinced of the truth of the Bible. He became very anxious to have a Bible, and at length got one of an old sailor who had one, but cared nothing about it. The Bible was old — he covered it carefully to preserve it choice, and then he read it. But with what emotion! how his bosom swelled! how his tears flowed! It was the word of God; every word of it was true; every promise was sure. How wonderful it appeared to him — he sat and wondered, and read, and wept, and wept, and read; so happy was he, he forgot every thing but God, and Christ, and his Bible. On their voyage, the ship stopped at a port for supplies. The city was illuminated, it was a perfect blaze of light. As the ship lay at anchor, our sailor walked the deck and looked at the illuminated town, “I was so happy” said he, “with my bible and my God, I could not help exclaiming — I am happier than all of you.” He said he did not once think whether he were a Christian, but his soul was all absorbed in love and joy.

After this relation, our sailor told his experience of the faithfulness of God. It appeared to him a small thing indeed that God should answer prayer — nothing remarkable or strange. God has said he would hear His people’s cry, and why should He not? He said it seemed no way strange that God should change the wind and give them a favorable breeze in answer to his prayer. He would take his watch on deck, the wind would be contrary, he would pray for a fair wind, and there was never so much as a doubt but God would give him his request. He would kneel to pray, the wind would be blowing on his larboard cheek, and before he arose, often it would turn and come from the starboard. This he would do many a night. “I did not think it strange or wonderful,” said he, “I supposed He answered every body’s prayer just so. I never thought of doubting His faithfulness and His readiness to answer my prayer.” Thus he went on through the voyage, constantly trusting, and praying, and rejoicing, and learning every day a new lesson in the unsearchable riches of the knowledge of Christ. His story, as he told it, ran through the congregation like a stream of electricity. He told a multitude of things, all tending to unfold the simple and child-like faith and joy in Christ which his soul possessed, and which, but for the hearty simplicity, and undeniable sincerity and truthfulness on the very

fact of it, would not have been believed. He was full of it; he would come to my room after I became acquainted with him, with a whole budget full which the Lord had taught him of the Bible and his own soul. I wish you could hear his testimony — it was as simple-hearted as a little child's. He did not know what spiritual pride was. He took not the least credit to himself, as though he were anything, or as though God had favored him especially, for he did not know but that every body thought, and felt, and trusted just as he did, and was answered just as he was. Now if Christians could testify as he could, they would exert a power well nigh irresistible — it would be most over-whelming. When he told his story, many things were so remarkable, I went and inquired of a friend who I knew was acquainted with the sailor, (it was the seaman's minister,) concerning the young man. "Ah," said the minister, "he is a true bill, depend upon it." And indeed, every body could see it was so, and yet it was remarkable, to hear a man relate so much about God from personal experience; for he had not learned it from man I assure you; no indeed, it was not what he had heard another say, but the Lord Himself had, at the opening of the door, come in, and they had sat down to a feast of fat things — to a banquet of love. O it was rich, delightful. I would rather hear him speak, than five hundred merely *learned* men, who should have no Christian experience. His very looks were preaching, and all he said was preaching of a most excellent kind, for it came direct from a heart overflowing with love, and full of the Spirit of the Lord.

**8.** There is there and here a most precious witness springing up in the church. God is never wholly without such witnesses. Blessed be His name! once in a while one will arise. And, glory to God! He is multiplying such through the land. Go through and visit the churches, and every now and then you will find a soul full; so heavenly, so Christ-like, so deeply in communion with God — listen to its experience, and you will seem to be fanned by the wings of angels. They are multiplying where the truth has been proclaimed in its fullness, and received in simplicity of heart. Such witnesses are bearing their testimony, and it is taking effect; and though there is much to overcome thereby, it will be overcome, as certainly as truth can affect human minds, and the Spirit can convert them.

**9.** Many Christians are afraid and ashamed to say much. They have feared to be reminded of their inconsistencies. And indeed it would be so. It is

best that such as cannot show a consistent walk, should keep silent. The stiller they keep the better, till they come and walk with God and do His will.

**10.** The relations that Christians sustain to God and the world, should be with them a most powerful argument in prayer to God. I fear Christians do not enough consider this, that they may come to God and say reverently — O Lord, Thou hast required such and such a thing of me, to testify for Thee, Thou wilt call me as a witness for Thee — now Lord, make me able to testify, let me know Thee, bring me into Thy pavilion and let me be ravished with Thy love. O, teach me the hidden glories of Thy word, that I may be able to speak what I know, to testify what I have seen. Make up your mind, Christian, be single-hearted, and go to God and say — O Lord, I wish to bear emphatic testimony, so that men shall be constrained to believe — urge it on the Lord, and rely on His word, expecting to be heard. This is a most cogent argument at the throne of grace, one that will prevail with God for you.

**11.** God's witnesses should realize that they are watched on every hand — that they are watched for inconsistencies — that there is a continual endeavor to impeach them as witnesses, to destroy their credibility. And if any thing can be found in the least degree erroneous — that can throw any shadow of doubt over your testimony, it will surely be taken up. Bear this in mind, and take care to live so, and speak so that they shall be compelled to say, however their hearts may writhe under it, that you are in the right.

**12.** There is nothing so fatal to a party in court, as the failure of its own witnesses through ignorance, or inconsistent testimony, or perfidy. Where a party's own witnesses know nothing of his case, or tell contradictions, or will not tell what they know, how can he maintain his cause? Who shall stand up for him?

**13.** Since God throws Himself upon our integrity, and uprightness, and candor, we should consider where we are. Consider, God casts His cause on you, Christians, 'Ye are My witnesses,' 'Ye are My witnesses.' How deeply should you realize your position; how you should be weighed down with the burden of your responsibility — with the importance of knowing all you may know, of testifying all you may testify, of bearing so



straight forward and unassailable a testimony as to carry conviction irresistibly to all around you.

**14.** Christians should remember that they are always under oath. The making a profession is, so to speak, taking an oath for God. They are bearing testimony all the time, are all the time on the stand in court, before the judge, and jury, and bystanders, constantly under the eye of those who are to decide the case. This should be borne in mind. There is no discharge in this suit while life lasts.

**15.** *Professors* will of course be considered as witnesses, whether God calls them or not. Your testimony, professor, will be taken, though you be only a false one. How fearful is your position if you have made a profession of religion — the eyes of the world, of God, of all are upon you; your deposition will be written, counted upon, read in court, have its weight in settling the question in the mind of those concerned in the issue. How incalculably important for you to remember who and what you are.

Brethren, do we live, act in such a manner that those around us, by taking knowledge of us, by taking pattern of us, shall get and exhibit a true picture of religion? How solemn a question this is! What a responsibility is assumed by ministers and young men preparing for the ministry, and by all young people educating for the Christian field! What a cloud of witnesses are here! What testimony might here be given. Are you resolved, young men, young women, that nothing shall be wanting in your testimony, in your life, in your experience, that can be obtained by the utmost diligence on your part? Are you resolved? If you are, how shall we rejoice to lend you all the help possible in effecting your noble purpose, to fit you to go out and proclaim aloud your testimony. But if you are only serving yourself and the devil, if you are seeking your own, and not the things of Christ, how much will your labor and our labor be misapplied. How are we mis-employed in fitting you — for what? For what? To fight against God and good in the world, and then be food for the flames of hell! A church is a cloud of witnesses — this people is a host of witnesses. And if ever a people were looked upon as witnesses, this is the people. Your testimony, whatever it be, is going out through all the land; the church and the world are hearing it; when one of you falls, the tale is told with trumpet-tongue through America, through Europe, in the islands of the sea.

The missionaries in the far off isles hear it and mourn, from the rising to the setting sun. O, brethren, how shall we give such a testimony as to be heard till holiness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea?

# WEIGHTS AND BESETTING SINS

*“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.”*

— *Hebrews 12:1*

In discussing this subject I shall,

- I. SHOW WHAT RACE IS HERE SPOKEN OF.**
- II. WHAT IS AT STAKE.**
- III. THE CONDITIONS OF WINNING IN THIS RACE.**

## I. WHAT THIS RACE IS

In this text the apostle manifestly alludes to the Olympian and Isthmian games which were celebrated in the East, and with which his readers were familiar. As these games were extensively known, he often alludes to them, to illustrate the truths of Christianity. These games originated in the policy of government, to develop the physical powers of their subjects, and give them the greatest possible efficiency. Before gunpowder came into use, success in war depended much more than it now does upon the physical power and dexterity of an army. Armies then met hand to hand with swords, spears and war-clubs, bows and arrows, and crossbows, and all those weapons to wield which required great physical energy and strength. Consequently it entered into the policy of governments to cultivate physical development as much as possible. For this purpose schools were established for training men to run foot-races, to handle the spear, the sword and the shield, and engage in all those exercises which serve to develop the muscular system to the utmost. In order to give great popularity to this system of exercises, these games were established and sustained by the highest civil authorities; even kings attended their celebrations. Great preparations were made for months and even years beforehand, by the most careful training of the competitors. Some of these games were foot races, it being in those times a matter of great importance

that men should be able to run with great speed and for a long time. Alongside of the whole race-ground, seats were erected rising one above another, affording accommodations for an immense number of spectators. Indeed the great mass of the population of whole kingdoms was assembled on these occasions. When these seats, forming a vast amphitheater on either side, were all filled with spectators they might be called a “great cloud of witnesses.”

The competitors in these games, of course made great preparations for running. Their dress, if indeed they wore any, was so arranged as to give every muscle the fullest play. Every thing was carefully avoided that might in the least prevent the freest and fullest exertion of their entire strength. They laid aside every encumbrance; exercised themselves daily; observed the utmost temperance in all their habits; in short, neglected nothing that was supposed to be conducive to their utmost speed.

Several things were to be attended to in running the race.

- 1.** They must start right, or according to rule.
- 2.** They must run the race through. If they started right, ran according to rule, and came out ahead of their competitors, they were crowned. Otherwise not.

Now in this passage the apostle manifestly alludes to these races, with which, comparing the Christian life, he calls it a race. The Christian life is also sometimes called a fight or battle. It is a great conflict, waged with the world, the flesh and the devil. The apostle’s design is to bring out the truth that in order to be successful in winning the race, we must make the utmost exertion.

It is the Christian race then that is here spoken of, or that struggle with the world, the flesh and the devil, with which every Christian is familiar, and through which he must pass to win the crown.

## II. I AM TO SHOW WHAT IS AT STAKE IN THIS RACE

The prize is a crown of eternal glory. It includes all that is honorable and glorious in heaven — to share with Christ in His glory; to sit down with Him on His throne; to become kings and priests unto God; to be God's adopted children and have mansions in His palace; to sit at His table and enjoy all the honors and blessedness of sonship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

## III. THE CONDITIONS OF WINNING IN THIS RACE

The first condition mentioned in the text is, that we lay aside every weight. This race or conflict is mental, not physical; it belongs to the mind and not to the body. We inquire therefore what is to be regarded as a weight or unnecessary encumbrance in running this race; I answer,

**1.** *All unnecessary business.* By this I mean any kind or degree of business to which we are not manifestly called by the providence of God. Any business in kind or amount to which we are manifestly called by the providence of God, and to which we attend with a single eye to His glory, is not inconsistent with our running the race, is not to be regarded as a weight, but as a part of our business and duty as Christians, and therefore as part of the race itself. But when a man engages in any business, however great or small, to which he is not thus called, he then takes an unnecessary burden upon himself. It is a dead weight upon him — nay, he cannot run at all with this business upon him because it is selfishness, and he has already apostatized from God and gone over to the serving of himself.

He has no right to do, say, or be anything more or less than that to which God calls him. If he undertakes any selfish business, or takes any more or less upon him than duty to God requires, he is then out of God's service, and consequently can no more win in this race, than a man could win in the Olympic games if he ran right the other way, instead of running towards the goal. Let it be forever remembered that for a man to undertake any

business in kind or amount which according to his best judgment is not for the glory of God and is not designed for His glory, is actual apostasy from God, and is a weight that must be laid aside or the soul cannot be saved.

**2.** Whatever draws unnecessarily upon our time is a weight that must be laid aside. All our time is God's; all to be consecrated to Him. Whatever is suffered to occupy a day, an hour, or even a moment of our time that is not demanded by our duty to God, is a weight that just so far hinders our progress in the Christian race. Suppose a racer in the Olympian games should suffer himself to be hindered by the compliments of the spectators; suppose he should stop to receive and return the salutations of his friends and acquaintance as he passed along; and thus lose time and distance instead of tasking his powers every moment — could he win the race? Now it should be forever understood that whenever a man suffers his time to run to waste, or to be desecrated from the service of God — whenever he suffers his time to be occupied with any other than God's business, he then takes upon himself a weight that must be laid aside, or he will never win the race.

**3.** All engrossments of every kind to which we are not called by the word, or Spirit, or providence of God, are to be laid entirely aside as weights. We have no business to be engrossed with anything to which we are not called by God Himself, whose servants we are. Our whole time, talents, powers, and all are His. The employment of our thoughts, and all our powers is to be entirely for Him.

Whenever therefore we take on our hands or on our minds any engrossments to which God does not call us, we have forsaken the service of God, and are employed by somebody else, or in other words we are engaged in serving ourselves instead of God. But this again renders it just as impossible to win the race, as it would be in the Olympic games if the racer should run in the opposite direction from the goal.

**4.** Whatever demands our attention, to which we are not called by God Himself, is to be given up as a weight.

God demands that we give our whole attention to His business, to glorify Him, to obey His commands and promote His interests. We have no right therefore to give any part of our attention to that to which He has not

called us. Anything therefore that unnecessarily takes up the attention of our minds, that is, every thing that is not a part of God's business, must be laid aside as weights.

**5.** Whatever engrosses our affections is a weight, and must be laid aside, or we can never win the crown. God demands that our supreme affections should be placed on Himself. Whenever we suffer them to be engrossed by any other object whatever, we have then encumbered ourselves with a weight that must be laid aside.

**6.** All unnecessary cares and burdens are to be considered as weights which must be laid aside. The real wants of human beings are exceedingly simple. And in general they have but few cares, unless they unnecessarily take them upon themselves. And we have no right to load ourselves down with a multitude of cares and burdens that don't belong to the service of God. Any cares and burdens to which God calls us, we may lay on Him who careth for us. But where we engage in matters to which He does not call us, and when we take burdens which He does not impose on us, it is tempting God to pretend to lay these on Him. We must therefore assume no cares, and no burdens that we cannot cast on the Lord. Whenever we voluntarily undertake that which is a matter of perplexity, carefulness, and anxiety to which He does not call us, we are out of God's business. We have taken burdens that we cannot bear and win the race.

**7.** All unnecessary furniture and equipage are to be laid aside as a burden which we cannot bear. See! that woman has to be engaged from morning till night, to see that the useless articles of furniture and trumpery with which her house is filled, are cleaned and dusted, and in good order. She runs from room to room with her dusting cloth, or calls her hired help from room to room, to see that her chairs and bureaus, her sofas and her side boards, and a hundred other things for show and not for use are kept in due order. A great house, much furniture, a small family and little company, and a multitude of things never really needed and seldom used. O! what a burden that woman has taken upon herself, and certainly God has not called her to it. Now can she have all this unnecessary care on her mind and get to heaven? I trow (think) not. And see that man; how he struggles to get along in his Christian race with that mass of useless equipage on his back! Surely God is not so cruel as to task him to run with such a load.

**8.** The care of all unnecessary property is to be laid aside as a weight.

By unnecessary property I mean that which is not and cannot be managed for the glory of God and the good of souls. I have often thought of a remark of the celebrated Mr. Law. In discoursing upon the folly and wickedness of endeavoring to be rich, he says that a man who labors to lay up one hundred thousand pounds sterling is just as unreasonably employed as if he were endeavoring to lay up one hundred thousand pairs of boots and spurs. It would require all his time to keep them from molding, rusting, and spoiling. He would never wear but few of them and they would occupy his whole time in preserving them. Just so with one hundred thousand pounds; a man can never use it, and it is a great deal of trouble to take care of it. He must occupy nearly his whole time in his counting room and with his books, notes, bonds, and mortgages, and musty papers, and what profit can his one hundred thousand pounds be to him? Why, it is only a burden which if he attempts to carry, will ruin his soul. All property therefore which is above a bare competency, and over and above what is sacredly consecrated to the service and glory of God, held and used for Him, is a weight that must be laid aside, or it is impossible to win the crown.

**9.** All unnecessary articles of dress are to be regarded as weights. Where a man or woman has a large wardrobe to over-haul, and see to, much wearing apparel to be cleansed and aired, and altered, and attended to, it engrosses the thoughts, takes up the time, is an object of care, and a weight that must be laid aside.

**10.** Fashion is another weight that must be laid aside. What a multitude are busy a great part of their time, as the different seasons follow each other in rapid succession and as the ever fluctuating fashions are introduced, in altering their dresses, making changes, getting new ones and disposing of old ones, running here and there shopping, conversing about the newest fashions, the most tasteful colors, the best milliners, and mantua-makers and tailors, and all the world of gossip and folly which engages the world of fashionables. Who can run the Christian race with a mind filled with such things as these? Who does not perceive at once that persons thus engaged are not consecrated to God? God has never called them to this service and these engrossments. This is selfishness and must ruin the soul.



And it is impossible ever to win a crown of glory by living such a life as this.

**11.** Unnecessary attendance upon company is often a great weight. It is often a great tax on a person's time to receive such a multitude of calls and complimentary visits, and have so many protracted conversations inflicted upon us as is often the case. Christians should always make their arrangements, so as to dispense as far as possible with all unnecessary company. They should be ever ready to exercise hospitality to the utmost of their ability, should receive their friends and be cordial in entertaining strangers, but withal should discountenance all unnecessary drafts on their time in any way whatever. It should be remembered that all waiting on company, receiving and entertaining company, or making visits for company's sake, to which we are not manifestly called by the providence and will of God, is a weight that must be laid aside.

**12.** All unnecessary reading is also to be laid aside. By unnecessary reading I mean all reading that is not necessary to our highest usefulness and well-being. Everything that is over and above this we are not called to, by the will of God. It absorbs our attention, is a waste of time, and often much worse than a waste, as it encumbers our minds with a multitude of things that are inconsistent with our highest holiness and usefulness.

**13.** All unnecessary conversation is to be regarded as a weight. It is surely a great burden to be obliged to keep our tongues from running. Many persons seem to talk for talk's sake, and to gratify a loquacious spirit. And they will often intrude upon you with some protracted conversation about nothing or that which is as good as nothing, greatly to the hindrance of your spiritual life. Now it should be remembered that our tongues are to be used only to the glory of God, and to the use of edifying, that for every idle word we must give an account in the day of judgment.

All unnecessary conversation should therefore be avoided as entirely inconsistent with growth in grace, and with running our spiritual race. "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain."

**14.** Everything in short to which we are not providentially called and which is not therefore a part of our duty as Christians, would be regarded

as a weight and be laid aside. Whatever is inconsistent with or not conducive to our highest usefulness should be regarded as a weight, and at once laid aside.

**15.** There is another thing to which I must call attention that may be regarded as rather of a delicate nature, I mean all untimely and unsuitable love affairs. Few things more completely engross the mind than love affairs among young people. Now, whenever circumstances are such that the providence of God makes it a duty to seek a wife, or to become a wife, these things are lawful, may be committed to God and attended to without distraction. But whenever the affections are engrossed with such affairs, where there is no call in providence to such a course, it is a grievous weight that must be laid aside. Oh! how much time is spent in brooding over such matters, in reading letters, and in all the multitude of engrossments of thought and feeling, and all the powers of the mind. These things must be laid aside, they don't belong to the service of God, because in the case supposed, there is no providential call for the mind's being given up to such matters; indeed where the mind is thus given up without consulting God and without being called in the course of divine providence to turn the attention in this direction, it is a real abandonment of the service of God, and making provision for the flesh. It is a real heart apostasy. It is an endeavor to please ourselves and not God. To win the crown in this way is impossible. Indeed the object is not to win a crown, but to win a lady; to win a wife or a husband, and that too, not for the glory of God, but to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

*A second condition on which we can win in this race is that we lay aside all our besetting sins.* A besetting sin is one to which on account of our constitution, or circumstance or both, we are peculiarly exposed, and into which we most easily and most frequently fall. Among these are;

**1.** Ill temper. This is one of the most easily besetting sins of most people. On account of their constitution or health or circumstance it is remarkable to see how many persons frequently become angry. This is a sin which so easily besets many persons, that they seem to be thrown out of balance, and to get angry, and often times to be filled with wrath on the slightest occasions. This must be laid aside.

**2.** Fretfulness is another easily besetting sin. This is anger but in a milder form. It is a peevish, passionate state of mind. Many persons who will seldom be filled with wrath or manifest what is generally called anger, are, nevertheless, extremely given to fretting. This must be laid aside.

**3.** Covetousness is another easily besetting sin. This is selfishness in a peculiar form. Some persons seem to lust after or to covet every thing they see, especially every thing that is a little superior to what they have themselves. A horse, a carriage, a farm, a house, a dress, or anything which exceeds their own things, they covet; little realizing that this is an easily besetting sin. Now all these desires indulged, are entirely inconsistent with running the Christian race. And whoever will notice the operations of his own mind, will find they always destroy his peace of mind, and communion with God. And whenever men indulge the wish of having this, or that, or the other thing, to the possession of which God does not call them, they are always out of the way, and should thrust such temptations entirely aside, or they can never run the Christian race.

Some persons seem never to be satisfied with what they have, but are always lusting after more and better things, just as long as any of their acquaintances have them. As the scripture says, "They enlarge their desire as hell." Now God often gives them their desire, but sends leanness into their souls. Have you never observed this, that when you have set your heart very much on having something which you did not possess, when you get it, it is a snare to your soul, engrosses your thoughts and time, and leads you away from God?

**4.** Another easily besetting sin is avarice. Avarice is a disposition to hoard up property. Some persons are so much disposed to this sin, that an opportunity to make a good bargain, a speculation, is a great temptation to them. There is a constant tendency in their minds to selfishness in this form. But this must be restrained and put away, or we shall never get to heaven.

**5.** Dishonesty is another easily besetting sin. Some persons find it extremely difficult to be upright and honest in what they say and do. They are tempted to little, petty frauds and over-reaching in almost everything, and frequently fall before these temptations. They are not sincere and honest with themselves in their religious matters, nor upright with God. In

short, they strongly tend to a hypocritical state of mind. We cannot run a Christian race successfully without putting this entirely away.

**6.** Falsehood is another easily besetting sin of many people. They do not seem to possess a truthful spirit. They do not appear to love truth for its own sake, but are very prone to give a false coloring to almost every thing they say. The lights and shades are thrown in at their own discretion, in such a way as to make a false impression. Now this sin so easily besets some people, that I never know exactly what to believe from what they say.

**7.** Trespassing on other's rights, is another easily besetting sin. It is astonishing to see what a tendency there is in some minds to trespass on other's grounds, by crossing their field perhaps with a team without permission, leaving down their fences, and committing trespasses on their rights in a great variety of ways, apparently without the least compunction of conscience. They go into their neighbor's land and get timber for wood and other purposes without leave, which is really stealing. Indeed it is surprising to see to what an extent many persons will go in disregarding the rights of those about them. They seem to be supremely selfish, and almost supremely reckless, and to go just as far as they think they can without its destroying their character, or reacting on them in a lawsuit. A person of this spirit can no more get to heaven than Satan can, unless he lay aside this state of mind, and cherish a most sacred regard for his neighbor's rights.

**8.** Unfaithfulness in business is another easily besetting sin of many persons. They are not faithful to God in their own business, and never pay that sacred regard to it which their duty to God requires. They do not seem to understand that they are the clerks and agents of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He expects in them the most entire promptness and faithfulness. They are exceedingly loose, and reckless, and inattentive to business. If they are employed by others as clerks, agents, or laborers, either within doors or without, they are eye-servants, feeling little or no responsibility, attending to nothing only for the sake of wages. They are thus exceedingly unfaithful to their employers and to God, and never can get to heaven with such a state of mind as this. It is sheer selfishness and injustice, and anything but religion.

**9.** Slothfulness is another easily besetting sin of many persons. Multitudes are really too lazy to be religious. Every where in the bible the Christian life is represented as a race, a conflict, that to which the utmost attention must be given, and about which all the faculties of the mind are to be strenuously employed. It is represented as a life of the utmost activity; as much so as the foot races and conflicts in the games to which the text alludes. Now can a slothful person get to heaven? No. All the winds, and waves, and tides of this world's influence set right towards hell, and nothing but girding up our loins and addressing our whole being to the work, will ever enable us to stem the tides, overcome the obstacles, win the prize, and plant our feet on the hills of glory.

**10.** Tale bearing is another besetting sin of many persons. God has said, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among the children of my people." There are some persons that seem to be so big with every secret which they may chance to know, that they are in agony till they can run about and tell it. They are in the habit of running up and down to tell the news. They are literally tale-bearers. They carry not the newspapers, but the unwritten gossip of the village and the neighbors. Such a person is a pest to society and a sinner, and must lay aside this easily besetting sin if he would ever get to heaven.

**11.** Evil speaking is another easily besetting sin. By evil speaking I mean, speaking of the real or supposed faults of others behind their backs; speaking that which is to their discredit, without being plainly called to it by providence. This is really slander in the spirit of it, whether the things spoken are true or false. It is totally inconsistent with the law of love, in doing by others as we would they should do to us. Consequently it is a sin, and with many an easily besetting sin. It must be laid aside or the race can never be won.

**12.** Levity is another easily besetting sin. Some persons, and indeed many persons are so much given to jesting, tittering, laughing, and idle gossip as not only to dissipate all the solemnity of their own minds, but to be sore temptations to all around them. Levity of mind is exceedingly inconsistent with the Christian religion. Triflers do not get to heaven. Let that be always remembered, and if you are given to this folly, lay it aside or you will lose your soul.

- 13.** Envy is another easily besetting sin of many persons. When they see others rising above themselves in wealth, influence, intellectual or moral improvement; when they see others more beautiful, more humble, or more esteemed than themselves, they lust to envy. This shows a state of mind entirely inconsistent with the love of God and our neighbor. It must be entirely laid aside, denounced, and repented of as sin, or it can never be forgiven.
- 14.** Jealousy is an easily besetting sin of many persons. By this I mean a suspicious temper. Some persons are exceedingly given to it. They seem to be constantly on the watch to see if they are not in some way slighted, if some other persons are not preferred to them, if something is not kept a secret from them which others are led to know. This state of mind manifests itself in a thousand ways, and is always a hateful temper, and must be laid aside as a besetting sin.
- 15.** Ambition is an easily besetting sin of many persons. This sin takes on a great many forms. It often manifests itself among students, in a desire to rise above others in their class in the esteem of their teachers, in intellectual developments. It is a hydra-headed sin, and seems to be common to a great many persons, from the emperor on his throne, down to the slave who labors in his chains. You will see it in the common school, the college, the theological seminary, the pulpit, at the bar, on the bench, behind the counter, on a military field, everywhere where human beings are. This must be put away.
- 16.** Intemperance in eating, is an easily besetting sin of great multitudes of persons. When a person eats more in quantity, or that in quality which is inconsistent with the laws of life and health he is guilty of intemperance. Intemperate eating is as really a sin, as intemperate drinking, and as really inconsistent with salvation.
- 17.** Intemperate drinking. There is such a thing as drinking water intemperately, at times and in quantities which are exceedingly injurious to health. All use of stimulating drinks which is inconsistent with the most healthful operations of all the functions of life, is intemperance. God commands us to be temperate in all things. But it has come to pass in these days, that nothing is regarded as intemperance, but some of the most flagrant forms of it; such as the use of intoxicating drinks. Let it be

remembered that every violation of the laws of life and health, to which we are not called by the providence of God, is intemperance. A man may be so circumstanced as to be under the necessity of both eating and drinking things that are not naturally wholesome, of exercising or resting under circumstances that will violate the laws of life and health. But when providence calls to this, it is not sin, and therefore is not the sin of intemperance.

**18.** Pride in vanity and dress, is another easily besetting sin. Persons are always guilty of this, when they put on that which they would not indulge in, were they expecting to receive a personal visit from the Lord Jesus Christ.

**19.** All fleshly indulgences are sins, and with most persons easily besetting sins. We are required to make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God, and not for the sake of gratifying our appetites and passions. Self-indulgence is always selfishness and always sin. The spirit of self seeking, and self-indulgence must be put away, and whatever we do must be done from a higher motive than to please and gratify ourselves.

**20.** Unbelief is another easily besetting sin; none more common, and none more fatal than this. How infinitely strange it is, that this should be an easily besetting sin. It shows the great degradation of fallen human nature. That we should so basely distrust infinite truth, and disbelieve Him whom we acknowledge cannot lie. This is the grossest of all absurdities, and the most unreasonable of all abominations in the world, and yet seems to be the most easily besetting sin of all mankind. But it must be put away, or damnation is certain.

**21.** Every neglect of duty must be put away, or we cannot be saved. Some persons are ready to acknowledge that such and such things are their duty, but they will make the acknowledgment with entire indifference, while they neglect the duty. Now this course is as fatal as death itself. How can they be saved who acknowledge their obligations, and yet refuse to discharge them? who make their religion consist rather in confessing that they do not do their duty, than in discharging it? This will not do. Christ will not be satisfied with our confessing what we ought to do, and that we do not do it. Shall we recklessly turn away from what we ought, and do

that which we ought not to do? It is true that confession is a duty; but who so confesseth and *forsaketh*, shall have mercy.

*The third condition on which the race may be won is that we start right.*

The first thing is to be born again. Unless persons are truly regenerated by the Spirit of God, they run in vain. For in fact, they are not in the way. They are running in a wrong direction altogether, and of course will run in vain.

*The fourth condition is that you run lawfully.*

You must keep the commandments of Christ. You must live a life of faith on the Son of God. You must learn to walk by faith and not by sight. Christ everywhere makes obedience to His commandments the only evidence of acceptance with Him. The Apostle says, and in other places it is asserted, that they that run in a race are not crowned except they run lawfully, that is, according to the rules of the races. Nor shall we win the prize unless we comply with Christ's directions. He is the judge. So run therefore that you may obtain.

*The fifth condition of winning the prize is perseverance to the end.* The Bible everywhere conditionates salvation on perseverance in holiness to the end of life. So does the text — “And run with patience, that is, perseverance, the race that is set before us.” Let this be ever remembered.

*The sixth condition is deep earnestness and honesty in religion.* No man will, according to Christ's direction, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, make this the first and the great business of his life, unless he is deeply honest and in earnest on the subject.

*The seventh condition is entire consecration of our lives to the service and glory of God.* Nothing short of entire consecration is real honesty and hearty sincerity in the work.



## REMARKS

- 1.** It is fatal to encumber ourselves with any thing that is inconsistent with a holy, spiritual life. Anything that is inconsistent with our daily walking with God, is entirely inconsistent with our obtaining salvation.
- 2.** From this subject we can see the madness and folly of great multitudes of professors of religion. What would be thought of a racer in the Olympic games who should load himself down with sand, or clay, or iron, or copper, or silver or gold, or should impede the action of his muscles by tight dressing and lacing? Or suffering his time or thoughts to be engrossed with things entirely inconsistent with his making the utmost exertion. Now it appears to me that a great many professors of religion misapprehend the true nature of religion, and what is indispensable to their ever obtaining a crown of glory, Here is one man running the Christian race with an enormous load of unnecessary business on his back; and here is a woman attempting to run the Christian race laced up in such a manner as to be entirely unable to make any exertion. Should she attempt to make any extraordinary exertions, she would fail for want of breath. She has loaded herself down with trinkets and everything that is inconvenient for the race set before her. There is a man with his enormous pockets full of silver and gold, with an immense bundle of papers under his arm, a tin chest of bonds and mortgages, certificates of bank stock, and multitudes of things strapped on his back. There is another trying to run the Christian race, and driving a whole company of negro slaves before him. He is determined to get to glory, and not to leave his slave property behind. There is another with a monstrous brewing establishment, and another with a whiskey distillery on his shoulders. And in short, we see the racers coming on to the ground, with every variety of fantastic encumbrance on them — with all the weights and besetting sins that the devil could desire them to have, in order to prevent their winning the prize. Now let me say that the conduct of such professors of religion is not only most unreasonable, but so highly ridiculous as to be a mere burlesque on the Christian religion. It is the greatest libel and stumbling block that can be conceived.

- 3.** Until you are prepared to make every needed sacrifice, to cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye if it causes you to offend, you are never likely to win in this race.
- 4.** You see the importance of counting the cost. It will cost you much to be truly religious. You can obtain a hope. You can pass for a Christian. You can gain a reputation with a worldly church, of being a disciple of Christ. But mark well what I say and what Christ says, except a man forsake all that he hath, he cannot be a disciple of Christ's. Selfishness under every form and in every degree must be cut up root and branch and put away entirely and forever, or you will make shipwreck of your soul.
- 5.** From this subject we see the misery of creating such a multitude of artificial wants among mankind, and the necessity of simplifying as much as possible all our business and all our domestic arrangements, so as to leave the mind as unembarrassed as possible, and to give ourselves as much time as we need to cultivate that deep spirituality which is indispensable to salvation.
- 6.** We see the folly of undertaking responsibilities to which we are not plainly called by our Heavenly Father. These are not things with which we should encumber ourselves, let them be what they may. We should never suffer ourselves to be brought into circumstances of responsibility, to which we are not plainly called in providence. If we do, these will assuredly be stumbling blocks to us. We cannot pray for the blessing, and direction and support of God; and without His direction and support we shall fall, and make shipwreck of our souls.
- 7.** The doctrine of this discourse is not to be admitted merely as a matter of theory, and we cannot get to heaven by merely saying this is true, and we ought to do so and so and then go as we have done. But let it be understood, we must really and in fact lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience — or, as it should have been rendered, perseverance, the race that is set before us. To acknowledge the obligation and not to comply with it, is fatal. Let this always be understood; when we acknowledge our duty, we must do it, or we have no right to expect the crown. Beloved, let us see to this.

# THE OLD MAN AND THE NEW

*“That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” — Ephesians 4:22-24*

It will be my object in speaking upon this text to show,

- I. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE OLD MAN.**
- II. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE NEW MAN.**
- III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN PUTTING OFF THE ONE AND PUTTING ON THE OTHER.**
- IV. SUNDRY MISTAKES OFTEN MADE ON THIS SUBJECT.**

## I. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE OLD MAN

**1.** There are two sources from which all human activity, or in other words, all mental life flows. I use the term, life, now, just as we do when we apply it to the body. In the latter case we mean by it the activity, or rather the active state of the various organs. This is life; its opposite, death, is the cessation of activity, and a passing out of that state in which action is the law of our existence into another in which absolute inaction is the law.

Applying the term life now to the mind, we mean to denote its active state; and our remark is that there are two and only two ultimate causes or springs of all this activity; one, fallen human nature; the other, the Spirit of God.

Mental activity is first developed through our connection with a physical body. The new-born infant has constitutional wants; its appetites demand gratification; and its mind is thus first aroused to exercise. Here human nature begins to develop mental activity. We would not be understood to imply that this first action of the infant is sinful; it manifestly is not unless the intelligence is so far developed as to take cognizance of right and wrong; — the Bible every where assuming that some knowledge of

obligation must be present, or sin cannot be. All that we can say now on this point is that our earliest mental activity is prompted by our connection with the body; and that the constitutional demands of the body lead to indulgence which, though not sinful before any knowledge of duty exists, yet becomes the main-spring of foul selfishness when this knowledge is developed and in the very face of it we prefer to please ourselves rather than God.

Another source of mental activity is the Spirit of God. We do not mean by this that the Spirit is a *necessary* cause of mental action, in such a sense that the mind under the Spirit's influence acts of necessity and not freely; we only mean that the Spirit excites to action, and is the occasion of such action as would not take place without the Spirit. Thus the Bible represents God as working in us to will and to do, and Christians as walking with the Spirit, or after the Spirit and not after the flesh. The Spirit begets a peculiar kind of action, the very opposite of that produced by the workings of selfishness.

**2.** The old or first man, is the carnal mind, or principle of selfishness. It begins with caring for the flesh even before its action can have any moral character, and continues to care for the flesh ever after. Hence it is called a carnal mind, or a minding of the flesh. Its characteristic feature is that its own gratification is its supreme end.

**3.** It is called a "man" because it is the hidden source and cause of outward activity. It would seem as if the Bible language contemplated a hidden agent, working underneath the visible exterior of each individual, in the one class of character producing selfish action and in the other class, the opposite. These inward-working agents — the old man and the new — correspond to the ultimate intention of the will and control all our proximate volitions in the same way that we see it done by the ultimate intention. Indeed, they are but other names for the same thing. The ultimate intention of course always governs all our voluntary conduct. We never can act without intending something; and all our lesser subordinate volitions are only the necessary result of our ultimate purpose, this ultimate purpose being always either to please ourselves or to please God.

**4.** My last remarks substantially include my text; viz., that the "*man*" in the sense of our text is the reigning disposition. It is that which the mind is

disposed, or rather which the mind voluntarily disposes and sets itself to do. The mind deliberately chooses its great end of existence — chooses the kind of good it will seek, and then of course sets itself to secure this kind of good by every means in its power. Hence arises a disposition of the mind: the mind shaping its efforts — all its mental activity to secure the good of its own ultimate end.

**5.** This is also an ultimate and efficient intention. In the form of the old man it is a deep and hearty committal of the soul to self-gratification. It controls all the activity of all unregenerate men. You do not see the old man with the external eye, but by its ceaseless development we learn its character and omnipresent agency.

## II. WHAT CONSTITUTES THE NEW MAN

**1.** It is a spiritual mind, or a disposition to please God instead of self. It is right over against the carnal selfish state. The mind is fully committed to pleasing God, so that this becomes the chief end for which the individual lives and acts. The new man is thoroughly committed to do the will of God just as the old man is to do the bidding of his carnal impulses. The former lives for God; the latter for himself.

Besides these two ultimate ends, no other can be conceived. All voluntary agents will seek to please either God or themselves. All action, therefore, results from one or the other of these ultimate intentions. And this is true not only of all men but of all other intelligent beings — of angels and of devils.

**2.** These two dispositions divide all mankind into two classes. Hence there are, as we often say, two sorts of men; and so the Bible says. The Bible represents all men as either saints or sinners; holy or unholy; spiritual or carnal; children of God or children of the devil. It makes them either old men or new men; born of the flesh, or born of the Spirit. The old state is first in order, and all pass into the channel of self-gratification which leads directly to it, unless some may be enlightened and converted by the Spirit from the womb. With this exception all others begin a course of self-gratification from their birth, which becomes sinful as soon as they know

that God forbids their making this the supreme end of their existence and yet refuse to obey God.

The new man is born of the Spirit — born from above; the Spirit of God continually begets his moral activity, leading him thoroughly to renounce self, and commit his whole being to do the pleasure of God.

**3.** The old man is corrupt according to and in compliance with the deceitful lusts. So says our text. By lust is meant in the scriptures all forms of sensual desire. It includes the entire circle of our physical propensities. All these the old man commits himself to obey. He lives for their gratification. They are called deceitful for the obvious reason that the pleasure they promise in their gratification is always delusive. They flatter only to destroy.

**4.** The new man is sometimes spoken of as being the Lord from heaven, or Christ formed in the soul. So it is, not however in the sense of a physical creation, but in this sense; Christ by His Spirit begets, produces, a state of mind in which we voluntarily commit our whole being to God. Then we become like Christ, and it is therefore as if Christ Himself were formed within us, His very Spirit and temper now reigning in our hearts, so that it seems as if Christ Himself were there, and indeed He is there by His spiritual and most efficient presence.

### III. WE ARE TO INQUIRE WHAT IS IMPLIED IN PUTTING OFF THE ONE AND PUTTING ON THE OTHER

**1.** Regeneration. This putting off the old man and putting on the new is precisely what the Bible means by regeneration. This is the change of heart of which the Bible speaks.

**2.** Perseverance is also implied. We are to continue in this state. Paul is writing to Christians and urges them to put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new man. Of course he must mean that they should continue to do what they began to do at their conversion, and maintain in constant vigor that activity which then commenced.

**3.** It implies the death of the old man. This does not mean the annihilation of the appetites and the physical constitution: no, the former body still exists, and you must eat and drink for its support no less than before. It only means that all these appetites and propensities are held under the control of God's revealed will, to be indulged only in accordance with that will. They are no longer our masters; we have no master but God.

Some on this point have run into great confusion; some have stumbled into grievous error. Holding the doctrine of physical depravity, they make the Apostle say — "Put away your constitutional appetites, annihilate the flesh; literally crucify its constitutional propensities." But the Apostle means only this: Let them not control your moral activity. Hold them evermore subordinate to the will of God.

It should be observed that these physical appetites are not necessarily the source of our activity. We may act from love and obedience to God, these appetites still existing within us; for we may indulge them only because we rightly conclude that this will please God, and only so far as this seems to be the case.

**4.** Putting off the old, and putting on the new man, implies entire consecration to God. It is equivalent to putting away all selfishness, and acting only and alone from real benevolence; renouncing the dominion of the flesh, and submitting to the dominion of the Spirit. This, of course, is entire consecration to God. There is no middle or third state. He who puts off the old man must put on the new man; for the mind will have some spring of action, some ultimate end to gain, some prime source of its activity. It must therefore turn from one of these to the other. In fact the mind never puts off the old man except that it may put on the new. We never really renounce self except when the Spirit draws us to choose God as our supreme portion.

**5.** Heavenly mindedness is implied. God and heavenly things are now its chosen objects of supreme affection, so that the mind now runs towards its chief love, as it did when this chief love was earthly good. There is now a heavenly state of mind by the same law which before produced a carnal and earthly state, namely, "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also."

- 6.** Consequently the conversation will be of heavenly things. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
- 7.** So will the thoughts also be of heaven. The mind turns toward God with delight. O, how does it dwell on the great things of God in the night watches, reposing sweetly on His universal providence, on His revealed promises, on the bosom of His ineffable love.
- 8.** The treasure is in heaven. No longer does the soul seek its chief good here. Its portion is above. A pilgrim and a stranger here, the new man seeks a better country, even a heavenly. Content to forego earth for the sake of heaven, he lets off his eager pursuit of things temporal; pursues them for a totally different end, so far as it seems his duty to pursue them at all; and really has no other God but Jehovah. His God is in heaven.
- 9.** Selfishness is put away and Christ put on in all things. This is the very essence of the Apostle's meaning. The new man put on, is the yoke of Christ taken, the Spirit of Christ imbibed and acted out; the law of love, supreme to God, and impartial to man, becomes supreme; a spirit of self sacrifice ensues, and the individual no longer asks what will gratify me, but what will please God. Now he puts on Christ, and grows up into Him in all things, studying continually to conform every thought and act to the great law of his being — imitation of Christ and obedience to His will.

## IV. WE ARE TO NOTICE SEVERAL MISTAKES INTO WHICH PERSONS ARE WONT TO FALL

- 1.** They try to reform the old man, not considering that he admits of no reform to any purpose. Just consider what the old man is — namely, a supreme intention to please self; and you will see at once that this intention can admit of no reform for the better. You may change its direction from one form of selfish indulgence to another, but such reform as this, though very common, is yet perfectly useless, for it leaves the heart as completely enslaved to sin as before. Thus, often men change the form of their selfishness without in the least changing its moral quality. A man removing from a community where one form of selfish indulgence is popular, to another where it is unpopular, will probably adapt himself to



his new circumstances, and pursue the most productive form of selfish gratification. Why not? Selfish happiness is his object; why shall he not make the most he can of it, and pursue it in the most hopeful way? This change may seem to him perhaps to be conversion, especially if he substitutes a more refined for a grosser form of selfishness; a form on which moral and Christian society frown, for one on which they smile. Yet in this very change he may be more thoroughly selfish than ever before; with this additional mischief that he is now deceiving himself, and blinding his eyes for the fatal plunge into perdition. All he has done, is just an attempt to reform the old man. It is no real reformation. He may put on a new face — it is only a mask; a new coat, a Sunday suit, but this changes not the hidden man of the heart.

2. The old and the new man in many things conduct externally alike. Both eat and drink; both use the necessaries of life, but with this broad, fundamental distinction; the one has no higher, and no other end than self gratification; while the other both eats and drinks for the glory of God. The one aims only to please himself; the other only to please God. Both may eat when hunger prompts; both may find pleasure in the gratification of the demands of nature; but while the one has no higher end than the gratification, the other finds a double relish in the gratitude of his heart to God, the giver; eats, that thereby he may have strength to live for God; and takes no more and no other food than he supposes God would have him. This makes the broadest possible distinction between the old and new man.

Again, the old man and the new man both equally may marry, and be given in marriage; yet, observe, with this broad difference in the ultimate end had in view; the old man does it to please himself, and the new man to please God. The old man, remaining old, can do this from no other end than to please himself; the new man, "*acting in the spirit of a new creature,*" can possibly have no other end than to please God.

Again, both attend apparently in the same way to the common business of life. Both may be behind the same counter, selling off the same lot of goods, at the same prices; yet one is there doing his own will, and the other doing God's will; the one pleasing his own self — the other pleasing his Master. Or, both the old man and the new may be following the plow,

each to raise the same crop, yet each with a perfectly opposite ultimate end in view; the one to gratify self, the other to gratify God. Their motives and ultimate end are just as really different now as they will be when one of them shall be in heaven and the other in hell. Then, as now, the real difference will be only this; the one is supremely selfish; the other is supremely benevolent; the one caring only to please himself, and the other only to please God.

There are two students, pursuing the same studies, in the same class, attending the same recitation; they study equally well, and may appear externally in all points alike; yet one is the old man and the other the new; the former, striving to mount up over the heads of all his class-mates, panting for fame, seeking great things for himself; but the other has bowed his whole heart to God's will, studies only because God would have him, and seeks only to please God by doing all His will.

Or take still another view. There are two young men, both preaching the gospel; both pray apparently much alike; both have the external air of piety; yet the Omniscient Eye sees one of them supremely selfish, selfish and supremely so in his prayers, for in all, his eye looks never beyond his own good. The other has crucified himself, lives now for God and for the good of his race, preaches and prays out of love to souls and love to Christ; this is a new man and the other is the old man.

**3.** Hence, the external developments being so similar, it is a common mistake not to distinguish between them. It is often impossible to know the hearts of others from mere external manifestations. For instance, you all come into this house of God to worship, apparently alike; how can I tell who of you come in the spirit of the old man and who in the spirit of the new?

Persons often fail to make this discrimination in their own case. They might know their own hearts if they would honestly and deeply search themselves, and take cognizance of their motives and of all the deep springs of their action; but often, very often they do not, and hence deceive themselves. They never go to the bottom of their own hearts.

**4.** For want of making this discrimination, hypocrites are prone to flatter themselves while yet in their own deep corruption. They put on a decent

exterior and are often comparing their life with the life of real, and spiritual Christians, inferring hence that themselves are real Christians. Indeed they often take pride in making their own external conduct quite unexceptionable, and hope to get a double reward for this good life, the gratification of their pride here and heaven hereafter.

No mistake in religion is more common or more fatal than the one of which I am speaking. Whole masses of professors go after the world in seasons of declension, that is, as soon as they can do so without disturbing their hope of salvation. They want to be as good as most others, and this they seem to suppose will bring them up into heaven with the mass. This being secured, the more they get of this world the better. How purely selfish! In a revival they wake themselves up, often tardily, yet when they must, they yield to the general influence and come along; bustle perhaps full enough for their credit and seem to reform, but this is only an attempt to reform the old man and his deeds — nothing else.

**5.** You may see the mistake often made by sinners in condemning the conduct of Christians. They condemn Christians for doing the same things as they themselves are doing. They say, “You, professedly holy men, eat and drink, buy and sell, plow and study, just as we do; wherein are you better than *we*?” The mistake is, that the wicked do not consider that while the external course is the same, the motive and the moral character of the course may be in the one case right, and in the other utterly wrong. The wicked man has no right to assume that the Christian acts from the same motives as himself, merely because he pursues the same business. This may be, and often is arrant censoriousness.

**6.** Many mistake the apathy of the old man for the peace of the new man. The old man sometimes becomes apathetic, vastly calm and indifferent to passing events, and this seems to him like that deep calm which the Christian feels because his own Father is at the helm. Nothing can be a greater mistake. The sinner’s soul is a perfect stranger to the Christian’s deep heavenly, peace-begetting trust in God.

**7.** Many mistake the zeal and legal bustle of the old man for the holy fervor of the new man. Legalists are wont to become very zealous; they strive hard to do some great thing, and often make a splendid bustle, and you would think that verily they were about to convert the world in a

twelve-month; now they look back upon these developments, and comparing themselves with active Christians they judge themselves to have the holy fervor and divine love of apostles and martyrs. Yet in fact their motives and spirit are just as unlike the real Christians as hell is unlike heaven. They are the Jehus of the Church; “come, say they, come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts.” Perhaps they really think that they outstrip most real Christians.

**8.** Often men mistake the impatience of the old man for the holy jealousy of the new man. The old man frets at sinners because they sin, feels indignant at such horrible wrong-doing; but point out to him his own sins, and press his conscience to repent and confess, and O! he does not think that wrong under his circumstances; he has nothing particular to confess. His heart is not quite so indignant against sin in himself as against sin in others. In his own case he sees various extenuating circumstances which more than alter, which quite reverse the case. Thus he reveals himself.

Yet he often takes credit to himself for holy indignation against sin. The real Christian feels a holy indignation; Christ felt it and often could not repress it; yet it was a holy jealousy for the honor of God, and not a fitful irritation against wrong doing because it might injure some of his own interests, or because it offended against his virtuous principles.

**9.** Often men fail to distinguish between the selfish sorrow of the old man and the godly sorrow of the new.

The new man remembers his former sins with great sorrow; his soul is weighed down within him and often his tears gush out in the very streets as he is reminded of his past deeds of shame and guilt; but not so the old man. He has a sort of sorrow for his old sins, especially if they have affected his reputation. But you do not see him loathing himself in his own sight for all his secret abominations. Yet he counts his own tears for sin, and things he has the sorrows of the real penitent.

**10.** Many mistake the selfish joys of the old man for the spiritual joys of the new man. The former however begin and end in selfishness; the man is pleased when good comes to himself, that is all. The latter rejoices in God, yea in God, his exceeding joy. He is happy when others get good, though himself has none.

**11.** Often people mistake the hope of the old man, for the hope of the new man. Each have their hopes. The sinner hopes to be happy in heaven — by what means is a thing of small care or thought to him. The Christian's hope is beautifully sketched by the apostle, "We know," he says, "that when Christ shall appear *we shall be like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure." The hope of the new man rests on being holy, not merely nor directly on being happy. No. His glorious hope is that he shall be perfectly, universally, eternally holy. Give him this, and you gratify the ruling passion of his soul.

**12.** A mistake is often made of the turbulence and fanaticism of the old man for the holy firmness and faithfulness of the new. See that man finding fault — how censorious, how turbulent; he can denounce everything in most unmeasured terms, yet under the self-soothing pretense of being faithful to his fellow men. He means to clear his skirts of the blood of souls, so he traduces his brethren and measures off denunciations in a most terrible manner. Yet ask him why he does this, and he will refer you to Christ and to the prophets of old who had the word of the Lord shut up in their bones; and he says, did not Christ denounce? Little is this man like Christ that is trying to cast out devils through Beelzebub. With the very spirit of Satan, he would fain drive Satan out of his brethren!

Not so the new man. He is firm and faithful, but his spirit breathes gentleness and love. I do not say that every Christian is always bold and firm, nor that all who have been converted continue through life to act out the new man and him only; happy if it were so. But while they do act the new man, they are firm without malevolence; faithful without bitter denunciation.

**13.** The effervescence of the old man is mistaken for the unction of the new man. Yet the difference between the two is most radical. In each there is excitement, yet while the one is the boiling up of a selfish heart, the other is a holy unction from heaven.

**14.** The presumption of the old man is mistaken for the faith of the new. The former often talks of his great faith, assumes to have more than his brethren, but it is all presumption; he pursues such a life and has such a spirit that he has no right to trust God for anything but damnation.

**15.** Many mistake the self-will of the old man for the conscientiousness of the new man. They are obstinate, unyielding; yet it is only self-will — a committal of the will, and not the demand of an enlightened conscience.

**16.** The constitutional tendencies of the old man are mistaken for the spiritual developments of the new man. The natural humanity and kindness, for instance, of the old man are mistaken for gospel benevolence; conscientiousness of natural character, for that conscientiousness which is created, trained and expanded in the school of Christ.

## REMARKS

**1.** None but a spiritual mind will really make the distinctions which I have been pointing out. No others care to make them; and moreover, the qualities of the new man can never be clearly apprehended without experience. Yet it is a vastly desirable attainment to be able to distinguish between what originates with self, and what originates with the Spirit of God. How rarely made! From my acquaintance with Christians, I think this point is but feebly developed. They don't distinguish between pleasing self and pleasing God. Yet no two things can be more opposite to each other, and none should be more carefully distinguished. In eating, in all labor, in study, we should be careful to know whether we are doing all to please God, or to please ourselves.

Some years since, my mind was greatly exercised on this point. Almost every waking moment the question would press upon me — Why am I doing this and why that? This led me to settle in my mind a thousand points of difficulty, and thus became of great service to my soul. How can we labor together with the Spirit of God in our own sanctification, unless we get hold of the real distinctions between holy consecration, and refined selfishness?

**2.** On this subject sinners constantly deceive and flatter themselves. They take credit for much that they do as good which is purely selfish. Thus they build themselves up on self-righteousness, but on a foundation which the last flood will sweep away and great will be the fall of it.

3. We see how and why sinners constantly misjudge Christians. They see Christians doing some of the same things externally which themselves are doing, and then they falsely judge that the Christian acts from the same motive as himself. Thus they take a flattering unction to themselves, and wrong both their Christian neighbors and their own souls.
4. The old man is constantly corrupt. There is nothing good in him. Paul might well say of the old man, 'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' No good originates there. You can say no good thing of the old man. He is wholly evil. You can place no confidence in him for anything really good. He is wholly selfish, and will do anything to carry his selfish ends.
5. No evil can be said of the new man. Understanding by this term the new, regenerate heart, it does nothing wrong. The converted person may sin, but if he does, it is because the old man is not dead, but rises up and rules, gaining a temporary ascendancy.
6. The old man is exceedingly tenacious of life. It seems as if you might kill him a thousand times and yet he lives. You gain the victory over him; you crush him down and he seems breathless; you flatter yourself he is dead and buried, but ere long up he comes — the old disgusting carcass, breathing out its fouled stench; your spiritual strength becomes weakness, and perhaps under this baleful influence, you return like the dog to his vomit. Ah! that old man, how he will live and keep coming up; and so there will be a tendency to this more or less while we are in the flesh;; we must watch, and often have to fight, and often kill our old man over and over again. Yet through Christ we may come off more than conquerors.

This leads me to say that a spiritual man is exceedingly jealous of the old man. He will always be watching his old enemy, and will never trust him at all. Yet, alas, even the spiritual are sometimes deceived by the old man and are lured into a selfish state before they are fully aware of it. But when they come to see it, O, how they loath the abomination! I have known persons so deeply disgusted with themselves for their own selfishness as actually to vomit. O, how horrid and how loathsome! That young man goes out to preach. He has prepared his sermon. But when he was studying it out and making it up, something whispered — "Now get in some choice and splendid paragraphs — this very classical and elegant

expression, that fine philosophical illustration — show the people that you are a scholar and a genius.” Well, he has made up his sermon and goes to the pulpit — spouts it off — takes good care to make a good impression for himself; at length returns to his home and his closet; there the truth flashes upon him — serving myself — serving myself — none else but self — not Christ, but my own great self! O! how he loathes this abomination! He is disgusted, and turns away from himself as if he had met the very devil! He is ready to vomit or even spit in his own face! O, young man, that is a bad business — such letting up of self — such a resurrection of the old man in your heart. Beware!

The converted man falls into selfishness, but let him see it, and how he loathes it! Horrible! Detestable! He would fain spue his very self out of his own soul!

Here you may see who is really the new man. No better test of the new life can be had than this.

Beloved, how is this with you? Does the religion you possess make you new creatures in Christ Jesus, or does it leave your old selfishness still reigning, only somewhat dressed over perhaps, and fitted out sometimes in a Sunday suit; how is this? O, there is nothing that so perils the souls of men in this Christian land and in this passing age, as a refining the manners, and polishing the exterior of the old man, till he shall pass for that new man which is truly born of God, and molded into His divine image!



# THE SIN OF FRETFULNESS

*“Fret not thyself because of evil doers.” — Psalm 37:1*

Fretfulness is a state of mind the opposite of that meekness and patient endurance which the gospel enjoins on all.

In discoursing from these words, I shall show —

- I. WHY WE SHOULD NOT FRET BECAUSE OF EVIL DOERS.**
- II. HOW TO AVOID IT.**

## I. WHY WE SHOULD NOT FRET

- 1.** Because, in fretting at the evil doing of others we do evil ourselves. Many persons seem to think that they do well to fret when others sin: for as much as they think it is meet to manifest holy indignation and zeal for the Lord of Hosts; and would say with Jonah, I do well to be angry. But such persons ought to remember, that in fretting at others for their sins, they are abusing God themselves. And surely this is a good reason why they should abstain from fretting, if by so doing, they are but adding sin of their own to that of the individual on account of whose sins they fret.
- 2.** Another reason why we should not fret because of evil doers is, that it will do no good. It certainly can do us no good to fret. It cannot benefit him at whom we fret. It does not tend to the glory of God, nor in any way to the advancement of His kingdom. Why then should we fret?
- 3.** The third reason why we should not fret because of evil doers is, that it will only add mischief to mischief. It will do us great evil; it will destroy our own peace; it will break up our communion with God; it will quench the spirit of prayer in our own hearts; it will bring us into condemnation; it will destroy our confidence in God, and destroy our respect for ourselves; it will in every way tend to the injury of our own souls.

Again, it will do great evil to others. It tends greatly to the injury of the one at whom we fret, and but exasperates and tends to make him fret in

return. It has no tendency to reform his heart, but rather to aggravate his wickedness.

Again, it tends to the injury of all who witness our fretting. It is a stumbling block to them. And perhaps our fretting is a greater stumbling block to them than the evil doing of those at whom we fret. Fretting at the evil doing of others tends only to mischief. It is dishonorable to God, and a manifest want of confidence in Him. It tends in every way to the injury of His kingdom.

**4.** If we manifest a sweet and patient spirit towards evil doers, it tends greatly to do them good. It also tends greatly to prevent the harm of their evil doing. If when they do evil we do well, and manifest a Christian spirit, our Christian temper, in some measure at least, is a set off against their evil doing. If they dishonor God by evil doing, and we highly honor Him by the manifestation of a heavenly temper, we do all we can to retrieve the injury done to the kingdom of God by the evil-doer. His evil doing tends to stumble those around him — our well doing in manifesting a heavenly temper tends to the removal of the stumbling block. Bystanders will say, to be sure here is one that has done a great evil, but another has manifested so excellent a spirit in view of it, as on the whole to strengthen my conviction of the necessity and excellence of the religion of Jesus.

**5.** Another reason why we should not fret is, that the evil doing is suffered to occur under the providence of infinite wisdom and love. God has chosen not to prevent it, but on the contrary to suffer it rather than to change the administration of His government, in such a manner as to prevent its occurrence. God has looked upon it as the least of two evils; and we ought to consider that no evil is done which could have been wisely prevented. No evil exists under the government of God but what is suffered as the less of two evils. That which daily occurs is permitted in order to prevent greater evil; and on the whole, it was wise and benevolent to suffer that thing to occur rather than to have interfered for its prevention. Why then should we fret about it?

**6.** Another good reason why we should not fret at evil doing is, because provision is made to overrule it for the glory of God and the highest good of His kingdom. “The wrath of man shall praise Thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.” All the evil in the universe has been taken into

account in the great plan of God for the promotion of the highest good of bring. He saw that in the wisest possible moral system all evil could not be prevented: consequently what He could not wisely prevent He overruled for His own glory. We can easily see in a great many instances, how God does overrule, as a matter of fact, the most flagrant transgressions for the promotion of His glory. Take the conduct of Judas in betraying Christ, and the wickedness of Satan in that affair. These were among the most flagrant transgressions the world ever saw, and yet they were instrumental in laying the cornerstone of man's salvation. God has taken occasion from these transgressions highly to honor Himself and to benefit the universe. Now although we cannot see the particular manner in which God does this in every instance, yet we may rest assured that every sin that ever does occur or ever can occur shall in some way be overruled for the promotion of the glory of God. No thanks to the sinner. He intended no such thing. He is perfectly free and responsible, and deserves to be punished just as much as though there were no overruling providence to bring good out of his intended evil. But the fact that it will be thus overruled, is a substantial reason why we should not fret about it.

**7.** Another reason is, it is Satan's object to make us fret. He understands very well the injury that we shall receive from it ourselves, and the great evil of fretting to the government of God. He is an enemy to human happiness, and loves to disturb our peace. He loves to stumble others and to see God dishonored; and understands full well that few things are more hateful in the sight of God and destructive to all good than fretting. It is therefore a prime object with him to promote as much fretfulness as possible. But shall we gratify the devil?

**8.** Another reason why we should not fret is, that the very evil doing at which we fret, is often allowed in providence, as one of the means of perfecting in us the grace of patience. Mother, did you ever consider that the trying conduct of your children is often designed to perfect the grace of patience in your soul? The Apostle says — "Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience: let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." The things at which we are so prone to fret all occur under the government of God, and are all parts of those means which God is using to perfect holiness within us.

**9.** The evil doing of others affords a good opportunity to glorify God. If in view of the evil doing of others, we manifest a God-like temper, this is highly honorable to God. What can be more lively than for a man under severe trials, to manifest the temper of Christ? When did Christ Himself ever shine more gloriously than under His severest trials? The temper which He manifested, was more glorious to God, and reflected more of the divine beauty of His character, than was manifested perhaps under any other circumstances. So when we are greatly tried with the evil doing of others, God has given us an opportunity of manifesting most of the divine temper to the world around us.

**10.** It evinces unbelief to fret. If we but realize that the hand of God is concerned directly or indirectly in everything that occurs; if we but firmly believe this, we shall not fret at the occurrences around us. No man who practically believes in the universal providence of God, will fret at the occurrences around him any more than he would fret at God Himself. He will perceive that fretting at these occurrences, is but fretting at God, and that scolding because of this evil doing, is virtually scolding at God. It is certain that God is in some way concerned in everything that occurs. Not so concerned, as to diminish in the least, the blame worthiness of the evil doer; but yet so concerned in it, that in a sense, God has done it. "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" "I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." I know that people very little realize that they are fretting at God Himself, when they are fretting at His providence, yet such is the fact, and but for their unbelief, they would at once perceive it.

**11.** Fretfulness is an expression of self-will. No man frets at what occurs around him, if his will is swallowed up in the will of God. If a man has a will of his own, and is set on having his own way, he will fret at anything that crosses his path, and opposes his inclinations. But if his will is lost in the will of God, he will recognize the universal providence of God, and having no will of his own, he will sweetly submit to all the Providences around him. He will blame the sinner and justify God, in suffering the evil doing rather than preventing it. He will look on it as something which has been permitted for wise and benevolent reasons, and will consider it highly absurd for him to fret at anything which occurs under the providence of the infinitely wise and benevolent God.

**12.** It is un-Godlike to fret at evil doers. God never frets, and why should we fret? And yet it concerns *Him* rather than ourselves, to resent wickedness. If anybody is injured vengeance belongs to Him, and not to us. But if He has good reasons for not fretting at what occurs, surely we need not fret about it. For it concerns Him infinitely more than it does us. When any trial falls in our way, we should always ask ourselves, now what is God's state of mind in view of this thing? Does He get out of patience, and suffer Himself to fret? Who would not be shocked at the idea of God's fretting at anything that occurs? Why then, should we fret?

**13.** Fretting destroys our own peace. Who does not know that the indulgence of the least fretfulness instantly breaks up the peace of our minds, brings a cloud over our spirits, and throws our souls into darkness? What Christian does not know this by his own experience? It is remarkable how easily our peace is destroyed. The least rising of impatience if indulged but for a moment, brings the spirit into rough waters, stirs up the sediment, and makes it for the time, like the troubled sea.

**14.** Fretting is also destructive to the peace of others. A fretful man is a great nuisance to all around him. Fretting seems to be contagious. If parents fret at their children, the children are almost certain to fret in return. If husbands fret at their wives, or wives at their husbands, the other is almost certain to fret in return, and thus the peace of a whole household will be continually destroyed by the wickedness of one fretful member.

**15.** Fretting grieves the Holy Spirit. He will not live where there is a fretful spirit. We are shocked and grieved if we go to a neighbor's house and find them in a fret. We feel embarrassed and uneasy, and if we find them out of humor, we retire in distress and disgust. And will not the Holy Spirit be grieved away and retire from us, if we suffer ourselves to fret in His presence?

**16.** It is destructive to our influence to fret. A fretful person can have very little Christian influence in any community. A fretful parent never governs his family well. A fretful minister, a fretful neighbor, in short, anyone that frets, destroys his Christian influence.

The common sense of mankind teaches them that fretting is the opposite of a Christian temper. And no man can have much confidence in the piety

of another who is in the habit of indulging fretfulness. Many a professed Christian parent has lost all Christian influence over his own household, by indulging in this sin. Visit any family you please, where the parents, either or both of them are professors, and are in the habit of fretting, and as a general rule, you will find their children unconverted. The family have been stumbled by them, and they remain in their sins.

It destroys man's influence with God, to fret. A fretful professor of religion can never prevail with God in prayer. The whole influence of a man's prayers, and exertions, and labors to convert others, will be lost on them, if he is known by them to indulge in fretfulness.

**17.** Indulgence in this sin, compels others to abhor us. Scarce anything is more hateful than fretting. And our nature is such, that although we may pity fretful persons, yet we cannot but abhor them. God both pities and abhors them, as He pities and abhors the devil. A mother who frets at her children, is never beloved by them. A fretful father is never loved by his family, but always secretly hated. A fretful husband or wife is never loved by the other party. If a man has a wife who is in the habit of fretting, he will find in time, that he neither respects nor loves her. Although he may be benevolent towards her, yet he cannot regard her with complacent love, but secretly loathes her, on account of her fretful temper. It is just so with the wife. If she has a fretful husband, she may fear him, she may pity him, but with complacency she cannot love him.

**18.** Fretting compels others to dread our presence. The presence of a fretful person is always to be dreaded. Scarcely anything is more annoying and loathsome than a fretful spirit. The children always dread the presence of a fretful father or mother, or of a fretful brother or sister; insomuch that if a fretful member of the family is away from home, his return is secretly dreaded.

**19.** Another reason why we should not fret is, God will take care of the evil doers. The verse immediately following the text, says: "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." They are in the hands of God. He will take care so to dispose of them, as to promote His own glory. We need not therefore fret ourselves because of their evil doings.

But again, their evil doing is of but short continuance. The verse just quoted, says: “they shall soon be cut down like the grass.” The triumphing of the wicked is short, and his evil doing in this life is but for a moment. God will remove him just as soon as He sees it wise to do so. When He can no longer overrule his wickedness to promote the general good, He will cut him off and put him out of the way. We often wonder why evil doers live so long, and are suffered through so many years to provoke the majesty of God, and to scatter fire-brands, arrows, and death through the world. But we have no reason to wonder at this, for God sees the end from the beginning, and suffers them to live and do evil just so long as He can make their evil conduce in some way to some good, and no longer. And should they live a thousand times as long as they do, and do a thousand times as much mischief as they do, this would be no reason why we should fret, for God will husband the whole matter in a manner promotive of the highest good of beings.

**20.** Another reason why we should not fret at evil doers, is because they are among the “all things that work together for good to them that fear God.” How often can we see that the trials into which we fall, the temptations of Satan, and the wickedness of men around us, are working together on the whole, for our edification and growth in grace. We thus learn many lessons which we could learn in no other way. What Christian has not thanked God for making Satan in many instances so useful to him? Or if Christians have not done this, what Christian has not reason to do it? I can plainly see that from my greatest trials, I have often learned the most useful lessons of my life. And I have often been led to thank God for all the abuses and temptations of wicked men and devils.

**21.** Another reason why we should not fret is, the things at which we fret, are not worth fretting about. By this I do not mean that the sins of evil doers are not great and grievous sins, and in themselves greatly to be hated and deplored; but I mean that on the whole, considering the overruling providence of God and all the circumstances of the case, they are not worth fretting about. Did we see the end from the beginning as God sees, we should no doubt see this to be true. If they were worth fretting about, God would fret about them. But if He is perfectly calm and unruffled by them, if He has no good reasons for impatience and fretfulness in view of

them, we may rest assured that there is no reason why we should fret at them.

**22.** The last reason I will mention is , that fretting makes us the very sport of Satan. Indulging fretfulness gives it all the power of habit, and when once the habit of fretting is formed, Satan is almost sure of his prey. He knows full well, that at any time he can seduce us from our steadfastness, and bring us into bondage. And such an enemy is he to our peace, and to our souls, as to take an infernal satisfaction in spending his leisure hours in causing us to fret. He loves to throw us into a tempest of fretfulness, and then tell it in hell, and excite a laugh in the infernal regions, at the fact that we profess religion, and yet are so easily provoked to fretfulness.

## II. I COME NOW TO SHOW, HOW TO AVOID FRETFULNESS

**1.** *Sink into the will of God.* Acknowledge and consider the universal providence of God. And know, that He is working all things after the counsel of His own will. Sink therefore into His will and learn to be sweetly and universally submissive. This is a sure antidote against fretfulness.

**2.** *Have faith in the wisdom and benevolence of the providences of God.* Settle down with your whole soul on the truth that everything that does or can occur, occurs under the direct or indirect control of infinite wisdom and benevolence. Let this be settled as an omnipresent truth, stable as the foundations of the universe, that nothing ever did, or ever will occur in the universe of God, that is not suffered, and in some sense brought about by the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness; that all this is perfectly consistent with the liberty and blame-worthiness of evil doers.

**3.** *Be self-possessed.* It is of great importance to cultivate the habit of being calm and self-possessed, under the various trials with which we are surrounded. It is often important not to suffer yourself to speak a word till you have had time to think, and lift up your heart to God in prayer. Sometimes when I have felt it a duty to say something (to a person of an irritable temper) which I feared might induce fretfulness, I have found it



useful to preface what I had to say with the request that he would not answer a word, nor speak on the subject, till he had had time for reflection and prayer. In such cases it is observable that persons will seldom fret when they come afterwards to converse upon it. Whereas had they made immediate reply, they would probably have been overcome by their temper.

Christian parents would often find it useful when they have anything to communicate to their children which they know will be a great trial to them, to request them before they make the announcement not at the time to make any reply, and even obtain a promise from them, that until they have had time for reflection and prayer they will not say a word. By being self-possessed I mean that a person should cultivate the habit of considering the reasons why they should not be irritated by circumstances around them.

**4.** Another excellent antidote against fretting is, *duly and habitually consider the aggravation of your own faults*. No man frets at the faults of others who duly considers his own. Only be well aware at all times, of what your own character and faults have been, and it will teach you to be very compassionate and considerate with respect to fretting at the faults of others.

**5.** *Reflect much also upon the forbearance of God*. I love to consider the infinite calmness of the divine mind, in view of all the provocations which He has to anger. His infinite patience, long-suffering and kindness to evil doers, is what I love to consider. It is of great importance to all Christians to habituate themselves to deep reflection upon the divine character and conduct in this respect.

**6.** *Reflect much on the meekness, forbearance, and long-suffering of Christ*. Nothing is more calculated to prevent or subdue a fretful spirit, than to inquire how would Christ behave under these circumstances. Under all the abuse which wicked men and devils heaped upon Him, He was never known in the least degree to fret. And how would His apostles have been shocked had they at any time witnessed impatience in Him! And how must they have admired and adored the sweetness of His temper, His meekness and long-suffering in the midst of all His trials; His kind and compassionate treatment of His greatest enemies. And when they heard

Him on the cross praying for His murderers, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” how could anything prevent their fretting at evil doers, if the remembrance of this temper in Christ would not do it?

**7.** *Avoid all undue excitement as far as possible.* We are too apt to imagine that religion consists in highly excited emotion and feeling. Whereas it consists altogether in the state of the heart or will. A highly excited state of the sensibility is often a very dangerous state. Cultivate therefore as far as possible a spirit of calmness, if you would avoid fretting. I have always observed in myself and others, that when highly excited even on the subject of religion, the feelings are easily diverted into a wrong channel. God’s mind is calm. Christ generally manifested great calmness of mind; and what Christian is there who does not know that when he is most sunk into the will of God, and is most truly religious and consecrated to God, his mind is most like a sea of love, calm like the heart of God. See the Christian on a death bed, lying at the very gate of heaven. See the calmness of the countenance, the mildness of the eye, the sweetness and calmness of the temper, the even balance of the pulse; everything bespeaks a mind full of holy calmness. Cultivate that state of mind, it is a great antidote against fretting.

**8.** *Learn not to look altogether on the dark side of things;* consider the virtues as well as the vices of those around you. Dwell on the good and not altogether on the bad qualities of those with whom you associate. It is a dangerous thing for us to dwell too much on the evil doings of those around us. I have often been struck with the tendencies of certain minds, and the results of certain courses of conduct. Many of the Adventists and other come-outers and radicals of the present day, seem to be taken up altogether with considering the great wickedness of the church and of the world; and this has manifestly led them away from God. Great multitudes of them seem not at all to be aware of it, but as sure as they are ever saved, just so sure must they come to a knowledge of the fact that they have fallen away from God. And if I am not entirely mistaken, the way in which they have fallen, has been by considering so exclusively the wickedness of the world and church, as finally to get into the spirit of anathematizing both. Said a good brother who had been acquainted with one of the principal defenders of the doctrine of Annihilation — “Until I saw him I could not understand how he came to fall into that error, but when I heard

him preach I understood it. It was manifest that he had the spirit of annihilation in him. He seemed to see nothing but the dark side of the picture; and the evils that were in the world seemed to engross his thought.” Now let me say this is a dangerous and wicked state of mind, and if you would avoid fretting, learn to look on the bright side of the picture, and see the good that is in the world, and learn what God is doing to promote the happiness and holiness of man. Consider the virtues of those around you and whatever is praiseworthy. Understand what Paul says in Philippians 4:8, “Finally brethren, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if these be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things.”

**9.** *Make due allowances for the circumstances, education, etc., of evil doers.* Considering the circumstances under which they act, their want of light, and many other things oftentimes greatly moderate the tendencies of their conduct to make us fret.

**10.** *Remember that it is God and not you against whom sin is committed.* The government of the universe is not committed to you. The kingdom is the Lord’s — all things are His. He has made all things for Himself — even the wicked for the day of evil; and you need not by any means take on yourself the responsibility of managing His affairs, nor suffer yourselves to fret because things do not go as you would have them. He will take care to secure the ends of His own government, without your getting into a passion about it.

**11.** *Don’t suffer yourselves to dwell much in thought on the evil doings of those around you.* If you are abused don’t dwell on it. Pray for the evil doer and dismiss it from your thoughts, lest it be to you too great a temptation.

**12.** Pray for evil doers. You never can fret at a man for whom you are sincerely and earnestly praying. Fretting at an evil doer and earnestly praying for him, are things inconsistent with each other.

**13.** *Labor to save their souls, and cultivate compassion toward them.* If you are deeply engaged in pulling them out of the fire, if you are exercised

with great love and compassion for their souls, you will not be apt to fret at them.

**14.** *Beware of trusting to mere resolutions made in your own strength, that you will not fret.* Such resolutions are as good as air. They promise much in the absence of temptation, but are of no value at all in the time of trial.

**15.** *Reflect on the wickedness of fretting at evil doers.* Consider how absurd and wicked it is for you to add sin to sin. How ridiculous it is because another sins, for you to get mad about it, and thus perhaps commit a sin of a more aggravated character than that about which you fret.

**16.** *Realize the uselessness of fretting.* Do but consider that it is of no use at all for you to fret.

**17.** Also *consider the great evil of it.* It is only making matters worse; for what will those around you say? This surely: "One man has committed an evil and others are fretting about it." And thus the last evil is worse than the first.

**18.** *Consider what an excellent opportunity it affords you of honoring God.* Consider that the greater the provocation the more highly may you honor God by manifesting a right spirit. This is what God does. The more provoking the conduct of His enemies is, by so much the more does He take occasion to honor Himself by the exhibition of a proper spirit in view of it. If their sin is great, His patience and forbearance are shown to be equal to the trial, and remain calm. Now consider that when evil doers do the worst they can, it afford you the most excellent opportunity of exhibiting the spirit and temper of Christ. If you do so, you will honor God more highly by how much the more provoking and outrageous is the conduct of evil doers. If you will take this view of the subject, surely you will not fret, but rather praise the Lord for these opportunities to glorify His name.

**19.** *Consider the comparative lightness of your trials after all* — what they amount to when compared with the trials which Christ, and the Apostles and martyrs have had. Their admirable spirit under these trials, was the most convincing argument that could be used in favor of the religion of Christ. Now what are your trials compared with theirs?

**20.** *Labor to improve these trials to the glory of God.* As I have just said, they afford you an excellent opportunity for doing so. Now make up your mind that by the strength of God and by His grace, you will improve these occasions to His glory.

**21.** Labor and pray for such a development of the sensibility, such calmness, meekness and quietness of spirit as shall enable you on all occasions to possess your soul in patience.

**22.** *Consider the declared design of these trials.* The bible everywhere represents them as designed for the trial of our faith. Understand that here you are in a school of discipline, preparing for scenes of usefulness in another world. And understand, that although you may not now see the wisdom of those dispensations which try you, yet when you come to be removed to those spheres of influence and usefulness, for which you are preparing, you will perceive the perfect wisdom of God in making you pass through these fiery trials. God does nothing in vain. All these things are parts of the necessary discipline through which we must pass. This world is a great school, and every servant of God must take his degree. He cannot be discharged from these conflicts until by them he is prepared for glory.

**23.** *Learn with the Psalmist to set the Lord always before you.* Persons are very apt to fret at little things when they would not at great events, because in the less they see not, while in the greater they do see the providence of God. Learn then to let this be an omnipresent consideration, that in all things, great and small, the hand of God is present. Set Him always before you, and let your mind be filled with the idea, that in everything that occurs, in some sense God is present.

**24.** Lastly, *learn to appropriate the grace of Christ to the complete suppression of this sin of fretfulness.* The providences that develop the spirit of fretfulness, are designed to show us our weakness and the need of the grace of Christ to perfect the grace of patience in us. That which you need therefore, is to learn to lay hold on Christ in such a sense as to be kept from the commission of this sin. The Apostle said — let us draw near to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now grace is designed to help against the commission of sin. As, under the providences of God, one of our weaknesses and defects of

character is developed after another, we should from time to time apply to Christ, and believe for the entire overcoming of the temptation and defect.

## REMARKS

**1.** Certain persons are constitutionally much exposed to the commission of this sin.

**(1.)** Those who have large development of order are exceedingly liable to fret, when brought into contact, or when intimately associated with those of an opposite development. Here is a man who has order large; he has a place for everything, and everything in its place. He can arise at night and put his hand on any book or tool that he wants to use. Now if he is associated in business with those around him who are of an opposite tendency, who have a place for nothing, and nothing in its place, it will be a grievous trial to him. If such an one has a wife of an opposite tendency from his own, whose kitchen looks like bedlam, and whose house, from the garret to the cellar, is in a state of disorder, he must have great grace, or he will live in a continual fret. There is a woman, whose development of order is large; her person and her house are but exhibitions of the perfection of order. Her meals are ready at a certain hour and moment. She has a time and place for everything, and everything is at the proper time, and in its proper place. Now suppose her husband throws off his dirty boots, and leaves them in the middle of the floor; he spits all over her carpet; throws his dirty clothes all about; wipes his dirty feet on her andirons, and does everything else under the law of disorder. Now, unless he can be reclaimed, and taught a different course of conduct, she might almost as well live with the devil as with him. He leaves the doors open, and everything is out of place, so far as his influence extends. His children have his tendencies of mind. The help in the kitchen are influenced by his example; and thus the poor woman is thrown on the rack, and is tried from morning till night. It is very difficult for such persons to live together, and yet the providence of God has brought them together, and afforded them a good opportunity of manifesting in these relations, the spirit and temper of Christ; the one to exercise patience, and the other to mend his ways.

**(2.)** Those who have a strong sense of right and wrong, if thrown into the society of those who have but little sense of right and wrong, are strongly tempted to impatience. They are often amazed, and grieved, and disgusted with the want of principle, the loose morality, the want of conscientiousness and justice of those around them. They feel their indignation enkindled, and sometimes are strongly tempted to rebuke them in a manner and spirit that would do more hurt than good.

**(3.)** Dyspeptics are very much disposed to the commission of this sin. An acid stomach naturally tends to an acidity of mind, and where persons have weak digestive organs, they need much grace to keep them from fretting.

**(4.)** Nervous persons have also strong tendencies to fretfulness. Persons also of a bilious temperament. You see a person of a sallow countenance: and manifestly bilious tendencies, be careful in all your intercourse with him. He cannot in general endure, what others may, without fretting. In all your treatment of such an one, be kind and considerate, be compassionate and forbearing, else you will tempt him to sin against God in this respect.

**(5.)** An unsubdued will greatly exposes a person to the sin of fretfulness. When the will has not been subdued in childhood or youth, persons are extremely apt before they are aware to get into a passion if their will is crossed. They are impatient whenever they cannot have their own way in anything and everything.

**(6.)** A largely developed sensibility, exposes one to temptation in this respect. Those persons whose feelings are deep and quick on every subject, need to be much on their guard, lest when suddenly assailed with temptation, they should fret. There is a great difference among persons in this respect. Some persons are constitutionally much more mild and amiable than others. Some are constitutionally disposed to take almost everything easily, while others have naturally a quick, irascible temper. Their resentments are naturally quick and strong. This class of persons need peculiar grace, or they will frequently dishonor God by the indulgence of an evil temper.

**2.** I remark again, it is of the greatest importance to guard against fretfulness as a habit. Some persons have indulged in it until they really

deserve to be indicted as common scolds. They really are a nuisance in community. I know a man who was a professor of religion, yet so much had he given way to this tendency to fretfulness, that he would sometimes break out into such a passion as really to curse and swear. Such a professor of religion is a deep disgrace to the cause he professes to love.

**3.** I remark again, that those of an irritable temper, often fail, on account of striving to overcome this propensity by mere legal efforts, by the force of their resolutions, prayers, and watchfulness, instead of committing themselves in this respect, to the keeping of Christ. Christ is your keeper. You will never keep yourselves. Unless you commit yourselves to Christ to be kept from the commission of this sin, all our resolutions will be of no avail. You will fall as often as you are tempted, until you will be disheartened.

**4.** This leads me to remark again, that many persons have fallen into great discouragements with respect to the possibility of ever overcoming the temptation. They have prayed against it, they have fought, and watched, and resolved, and wept, and agonized, and tried and fallen, and resolved again, and so often have their prayers been repeated without avail, that they have sunk down in discouragement. Now let me say to such persons, when you have used all your own stock and exhausted your own strength, till you are worn out with attempts to keep yourselves, I hope you will learn to trust in Christ. Christ will keep you, if you will let Him, if you will not push Him back, and undertake to keep yourselves. You may not be conscious of doing this, but be assured you do not appropriate the grace of Christ, nor really consent to give yourself up to be kept by Him, or He would keep you.

**5.** Again, God in His providence is continually developing the weakness and imperfection of His people, that they may see their need of one mightier than themselves to save them. Do not then be discouraged, when by His providence He tries you, and develops your need of a Savior. But learn to lay hold of and appropriate the grace which is provided as your remedy.

**6.** Lastly, I love to reflect on the fact that God's plan embraces all events, that His plan is perfect, that He will do all His pleasure; that He can do all His pleasure, that the wrath of man shall praise Him, and the remainder of



wrath He will restrain. That therefore we need not make ourselves wretched and unhappy, and vex our souls on account of anything that occurs in the universe, but compose our minds in view of it all, as God composes His; concern ourselves to do our own duty, and not suffer ourselves to fret about the conduct of others. Let us try to reform them, and try to do them good, pity and pray for them, but by no means suffer their evil doing to cause us to do evil, and to dishonor God. Always remembering not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

# SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD FIRST

*“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” — Matthew 6:33.*

The Jews were greatly mistaken in respect to the nature of that kingdom which their Messiah was to set up. They expected a kingdom like the kingdoms of this world, invested with earthly splendor, fitted to aggrandize their nation, and minister to their national pride. Christ sought to undeceive them. He told them that His kingdom did not come with outward show — that it must be *within* men, and that it was not of this world. He would have them understand that it was spiritual, and not temporal; demanding the homage of the heart, and not the pomp and pageant, so commonly rendered to royalty. The simple idea of this kingdom is that Christ Himself reigns in the hearts of His people, securing the perfect submission of the will, and the consecration of every power to Himself. Thus His kingdom is within; it is invisible. It puts on no outward glare. In the hearts of men He writes His laws by His Spirit, and thus rules over them to deliver them from Satan and sin, and translate them into His own kingdom of peace and love.

The subjects of this kingdom are shut up to no particular location. Each in the sphere where providence has called him to reside and to his master’s will, may there be truly a member of this invisible kingdom. Christ may be reigning over him, and he may be indeed a subject and a citizen of this kingdom of God.

This is the kingdom we are required in our text to seek. To seek it implies that we seek to belong to it — seek to know Christ’s will and to do it — seek to be recognized by Christ as one of His subjects, and seek to promote the interests of this kingdom, as all true subjects of any kingdom do, and should do if the government deserves their support. He who truly seeks first the kingdom of God, seeks to be as really and perfectly governed by Christ now, as the holy in Heaven are. He would have Christ

living and reigning within him so that every thought shall be brought into obedience.

We are required, not only to seek the kingdom of God, but also “His *righteousness*.” The original word here rendered righteousness, is sometimes rendered justification. The radical idea seems to be simply this — being *right* with God — coming into a state of acceptance with Him. This we know must in our case include both the free pardon of past sin and the being sanctified so that we are not actually sinning. So long as His law condemns us for unpardoned sin, or so long as we are actually sinning, it would be monstrous to suppose that God can accept us as righteous, and that we are *right* in His sight.

Hence, when the righteousness of God as in our text, is spoken of as a thing for us to seek, it must include both pardon and sanctification.

The command to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first, enjoins upon us to treat this subject as of absolute and supreme importance. This must be the great business of our lives. Nothing else is allowed to have any practical importance compared with this.

The injunction — seek God’s kingdom first, implies that we seek it first in point of time. It should be the first thing attended to. It is not merely to be admitted as of first importance, but should really be put first in point of time. The first thoughts of each morning should be given to it. And whenever God’s word, or His providence brings before our mind the invitations or the claims of this kingdom, we are to remember that *now* is the accepted time. *Now, first* in order, before anything else, let the concerns of your soul with the kingdom of God and His righteousness have the first regard.

It is also implied that we seek this kingdom *with supreme earnestness*. This is fully involved in the points just spoken of. We are required to *agonize* to enter in at the strait gate — to press hard for entrance, with the greatest earnestness, and the most strenuous efforts. Let the soul be indeed in agony to carry the point and make sure of admission into the kingdom of God. To the same purport are very many passages which I might quote from the Scriptures, all going to show that God requires us to seek with all our hearts, to lay out the utmost strength of our souls, if we would

successfully resist the devil, and really break the chains of sin, and secure so great a treasure as eternal life.

It is also implied that we seek the kingdom of God with *perseverance*. We must press on till we obtain. This is the great business of life — to get back from revolt, to obedience — from our state of rejection, cast out from God, to a state of acceptance, where we shall be sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Then let us persevere in seeking the whole of this change until it be completely effected. The nature of the case demands such perseverance. The blessings within reach are too great and precious to be lost for want of perseverance in the pursuit. They will amply reward you for a whole life of most earnest seeking.

Again, the kingdom of God would be the object of supreme engrossment. You must bring all your powers into action. Your intellect must be thoroughly awake — your sensibility to the claims of truth must be all alive, and your will must act with inflexible decision. Absolutely your whole mind must be aroused to its utmost exertion.

Still again, the command implies that everything else must be postponed to this. The spirit of the precept demands that everything else be thrown into the back-ground, and this be placed foremost of all.

When Christ was upon earth, He admitted no apology for delay — would allow nothing to interpose between the soul, and its present duty. On a certain occasion, Christ called a man to follow Himself. The man replied, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father.” No, said Christ, “leave the dead to bury their dead” — the dead in sin to bury the natural dead — “but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” One might suppose that if any circumstances would justify delay, these would. God has said, “Honor thy father;” and the instinctive feelings of propriety, as well as respect for the dead are wont to secure a prompt regard to these last offices which we can pay to the departed. Shall we then forsake a father’s burial, and leave to others, yea to wicked men, these last obsequies? Yea, let the dead bury their dead; thou hast a call from God — go thou and preach the kingdom.

But “let me go first and bid them farewell which are at home in my house.” No; said Christ, no man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Now it is plain that our Savior puts these strong cases for the very purpose of enforcing strongly this point — that nothing else whatever may be placed before prompt obedience to this great precept, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

The spirit of the text requires that everything shall be promptly sacrificed that comes in competition with this. Let nothing else come up to crowd this aside; seek this first; make this your present business; if your father is dead, no matter, attend to this; cut off your right hand if it interfere with this work — make any sacrifice whatever which needs to be made in order to your successful prosecution of this great work of seeking first the kingdom of God. No consideration whatever may be allowed to divert the mind from this subject.

To this command Christ has annexed a *promise*. This next claims our attention.

You will observe that the condition of this promise is, “Seek first the kingdom of God;” — as if He had said “If you will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, you shall have all these earthly things of which He had been speaking. You shall be fed as surely as I feed the ravens, and clothed as well as I clothe the lilies. You need not be *anxious* for these things. It is my business to provide them. Mark the lilies of the field; how they grow — they toil not — they spin not; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. And if God so gloriously attires the grass only for a day, and is burnt tomorrow, will He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” Therefore, be not anxious about these earthly things. Let the Gentiles who know not their Father on high, seek after these things anxiously — but remember that your Father knows your wants and will take care to supply them. Only, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Consider also that your anxieties about these things can do no good. Which of you by ever so much anxiety can add to his stature one cubit?

We are to understand this promise as including all that is necessary for us, either in time or eternity. The connection however, shows that Christ had principal reference to provisions for our earthly wants. He knows what

these wants are. He formed the constitution which creates them; and He passed through this very state of physical want Himself. He understood how strong the tendencies of our minds are to excessive anxiety about the requisite supply. Hence He says — I will take away from you all apology for neglecting the things of My kingdom — you shall have no excuse for not making religion the chief thing; let it be your first business — first in point of time — first in your esteem — first in the earnestness with which you seek it; then trust Me to make up all the other things that you need. Do My business and I will do yours. Take care of My kingdom — throw your whole soul into its interests, and I will supply your physical wants. Do your duty as I enjoin it, and I will be responsible for these lesser things.

It is very easy to see that for Christ to take this course, and require us to seek the kingdom of God first is very reasonable, even though He had annexed no promise; because,

- 1.** It is of supreme importance to us that we should attend to these spiritual things. The infinite well-being of the soul depends upon it.
- 2.** The time is so short: and the fact that we know not how short it is, renders it indispensable that we should attend to it immediately. Life is so uncertain that we can place no dependence upon the prospect of doing another day what we put over from this. “Who knoweth what a day may bring forth?”
- 3.** Another consideration: Every hour’s delay makes success more doubtful, and your peril of damnation more portentous. Your heart will be more hardened, temptations will have gained more power, and a mightier struggle will be demanded ere victory can be sure.
- 4.** If you neglect but for one moment too long, it will be fatal. There is a moment beyond which if you neglect seeking the kingdom of God, you can never attend to it with success thereafter. If you wait beyond that point, no mercy remains; the door of heaven is shut against you; your damnation is certain.

We cannot know where this point is. It may be this hour, this moment. *This* sinner, may be your last opportunity. If so, how important that

Christ should require you to seek salvation *now!* And how vital that you should heed and obey the call!

**5.** Unless the subject is treated as of supreme importance, it is of no use to attend to it at all. Some persons attend to it just enough to make their damnation as certain as it can possibly be made, and as dreadful. Let one attend just enough to quiet his conscience and lull his fears — just enough to keep the truth before his mind and learn to resist it — just enough to habituate himself to resist the claims of God and do despite to the Spirit of grace; he is in the worst condition possible. He is commonly decent enough to prevent being aroused and alarmed by his own open wickedness. He does nothing that shocks his own moral sense and startles him from his deep lethargy; so he moves along waxing daily worse and worse, till he wakes at last in hell.

Now it were better for this man to let the subject entirely alone than to attend to it in this sleepy, profitless, heart-hardening way. It is better also for the sake of others that he should let the subject alone than give it only such attention; for he will greatly stumble others and lead them down to perdition. His example induces others to follow him; and if his course is the most ruinous that can be for himself, so will it be for his followers. But it was in view of this very influence that Christ said of some, “I would that thou wert cold or hot; because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.” Christ therefore prefers that you would let the subject entirely alone, rather than attend to it just enough to quiet your fears, evade conviction, harden your heart, induce others to ruin, and never do your duty.

**6.** The supreme importance of the subject would render Christ’s command in the text more reasonable even without the annexed promise. For even if we were to suffer the want of bread and the worst pinchings of poverty, this were infinitely better than to lose the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Therefore, it must be wise to seek the kingdom of God *first*.

It would be supreme folly to grasp the lesser good so eagerly as to lose that which is infinitely greater. How much more now, since to him who seeks first God’s kingdom, the promise is given — all these things shall be added unto thee. Indeed we have no reason left us for neglecting obedience to this great and good command.

My main object in this discourse is to bring before you, and illustrate several

## REMARKS

**1.** The command and promise in our text strongly illustrate God's great care for our souls. If God had no care for us, or but little care for us, He would not use so much effort to urge us to secure salvation. Why is it that God reiterates these commands so incessantly, giving line upon line, and precept upon precept? Only because He would awaken and urge us to those efforts which our case demands. But especially I ask, Why does God append to His commands to great and precious promises? He knows our circumstances. He sees how great our wants are, and how many, and therefore He says — your soul is in danger and will be lost if you suffer your chief attention to be engrossed in cares for earthly things. I entreat you, therefore, to take care of your soul, and I will see to your physical wants. Do you by all means seek first My kingdom and righteousness, and I will see that your “bread shall be given and your water shall be sure.”

This is just like an infinite Father. It is as if a father should come out from the East to visit his son in Ohio, and should find him almost worn down with toil, laboring hard to get in his wheat and his hay that he might feed his family and pay his debts — but his great labor and care are crushing his health and putting his very life in peril. See, he raises blood, and his cold night sweats but too plainly show that he must change his course and get relief, or his wife is a widow and his babes are orphans. The father sees all this in an instant. My son, he says, attend first to your precious health and do all you can to restore it and prolong your life; I will take care of your hay and your wheat; I will see that all the other things you need shall be added if you will only secure your precious life. So he writes home to his distant family that they need not expect him home again for a long time yet; — he finds business with his son of more importance than anything else can be.

Now this would be a striking case of parental sympathy and interest — just such a case as we have in our text of the parental care of *our* great Father for our salvation.



**2.** The disinterestedness of God is very affectingly manifested in this command and promise. What would you say of a father who should do as I have just represented? Just leave all care of your business to me, he says to his son; go at once into your house and take your bed as much as your health needs; and he sends home to the dear ones there that they must forego the pleasure of seeing him for some months yet, for here are other interests not his own which his heart will not allow him to leave neglected; this father you would say manifested a most admirable degree of disinterested affection. You might perhaps naturally expect all this of one who was really a father, yet it would show that indeed he had a father's heart. So of God. In making these provisions for supplying our earthly wants and in taking from our minds the burden of earthly cares, He has shown Himself a God of love. That He should be so careful to urge us up to duty and to remove all hindrances so that nothing need divert or interrupt us — this indeed shows us a God full of goodness and rich in love.

**3.** To refuse to be diverted from God's service by worldly cares and to give our whole heart to the Lord, is the only way to make sure of earthly good. If any of you would make sure of whatever temporal good you need, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then you shall have a promise which is infinitely more secure than any stocks or deposits in all the land. It will be safe to trust God. He who makes the rain and the sunshine; He who clothes the lilies and feeds the young ravens, knows how to reach your wants and fulfill His own promises. He cannot lack either the resources or the will.

**4.** Unbelief urges a very different course from this. Unbelief always professes to be sorely afraid of tempting God by neglecting temporal matters. So much afraid is it of overdoing this thing of having faith in God's explicit promises!

Now it cannot be doubted that the Savior meant to rebuke this unbelief and urge strongly the duty of casting all our care upon God, only taking care on our part that we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. He meant to show us that we have no room for fear about earthly good, provided we take all due care of our souls and of all the things of His kingdom.

And this was in our Lord a most wise and beneficent foresight. For who does not know that for one reason or for another, almost all persons are excusing themselves for neglecting the soul. The student must study. Most certainly, and without doubt, he must now get his lessons. What! do you call him away from his lessons to seek the kingdom of God first! What! he cries out, shall I not lose my education if I listen to such a call? Now is my harvest time — now is the time to cultivate my mind — I came here to study — it were a pity if I may not get my lessons first, and seek the kingdom of God when I have a convenient season!

Yet let me say here that ever so much proper attention to religion can never be any loss to us. It never robs us of other things which are really better. The student who seeks first the kingdom of God rationally, will not need to neglect any useful study. He cannot lose anything on the whole by putting each and all things in their proper places, and giving to each its due measure of attention. The wise-minded student may not know so much of Shakespeare or of Byron — may have less to do with Homer or with Virgil; but he will not therefore fail of learning the things that are most useful. I do not hesitate to say that the student who shall obey this precept will come out ahead of all his fellow-students who disobey it; he will not be an intellectual drone, a lounging idler, only half awake to the value of knowledge, and only half alive to pursue it. No, his mind will apprehend the value of truth and will press forward with quenchless longings to attain it. Hence his mind will move under such impulses and be encompassed with such an atmosphere of light that he will be a better man, will have more of all useful knowledge, and will have a better balanced mind than any of his associates who seek first something else and not God's kingdom.

The same may be said of men of any condition in life — of those who till the ground — of those who fill the shop, or move behind the counter. Let a man anywhere obey this precept you will find that his temporal wants will be supplied. He may not get so rich or get rich so fast or by such means as shall load himself down too much to run the Christian race at all — so much as to crush himself down to hell — this may not be his course, but he will have all real good.

**5.** Everything really valuable must be lost by disobeying this command. If a man neglects the kingdom of God, nothing which he can obtain is really valuable to him. Suppose he gets an education. This will only aggravate his final condemnation.

I wonder if this is usually understood. Do these young men and young women understand this principle? It is plain and undeniable. Our future happiness and misery will be *as* our mental cultivation and *as* the development of our intelligence. The more mental power and the wider range of views we have, the larger is the scope for bitter reflection, and the keener the pangs of self-reproach and remorse in that world where the wicked become their own worst tormentors.

Did you ever consider what Byron's state of mind must have been when he spent whole nights in writing poems to save his soul from the unutterable agonies of reflection upon himself — to keep himself from rolling in hell while he yet lived upon the earth! And do you ask, why was this? Because his mind was highly cultivated, and its original endowments were of the very first order — because he saw truth and its relations clearly, and felt its force deeply — and therefore could not bear the terrible reactions of such mental powers when they turned in upon his soul to scourge and lash himself as the guiltiest being on earth. In mental power and in self-inflicted torment too, he is like the devil. Perhaps one more like the devil never trod the earth.

Sinner, if you don't mean to serve God, I advise you to be as near an idiot as possible. Keep away from knowledge; go beyond the Rocky Mountains — go and fish for whales — shut off every flashing ray of light you can — contract your mind within the narrowest possible compass; don't seek knowledge unless you mean to pile up a mass of fuel that shall burn your soul forever. Keep away from knowledge and mental cultivation. What have you to do with an expanded mind, and sharpened intellect? It will only inflict the keener stings of remorse and furnish you the more scope for everlasting self-torment.

I said, nothing is valuable to you unless you mean to seek first the kingdom of God. Every enjoyment, even life itself, is a curse to him who is treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Every abused mercy augments that fearful treasure of wrath. The sooner you stop eating and

drinking and breathing the better. “Every beating pulse you tell” will rise up in the judgment against you to swell the evidence of your great guilt in not seeking life when God besought you to live. It were better for you not to have lived at all unless you seek first the blessing of God and eternal life.

Hence, if you neglect to seek first the kingdom of God in pretense of seeking other good first, you are infinitely mistaken. You will lose the good you seek, and also the greater good you would not seek but should have sought. Let me tell that student who neglects the kingdom of God and drives his studies that he may keep up with his class or keep before them; that he drives on upon his own ruin. The good you seek to gain will be an infinite curse to you. If it should prove a blessing, it must be in spite of God’s threatened curses; and surely you ought to know that it is a vain thing to fight against God. Surely whom the Lord blesses is blessed, and whom the Lord curses is cursed. You will find it so.

**6.** Again, it is plainly implied that if we seek first the kingdom of God, we shall not only have these other things promised, but have the kingdom of God too. Certainly our Lord meant to imply that we should have the very thing we seek first.

**7.** If we really obey this command, it will be manifest in all the arrangements of our common life. Observe a business man who obeys this command. He never takes upon himself any business which must crowd out a proper attention to religion. You will see in all his arrangements, that he makes provision for religious duties as much as he makes provision to eat his daily meals. When did you ever know a man lay out his business so as to reverse no time for his daily food and nightly sleep? Go into any house and you see provision made for sleeping and eating. You will see perhaps articles of food and means of cooking it. You will say — well, these people expect doubtless to eat and to sleep. This enters into their arrangements. So of every man who means to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness. Whatever his *principle* business is, you will see his arrangements made accordingly. So long as he has his reason, he never can make his arrangements for his time so as to leave his principal business unprovided for. If his principal business be to seek the kingdom of God,

everything will be shaped accordingly. He will no sooner fail to do this than fail to make his family arrangements for eating and sleeping.

But let us go into that student's room. We can probably learn what he is seeking first. The door opens; we pass along in; there are his books; there lies Byron and Shakespeare; let us look for his Bible. Aye, his Bible is not there; we look for it on the table, for possibly he keeps it there and goes to it regularly for his spiritual bread — but no, it is not there. Look under his pillow. Alexander the Great is said to have slept always with his Homer under *his* pillow — but not so with this student. You find no Bible there. At last it is found in the bottom of his trunk. It has not been opened since his mother put it there on the very day he left that home of his childhood. It was his mother who put it there we know; for see, she has marked many passages with her tears. O, she did hope this dear son would ponder and learn to love those blessed pages. With what throes of heart, such as none but a parent feels, did she send him away and commit him to her own Father and Savior. O, has he forgotten all a mother's prayers?

But perhaps the Bible has been taken out of his trunk, but has lain on his shelf unmoved until the dust has coated it over — a witness against him that he heeds not the words of eternal life. Or you find it at last on his table, but under his Cicero and a huge pile of newspapers and novels — ah, that youth is not seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. His arrangements are not made at all for this end.

But there is another scene. Here is a student's Bible worn with much and constant use — wet with many tears — Oh, how often has his soul been feasted as with angel's food from those exceeding great and precious promises!

It is said of one of the Apostles that after his death his knees were found to be callous from his frequent and long-continued kneeling in prayer. So it might be with you if you were really given to prayer and mighty wrestlings with God.

**8.** When persons are really engaged about their souls, they will not suffer themselves to be placed in circumstances so engrossing as to be crowded away from seeking God supremely. They would dread such a state worse than death.

**9.** Many hold this truth in theory who after all utterly deny it in practice. Almost everybody will admit that we ought to seek first the kingdom of God, and that religion is the supreme business of life; yet how almost constantly is this denied in practice?

As I have kept my eye upon the course of things in this community, I have seen almost everything crowded in here to draw men away from God. The students get up society after society to cultivate the intellect; but where are the societies got up to cultivate the heart? If all were right here, should we not see a different course of things; should we not see something crowded in almost everywhere to make the heart better — to awaken religious feeling and arouse attention to religious truth, and carry abroad a religious influence over all hearts. O, if this truth were really believed, we should see it reduced to practice by the students and by all the church, let their vocation be what it may. But now we see a great many students constantly pressed — full of engrossing business and wasting care — and why? What are they doing? Are they making ceaseless efforts to promote their own or others spirituality? Their efforts surely are ardent and vigorous enough to lead you to suppose so. O, if such were only the fact!

But judging from the actual life of many of these students, one would suppose that Christ had said — Seek first to get your lessons — seek first to master your Algebra or your Latin. And the course of things in the business community is such as it might rightly be if Christ had said — Seek first to get your business done in good time and in the most perfect manner; — first see to it that your crops are duly sown and timely gathered; then shall all needful things be added to you.

Such is a very common state of things in this community. It is such also with many of the students, but not with all as I am happy to know. There are some here who show that their hearts are upon the Zion of God. But having made these exceptions, the rest seem to live as if Christ had said to the student — Get your studies first, and you shall lose nothing in point of spirituality.

The fact is, if we are ever going to be seriously and thoroughly pious, we must make all our arrangements accordingly. Wherever you see a man thoroughly pious, you see a man who in fact does make all his

arrangements with a view to this great object. He will not let labor or business of any kind interfere with his going to meeting, when he can go without fearing to displease God by neglecting some other apparent duty. His seasons of prayer are too precious to be lost. He cannot on any account forego the pleasure of meeting with God a few times at least each day. He is conscious that he needs to be strengthened daily with might in the inner man. Hence he cannot live without prayer.

**10.** No Institution can do much to bless the world unless it practically sets religion foremost. I mean what I say — *practically*; not in theory only, but in *practice*. An Institution which takes some other practical ground, may make students intellectual — may train them well enough for the bar or for medicine; but students so trained, must suffer fearfully in their spirituality, and if they go into the ministry, they can do little indeed to promote the salvation of souls. They cannot have power without deep piety, and they cannot have this unless they seek it first. The first place is its only right place. Make piety a secondary thing in any Institution, and the Spirit of God feels Himself dishonored, and cannot bless.

Oh, brethren, let us anchor this Institution fast to this only right principle — *religion the chief concern* — *seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*.

# REJOICING IN BOASTINGS

*“But now ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.” James 4:16*

In discussing this subject I shall show,

## **I. WHEN ONE MAY BE SAID TO REJOICE IN HIS BOASTINGS.**

## **II. THE WICKEDNESS OF SUCH BOASTINGS.**

**1.** When we have a self-complacent spirit. For example, when we feel a self-complacent joy in view of our worldly prosperity; when we look on our worldly prosperity as resulting from our own providence, prudence, economy or goodness, without giving the glory to God as the Author and Giver of every perfect gift. When we do not recognize Him as not only ordering the outward circumstances, but as giving such directions to our thoughts and efforts as to secure this prosperity. If our worldly prosperity has been brought about in a manner consistent with honesty and Christian integrity, God is of course to have the glory of so working providentially without us, and so working by His Spirit within us to will and to do, as to have secured this result; so that the glory belongs to Him. It is grace which has secured this result, and what have we that we did not receive? And who has made us in this respect to differ from others? Why then should we boast, and be self-complacent? Why should we take credit to ourselves, as if these things were not a gift? Whenever we do so, we rejoice in our boastings. But if our worldly prosperity has resulted from any dishonesty whatever, then of course to indulge in self-complacency, is not only to rejoice in our boastings, but to rejoice in our villany.

**2.** To indulge in a spirit of self-complacency on account of our influence in the world is rejoicing in our boastings.

First, because if our influence is great and good, grace working within us, by the Spirit, and providentially without us, has secured this result, and all the merit we can claim is that we yielded, or suffered ourselves to be persuaded by the infinite entreaties and persuasion of God to do our duty. Being as it were over-persuaded, we yielded, and when our reluctance was



overcome, we consented to take the course that has given us this influence, and in this sense alone have we any reason to be self-complacent.

But in how much higher sense does all the glory belong to God, who from His own self-originated goodness set Himself to persuade us, and persevered until He did persuade us to take such a course as secured this influence. What reason then have we for self-complacency? Verily, none at all. And whenever we indulge it on account of our influence we rejoice in our boastings.

But if our influence is evil, to be self-complacent in that, is not only to rejoice in our boastings but to boast of our shameless wickedness.

**3.** When we are self-complacent on account of our intellectual attainments. If they are great, or whatever they are, it is a gift of God. He created our intellect. He has so arranged His providences as to give us opportunity to cultivate it. He has also by His providence without, and His working within, secured the application of our minds in such a manner as to develop our intelligence. And now in what sense have we a right to be self-complacent? Have we studied hard? It is because He has so constituted us, so arranged His providences, and all the circumstances of the case, as to persuade us to study hard. He has overcome our sluggishness, and pressed us onward by ten thousand influences without and within us, and secured this result. And now, do we take the credit to ourselves? Verily this is rejoicing in our boastings.

**4.** When we indulge self-complacency in regard to our spiritual attainments, we rejoice in our boastings.

But I am almost ready to say that these things are incompatible: that is, that self-complacency in respect to our spiritual attainments, would demonstrate that we have made no spiritual attainments at all. But it is undoubtedly true that sometimes persons who have made some spiritual attainments, afterwards become self-complacent, and develop a disgusting amount of spiritual pride, or which is the same thing, rejoicing in their boastings. Buy why should we be self-complacent on account of any degree of spiritual attainments? We were totally dead in trespasses and sins. God began a work within us by first convicting us, creating desires, setting aside our cavils with all long-suffering, and persevering in the midst

of all our obstinacy, rebellion, and sin, and using the most persuasive means to obtain our consent to be spiritual at all. He has never gained one step with us only by pressing us with truths and providences, so arranging His providences without and so enlightening us by His Spirit within, as to overcome our utter reluctance, enmity, and spiritual death, and after a protracted struggle, at last to gain our consent to follow Him and be saved. His Spirit has never succeeded in making us spiritually-minded, any farther than He has anticipated all our movements toward Himself, by first moving toward us, and beginning to call up our attention and press us with such considerations as to overcome our apathy, enmity, and unbelief, and finally succeeded in bringing forth the voluntary result of our present degree of spirituality. Prompted by His own sovereign goodness, He has thus moved on us, worked in us to will and to do — surrounded us without and enlightened us within, and at last got our consent. Now I ask, how much reason have we for self-complacency? And in how low a sense can it be said that we are worthy of praise? True we have been free. But it is also true that our liberty has been abused and used only in opposition to God, until finally overcome with His persevering and overpowering persuasions. True, we have done our duty at last. But why have we done it? Because God in the abundance of His grace has persevered till He has over-persuaded us, and finally wrung out from us our consent.

But observe in how much higher sense does the glory belong to God than to us. Verily instead of being self-complacent we have reason to take to ourselves the utmost shame that it should cost God all this effort to overcome our reluctance, and persuade us to do our duty. Are we to ascribe glory to ourselves, to be self-complacent, to plume ourselves, and rejoice in our own goodness? It is infinitely more reasonable to hide our faces in the dust, and to say we are unprofitable servants. We have only done that which it was our duty to do, and even that we have not done only as we have been overcome by the persuasions and pleadings of infinite and persevering goodness.

Again. When we give ourselves up to rejoicing in our spiritual state, instead of rejoicing in God, we always rejoice in our boastings. I have seen persons who seem to me to be watching their spiritual state, and to be contemplating their own feelings, with a kind of self-complacency, from day to day. They remind me of a peacock when he struts in the sun-

beams, and turns his head from side to side and views his gorgeous tail. He seem to delight himself in his own beauty and to be taken up with rejoicing in the glory of his own appearance. He struts and seems to say, "What is so beautiful as this? Am I not the most beautiful of birds? And have I not more reason to carry my head high than any others of the feathered tribe? Indeed I am quite satisfied with my own exquisite beauty." Now some persons seem to be taken up in the same way. They have worked themselves into a kind of ecstasy; have got certain views, as they say, of Christ that have brought their sensibility into a very happy state. They seem to be saying, "God I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, that I am not in bondage like this legalist." In words they ascribe the glory to God, just as the Pharisee must have done who is contrasted with the publican. It must be that in theory at least he ascribed his pretended goodness to God; else he could not have thanked God that he was so good, for why should he have thanked God unless in theory at least he ascribed his righteousness to God? "God," he says, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, or even as this publican." Now I have seen some that appeared to be precisely in this state of mind from day to day. Instead of rejoicing in God, they seem to be taken up with their own state of mind. They are contemplating what they call their own peace and their own goodness. The state of their sensibility is with them the chief subject of attention, and source of self-complacency. While they are practically inefficient in the kingdom of God and are doing nothing to pull sinners out of the fire or to sanctify the saints, they still have a wonderful degree of self-complacency on account of their state of mind. Now this is nothing but rejoicing in their boastings. How infinitely different from the publican, who, standing afar off, and not daring so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven, smote upon his breast and cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." By this I do not intend to teach that a man must be conscious all the while of committing sin in order to be accepted of God, or that a sense of our sinfulness is in itself an evidence that we are accepted of God. But I do mean that a person in a right state of mind is never taken up with a self-complacent view of his goodness. But his rejoicings are always in God and never in himself.

Again, when we cherish self-complacency on account of our usefulness, we rejoice in our boastings. If we have been useful, to whom does the glory

belong? If any good has been done through us, by whom has it been done? Has God done this, or have we done it? If we have so much as intended to do any good, God has begotten and perpetuated in us this intention. If this intention has been carried out, and has secured the desired result, why do we glory? It is God who has worked within and without. He has moved us to these efforts, and He has secured these results. What though we have been free, yet He has over-persuaded us to use our liberty as we have. Nothing but the most strenuous efforts on the part of God have ever secured in us an effort to do anything good. He has overcome our reluctance, He has put away our slothfulness, He has quickened our death, and surrounded us, within and without, with such influences as to lead us in this way in spite of all the natural tendency of our minds in an opposite direction. Surely, if any good has been done, the glory belongs to God. Shame and confusion of face belongs to us, that it has been so difficult for God to persuade us even to intend any good. What though we did at last intend it: what though He finally prevailed on us: let us take shame rather than praise to ourselves. Surely God has done it. He has worked in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and with great pains taking, has, through us, wrought some good results. And are we indulging ourselves in self-complacency in consequence of some good which has resulted from our labors? Shame, where is thy blush? All such rejoicings are rejoicings in our boastings.

Again, we rejoice in our boastings whenever we congratulate ourselves on account of the high stand we have taken on any moral question. If the stand we have taken be right, who has secured this result? Where should we have gone if not led and overcome by grace divine? Has not God paved all the way, guided us by His eye, lifted us up with His hands, and brought all the influences to bear, both within and without us, that have finally over-persuaded us, and brought us to take right grounds? And are we the persons to be self-complacent? What if a man who was bent on murder should with the greatest possible pains-taking be persuaded to relinquish his object, and then plume himself on his virtue in abstaining from the bloody deed? Ought he not rather to say, “‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ It was in my heart to have committed this horrible deed, and hadst Thou not over-persuaded me by Thy goodness, confounded and broken me down, and turned me away from this infernal project, my hands had

now been red with a brother's blood! Be sure the glory all belongs to God.”

So it is with whatever right ground is taken by us on any subject. Instead of being self-complacent, it becomes us rather to say, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” It was in our hearts to have said and done anything else than what was right — to have taken any other stand than a right one. But, O Lord, Thou hast persuaded us, and we have suffered ourselves to be persuaded.

Again, whenever we complacently regard ourselves as the objects of divine favor, we rejoice in our boastings. Suppose God blesses us, gives us His Spirit, makes us useful, enlarges us in any respect, and we feel self-complacent on this account, and rejoice in it as if He had blessed us on account of our own goodness, and intended to bear a testimony of our favor; this is rejoicing in our boastings. Why may not the veriest sinner that was ever converted take the same ground, and say that God has converted him because he was so good, or the veriest backslider that was ever reclaimed say that God has given him reclaiming grace because he was so good, and acceptable to God in his backslidings? The fact is, whenever we regard God's favors as a testimony of our own goodness, or as being bestowed on us on account of our own worthiness, we are always rejoicing in our boastings. All favors bestowed on us, are bestowed for an infinitely different reason, only for the sake of Him who died for us and rose again.

Again, when we fail to recognize the fact that it is not for our sakes, but for His own name's sake that we receive anything from His hand better than hell, we are rejoicing in our boastings. We have deserved nothing but a dire damnation, and He takes particular pains to say to us, it is ‘not for your sakes, be it known unto you that I do these things, but for My great name's sake;’ and whenever we fail to recognize this truth, and indulge a self-complacent spirit on account of any favors received, whether temporal or spiritual, we are always rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, whenever we fail to recognize the fact that He works all our goodness in us, and that too in spite of our natural obstinacy, and determination to have our own way. When I speak of His working love or goodness in us, I do not mean to imply that we are not free, moral agents. I do not mean that we are not in a sense co-workers with Him, for we really

are, voluntarily; and the way in which He works in us is as I have already intimated, by over-persuading us, over-coming us by His powerful persuasions, and drawing us by these in an opposite direction from that in which we should have gone, if we had been left to ourselves, so that in every instance, in which we are conscious of doing our duty, we are to know assuredly that we should not have done it unless God by His grace had secured this result in us in spite of all our natural obstinacy and tendency in an opposite direction.

Again, whenever we fail to recognize all the good done to others through our instrumentality as being so absolutely God's work through the agency of His Spirit in us, and with us that we have no ground whatever for the least glory or self-complacency.

Again, whenever with self-complacency we compare ourselves with others in any respect. It is reported of Whitfield, that on seeing a poor drunkard reeling along the streets, he exclaimed with tears, "But for the grace of God, there goes George Whitfield." Paul could say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Now in whatever respect we may be better than others, in better circumstances outwardly, or in a better state inwardly, we have no reason whatever for boasting. "Who hath made you to differ from another? or what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" says Paul. "But if thou didst receive it, why boastest thou thyself as if thou hast not received it?" If we are better than others, it is only because God has in His wisdom and benevolence secured this result. It was not because we were any better by nature, for we belong to the mass of fallen humanity. We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others, we are only brands plucked out of the burning, are only a little clay, taken from the common lump and molded by the Potter, and are in no respect better, more praise-worthy than others, even the vilest of mankind, only as divine grace has overcome our downward tendency, and over-persuaded us until we have been subdued, and at last given our consent to be thus molded. Brethren, did you see that vile drunkard lying there in the ditch? Did you see his bloated face, his blood-shot eyes, his almost naked carcass rotting in the gutter? As soon as he could speak did you hear him swear and blaspheme? Now mark me, brother; but for the grace of God that is yourself. Had not the grace and sovereign goodness of God surrounded you, wrought within you and without you, to secure different results, you had today been like him, or

perhaps even worse. And if you are not as degraded and wicked and miserable, as any sinner either in or out of hell, no thanks to you. You have no reason for self-complacency. God has brought this about, and all that you can say is that He wrought you over with His grace and His providence, within and without you, till He at last secured your consent.

Woman; are you priding yourself on your modesty, chastity, your comeliness without, or purity within? See that vile harlot. She sits before you on the curb-stone of one of our great cities. She is drunk. She has lost her bonnet, her shoes. She is ragged, polluted, disgraced, profane, a wretch too loathsome to look upon, and too degraded to be thought of without disgust. Now mark me, but for the sovereign grace of God you had been in that harlot's place. To be sure you have been free and voluntary in all your ways. But O! had not sovereign grace been busy arranging all the elements without you, and keeping up a busy play of thought and motive within you; had not God plied you with ten thousand moving considerations, arranged all His plans from eternity, laid all His trains, pressed every consideration and brought about things as He has until He has really persuaded you and overcome your reluctance, where had you been but in the gutter, in a brothel or in hell today? And now mark me again, in what respect soever any man or woman is any better in character or in any better circumstances than the damned in hell, the vilest of the vile, the most dissolute of the dissolute, the most profane of the profane, the most abominable of the abominable, it is owing to the grace of God only. Grace has persuaded you to all this, and all the virtue you have is, that after great reluctance, you have barely suffered yourselves to be persuaded. Now is it for you or me to be self-complacent, to boast ourselves above others, to take the Pharisee's place and thank God on account of our own goodness? Shall we boast of our prudence on our worldly affairs, or of our efforts in our spiritual affairs? Shall we look around on the world of mankind and breathe out a selfish complacent breath, or shall we cry out, "God be merciful to us, sinners." "But for Thy glorious sovereign and preserving grace, we should have been as wicked and as miserable as any of the damned in hell."

Whenever we take credit for being better than the worst, or less miserable than the most miserable, whenever we indulge the least self-complacency

in the comparison of ourselves with any other human beings, or even with any devils in hell, we are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, when we ascribe to our own wisdom or prudence any success which may attend our efforts in any direction, we are rejoicing in our boastings. Who has developed this wisdom and prudence? And who has directed us in this way, and secured this result? Verily God! And to Him belongs all the glory.

Again, when we ascribe to our own virtue the avoidance of any crime, we are rejoicing in our boastings. Whenever we say we should not have been guilty of such and such a crime, or that we should have done thus and thus, which is better than others have done, and have the least self-complacency in these sayings, we don't know ourselves. We are abusing God. We are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, when we have the slightest confidence in ourselves we should do any good, that we should avoid any crime, in short, when we have the slightest confidence in ourselves, in any respect whatever, we are rejoicing in our boastings. For surely we can be depended on for nothing but to sin, and only sin, and that continually, if left to ourselves. And in just so far as we fail to recognize this fact, we rejoice in our boastings. If we imagine that there is anything within us that is any part of ourselves, or for which we have the least occasion to boast, that can secure us against any crime however horrid, we are deceiving ourselves, and are rejoicing in our own boastings.

Again, when we have any confidence at all in the efficiency of our own resolutions, and purposes of good. Whenever we comfort ourselves with the idea that these purposes of ours, will secure any good result whatever unsustained by the grace of God, we are deceived and playing the fool, and are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, whenever we fall short of recognizing the fact that in us apart from grace, there dwelleth no good thing — that whatever attainment we may have made in holiness, still holiness could not live in us except as it is constantly sustained by the divine presence and energy, we deceive ourselves. If we imagine that any attainments in holiness are so thoroughly made, that any virtue is so lodged within us, that it will live a moment if



the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, we are deceived. And whenever we comfort ourselves with any such ideas as these, we are rejoicing in our boastings.

Again, when we overlook the fact that all our tendencies are downward, away from heaven, away from God and towards the depths of hell, we are deceiving ourselves.

Again, whenever we fall short of what the most spiritual saints call self-annihilation, in respect to everything that is good, we are rejoicing in our boastings. By self-annihilation in this connection, is not meant that we are not active agents in obeying God; but that our activity and free agency are so overruled and directed by the grace of God, working without and within us as to secure a result which is the opposite of what had taken place, but for this divine agency.

## II. SHOW THE WICKEDNESS OF REJOICING IN OUR BOASTINGS

**1.** It is wicked because it is rejoicing in a most pernicious falsehood. It is infinitely far from true that we have any good reason for self-complacency. On the other hand it is true that we have infinite reason to be ashamed of our wickedness, our great and astonishing aversion both to do and to be anything which we ought to do or be. And for us to rejoice in ourselves, is a rejoice in our boastings. The least degree of self-complacency in us, is infinitely inconsistent with reason and truth.

Again, it is wicked because it is unjust to take credit to ourselves. The praise belongs to God. All goodness originates with Him. He has at the greatest expense and with the greatest pains-taking barely secured our consent; and shall we after all this persuasion pride ourselves for being barely overcome by His strong persuasions and influences, so that we merely consent to do our duty?

Again, this is wicked because it is really robbing God of His glory; that is, it is attempting to rob Him, and is taking credit to ourselves where the credit belongs to Him only.

Again, for us to take the credit to ourselves, is denying the work and grace of the Holy Spirit.

Again, it is overlooking and denying the providence of God without and the grace of God within, that has secured all these results.

Again, it is a virtual denial of the Bible. For the Bible takes the ground that we have no reason for self-complacency, but infinite reason for humiliation and self-loathing.

Again, all self-complacency is spiritual pride, is infinitely unreasonable and odious in the sight of God. It is setting aside the gospel and is opposition to God.

## REMARKS

**1.** It is very important to understand the views of inspired writers on this subject. Hear Paul, "I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Again, "I am crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," and not by my own faith. Inspired writers seem fully to have recognized the truth of this discourse, and everywhere insist that God works all our good works in us; that it is God that works in us to will and do of His own good pleasure; and in short, that it is sovereign almighty grace that secures all human virtue.

**2.** There is a great deal of rejoicing in our boastings. It is amazing to see how much of this there is of which persons are not themselves aware. The egotism and filthy boasting with which the world and even the church are filled, must be infinitely disgusting and abominable in the sight of God.

**3.** It is to be feared that there is a great deal of this boasting in spirit, where there is but little of it in form. Often, no doubt, much is ascribed in words to the grace of God, of which men give the glory to themselves and not to God.

**4.** No person gets clear of rejoicing in his boastings, unless he apprehends what it is to be "*in Christ Jesus*;" to live by the faith of the Son of God. To have that faith, patience, love, meekness, gentleness, goodness, and all

the graces of Christ developed within himself until he understands what it is to put off self and put on Christ in the sense of becoming dead to his own goodness, and alive only in the life and activity of Jesus Christ.

**5.** Again, I remark that just in proportion as persons become really holy, they are indisposed to take any credit to themselves. Nothing is more offensive and infinitely abominable, shocking, and disgusting to a sanctified soul than self-complacency. Every shade and every degree of it is loathsome as the very filth of hell.

**6.** It is often very difficult to speak exactly the language of our own feelings and sentiments on this subject. We find Paul, as it were, often over-hauling himself. When he has spoken of himself as being good, or as having done anything good, he speaks as if he would take it back, and say — not I, not I, but Christ that dwelleth in me.

**7.** From this subject it is easy to see how Christians get into darkness. Whenever they indulge in the least self-complacency in any respect, they sin, grieve the Spirit of God, and get into darkness. Oftentimes they seem to be entirely ignorant of the cause of their darkness. They look around and ask wherein they have sinned. Finding nothing in their outward conduct to accuse themselves of, they are at a great loss to account of this spiritual desertion. Now if they would but direct their minds to thoughts and feelings indulged, they would often learn that they have been at least dividing the glory and praise of their goodness with God. They have been stealing from God. They have been secretly filching a jewel from the diadem of Christ, and would fain place it as a crown on their own head.

**8.** Spiritual pride, or rejoicing in our boastings is one of the most common forms of backsliding. How few persons there are that can bear prosperity, temporal or spiritual, without indulging in self-complacency, and thus grieving away the Spirit of God. This no doubt, more frequently than anything else, causes the young convert to stumble. He stumbles without knowing at what he stumbles. He becomes spiritually proud without observing it. He rejoices in his own boastings, and falls, and sadly dishonors God.

**9.** Revivals of religion are more frequently put down by this sin than by any other. The minister and the lay brethren are powerfully moved by

divine grace, and bestir themselves. God pours out His Spirit and a revival ensues. Directly they begin to be self-complacent. God is blessing their labors. They begin to tell what *I* have done, and what *I* have done, and how God blessed me in this labor and in that — how this sermon, and that exhortation, and that prayer, and that fast had resulted thus and thus. And perhaps ever and anon there is a little puff in the newspaper, and a self-complacent sending out and trumpeting of our own fame, that the world and the church may hear. The Spirit of God is grieved; He turns away His face; He withholds His hand. Young converts stumble, sinners return to stupidity, the church return every one to his own way, and desolation drives its plough-share over the fair heritage of God.

**10.** Many persons apparently good have so rejoiced in boastings, that God seems to have left them. This has been true of ministers oftentimes — of those who have labored as evangelists, awhile successfully — of many laymen who have once known what it was to prevail with God. They have rejoiced in their boastings until God has forsaken them. He has thrown them aside, and there they lie and rot; and if they escape the depths of hell, it will be only by the persevering grace of God.

**11.** This subject ought to be a warning to all classes.

**12.** We are never right only as we lose sight of self, and rejoice only in the Lord, and glory only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Persons are never so nearly right as when they have the least apprehension of being right — as when they have the least thought of their own comeliness and virtue — when they are the most completely empty of all thoughts of their own goodness, and their minds are most entirely absorbed with the consideration of the goodness of God, and when all the powers of the mind are directed away from the contemplation of self, and most engrossed with the work of the Lord, the goodness and the infinite grace of God.

**13.** Persons who are really in a sanctified state, are not occupied with rejoicing in themselves. If they are really sanctified, it is impossible that they should be thus engaged in self-complacent rejoicing. For when sanctified, they are really emptied of all self-complacent rejoicings, and filled only with a sense of the adorable and sovereign grace of God. And with the utmost loathing and abhorrence of themselves, as for themselves

they can say with all their hearts, “In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.” “By the grace of God alone, I am what I am.”

# THE FOLLY OF REFUSING TO BE SAVED

*“Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” — Proverbs 17:16.*

In ordinary discourse the term ‘fool’ is used in various senses; but generally in only one sense in the Bible. We sometimes speak of a natural fool, meaning one that is born so, or that becomes so by some injury of the brain. Sometimes persons are called fools who are deranged; and sometimes the term is applied to those who in common matters act unwisely.

Moral fools are those whose intelligence remains unimpaired, but who refuse to use it, and who give themselves up to be controlled by their sensibility and their passions as if they had no intelligence at all. This is the sense in which the Bible uses the term, fool.

It deserves special notice that this is the worst and most disgraceful sense of the term. Fools in most of the other senses of this word are not much if at all accountable; perhaps they are not moral agents at all; and hence the term as applied to them is not reproachful. We may pity them; but it were unreasonable and cruel to blame or even despise them.

But a moral fool, who has reason and will not use it, who gives himself up to his own gratification as if he had no intelligence and meant to stultify all the sense God has given him — he is a mean man, and the term fool which the Bible applies to him is intrinsically and most justly reproachful.

The term wisdom in scripture, denotes true religion, virtue, or holiness. It implies a knowledge of things as they are, and especially some right knowledge of God, and a corresponding conformity of heart to this knowledge. It always involves these two elements; enlightened intelligence, and a systematic yielding of the heart to the control of known truth.

The meaning of our text is obvious. It asks why sinners should possess all the means of salvation, and have the opportunity of laying hold of infinite good, and yet have no heart to use it. Wherefore is it that they have so

great a price lodged in their hands? Why does God give them the means to buy, when they don't want the commodity?

The text assumes that sinners really have all the requisite means of salvation — that they have no heart to lay hold of it though it be an infinite good; and that, acting thus, they are really fools. It is taken for granted that having price enough in their hands to buy infinite good and yet refusing to buy, they are fools indeed. Then the inquiry is pressed; why is this so? Why are so many facilities afforded, and no use made of them?

This naturally leads us to inquire in the first place *what constitutes the price which sinners have in their hands?*

To this we answer,

**1.** *God has removed the obstacles to their salvation by giving Christ to die for them.* Now if they will only give themselves up to Christ and accept His atonement for their sins, there remains no need of their suffering the penalty of the law. They are indeed condemned to hell already, and most justly; but through the death of Christ, the redemption-money is put into their hands, and they may redeem themselves if they will.

**2.** *God tenders to them the advocacy and mediation of Christ.* It only remains that they accept it, and it is theirs — freely, faithfully, unceasingly. God has given His own Son to mediate between sinners on the one hand, and the infinite government and throne of Jehovah on the other. Now He only asks the sinner, will you have My own Son for your prevailing advocate? I “hear Him always.”

**3.** *Christ Himself in all His official relations is offered to sinners.* Every thing that He is appointed to do, He offers to do for them. The true Christian can say in truth, Jesus is mine, my Teacher, my Mediator, my atoning Sacrifice, my everlasting Friend, my All. Now everything that Christ can do for the soul, He offers to do for every sinner. The price is put into the sinner's hands to obtain this immeasurable good.

**4.** *God offers him also the Holy Spirit.* Yea, this Spirit is given, is sent to strive with even the wayward, unwilling sinner. Fain would the Spirit lead him to forsake his sins and live. The heavenly voice calls, entreats, implores; the Divine Agent throws light before his mind; awakens solemn

thought; bears long with his stubbornness and folly; so that no sinner can say — There is none to plead with me that I would turn and live, for the Spirit of God is doing this very thing.

**5.** *All the promises are given the sinner.* God has given you all these exceeding great and precious promises that He may encourage and incite you to lay hold of everlasting life. They cover every want you have or can have, they come down to meet you just where you are, like a golden chain let down from the eternal throne to lift you out of the horrible pit, and raise you up to heaven. O, what promises! Surely such words could come from none but God! What a price are they! They are written pledges — the express bonds of the government of God — *government bonds*, sinner, enough to insure you the infinite riches of the treasury of Jehovah, yet they are laid at your feet — a price put into your hands to get wisdom.

**6.** God gives you all things requisite to life and godliness. All needed grace is provided and proffered you to make sure to you eternal life. Provision enough is here to meet all your need for time and for eternity. You may have the prayers of this people, their sympathies, their counsels; all the aid they can afford you in your way to heaven. You cannot imagine a thing essential to your salvation which God has not furnished you — not one thing. On His part all is done. Nothing remains except what necessarily devolves on you to do.

There are some things essential to the salvation of the sinners which God cannot do. They must be done by the sinner himself. God cannot repent in your stead, you must repent for yourself. Neither can God believe on Christ for you; this also you must of necessity do yourself. The Deity cannot be born again for you, so that it shall answer instead of your “making yourself a new heart and a right spirit.” It is no part of the provisions of salvation to relieve you of the responsibility of these duties. Indeed it is in the nature of the case impossible that you should be saved unless your own mind consents to obey God and accedes to the whole plan of salvation. No other being in the universe can give this consent of the mind in your stead, so as to exonerate you from the responsibility of doing it yourself.

But everything that God could do, He has done. He knew the whole ground beforehand. His eye ran through the whole subject; He knew your



guilt and condemnation, and consequent need of an atonement; He knew your ignorance and need of instruction; your waywardness and consequent need of guidance and quickening; your reluctance and aversion, and consequent need of mighty influences to constrain you to turn and live. Hence it is with the utmost truth that the Deity, looking over the whole case, says of you as of His ancient people, “what could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

And now in view of all that God has done to bless the sinner by putting in his hand a price of infinite value, how can we say less than this, that every sinner who has this price given him to get wisdom and will not use it, is a fool, really a *fool* in the worst sense of that term?

Sinner, your conduct is infinitely unreasonable. It would be wicked to call you anything else than a fool. If any one should call you anything else than a fool, he would be a liar like yourself. You can rightly bear no other name than this, No other word so perfectly expresses your real character, and so well distinguishes you from all other beings in the universe. By pre-eminence, and in distinction from all other beings, you are a fool. Yes, a fool and a liar in the worst sense of the term are you — in the same sense in which Satan is a fool and a liar. Did I say, in the same sense in which Satan is a fool? I take that back. The devil has no price put into his hands to get wisdom. Who knows that if he had, he would play the fool with it as you do? Go bear this price to hell, and then put it in the hands of Satan and his angels, and see if they will scorn it as you do. Let them have Bible societies there, and the glorious effusions of the Holy Spirit, and let the tidings ring through all the deep caverns of hell — “Behold now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Who knows that they would hear with cold indifference, and spurn with proud contempt as some of you do? We are too fast then, in saying that Satan and his legions are as wicked fools as those ungodly sinners who will not have salvation. We should not condemn them before they are proved guilty. Put on trial, they might show vastly more wisdom than you do. It is by no means improbable that you are greater fools than they. We do not know that they would not reject the offer of eternal life. True they once played the fool when they broke away from their rightful allegiance to God. They did then just what you did when you began to sin; but no offers of mercy ever fell

upon their ears. Who knows that they would have been so great fools as to have trampled Mercy underneath their feet? Surely they have never evinced that superlative folly which characterizes the sinner who will not have a redemption which costs him nothing but which cost the Son of God a cruel death.

But let us enter into some particulars which show the infinite folly and unreasonableness of the sinner's course.

**1.** Sinners prefer their own gratification to the happiness of God and of the universe. They had rather please themselves than please God, though they know that God's pleasure is perfectly right and perfectly vital to the happiness of the universe. O, what infinite folly to be willing to see the well-being of the universe put in jeopardy, or even sacrificed, to secure their own selfish gratification!

What should you think of a man who should see a city taking fire and know that by an effort he might extinguish the fire and save the city; but prefers some slight gratification, and sees it burn down. He had rather read a novel, or finish his dinner, or play with a whistle, any such paltry gratification he places before the saving of a city from devouring fire! O, you would cry out, What a contemptible fool! What a wicked fool, and a wretch! O, you would cry — what! would he stop to read his novel, or finish his dinner, or jingle a rattle-box, and give this mean gratification the preference over the salvation of a city from fire! What a fool!

We do not call the fowls of the air or the beasts of the field fools, for they know no better; but the beings whom God has given intelligence and who then make themselves like brutes, should be called fools in the worst sense of that term.

**2.** Sinners are fools because they give time the preference over eternity. These little interests that can endure but for a moment, they value more than those momentous interests that must endure through ceaseless ages. Just think of this! They not only hazard, but cast away eternal interests for those which are transient as a dream. If this is not folly, what can be?

**3.** Sinners prefer their own present gratification to eternal happiness with God. God promises them His own infinite smiles of love and favor; they

of their own accord forfeit this blessedness every day they live for the sake of the pitiful pleasures of sin. What infinite folly is this!

**4.** Sinners are fools because they really care more for men than for God; care more for the good opinion of men than of God; are more afraid of offending men than God; care more to be loved by men than to be loved by God, and would sooner please man than God. All this you know is the fact. Some of you are conscious that it is your state of mind this very moment. You can all look back to the time when you practically acted and really felt as I have just described. You thought a thousand fold more of men than of God. Was there ever greater folly than this in hell?

How do you suppose that angels must regard this? What can be more wonderful to them than such folly in beings whom God has made capable of wisdom? What can astonish and amaze them more than to see how men treat God? How they must feel to see men treat their Infinite Father with absolutely no respect whatever — with not a thousandth part so much respect as they show to most of their fellow mortals! O, they never saw God so abused and insulted in their worlds of light and love! O, they cry out — why does God bear with such outrageous insult? Why does He let any sinner breathe His air or see His sun light another moment?

And if they wonder that God should bear with the sinner's folly, surely they cannot any the less wonder that sinners should be such fools. O, they say, why will those sinners lose heaven and go down to hell for absolutely no good reason whatever — nay, when every imaginable reason urges them to win eternal bliss and shun eternal woe?

**5.** Sinners show their folly inasmuch as they care more for their bodies than they do for their souls. What hosts there are over all the land who really care more for dress than they do for heaven; or more for the low forms of sensual gratification than for the noble enjoyments of benevolent affections. O what folly to put the body before the soul! And what *is* that body, sinner, for which you care so much? Pray what is it made of, and what *is* it? Made of the same matter which last year was gathered in from your wheat field — the same which a little farther back was carted out from the dung-hill; — now you are strutting about with a portion of this same substance in your body; and you are proud of it, and value it more than your immortal soul! And where may this choice body of yours be

when another summer shall have come and gone? Where? There is a place for it on yonder hill, and there are worms there to consume it. Ah, sinner, is this worth more to you than the soul that never dies?

Your soul — what is it? A spark of God — a living, thinking agent, made like it's Author to exist onward, and still onward through everlasting ages. In its essential nature as intelligent, and moral, it is made like God. Like God, your soul must exist eternally, reaping forever the fruits of seed sown in these passing years of your existence.

And yet this soul you value less than that earthly body! You would think a man mad if he should pay more attention to his shoes than to his feet — if he should value the cloth he wears more than the body that wears it! Yet your folly is greater far than this.

**6.** The sinner's folly is apparent also in this; *he prizes other books more than the Bible*. He reads other authors much; the Bible little, or perhaps none at all.

What strange conduct is this. Consider, of what does the Bible treat? Is it merely of history, or of philosophy, or is it to be valued merely for its poetry? No, no; it is far more than this; it is a guide from earth to heaven — rather a guide from the way of hell to the way of heaven; it leads away from the doom of the lost to the joys of the blest. It puts into your hands a pearl of great price. O how precious! But in its place you put Byron and Shakespeare — and what next? Perhaps Tom Thumb or Don Quixote — nothing can be so mean or so frivolous that you will not prefer it before the glorious word of God.

Some of you probably know so little about the Bible that you would not know whether the preacher had quoted from the Bible or the Koran! Shame on such ignorance of such a book as the Bible! Let me ask these young men and young women; how much have you read in your Bible the past year? Is it so much that you are advancing in that knowledge of God which it reveals? Are you sure that you have made some fresh accessions to your knowledge of the Bible during the past week? Suppose your Bible could speak and were called on to testify how much you had read in it; what sort of testimony would it bear? If that Bible could also testify how much you have neglected its pages and how much you have read other

books of far less importance; if it could testify also to the small interest you have felt when you seemed to be reading its sacred lines and to your great interest, when you have read other pages inspired with far other spirits; what a testimony would be borne! How full of condemnation to your soul! Let this come home to every heart.

**7.** The sinner's madness appears also in this; they postpone the one thing needful for almost any trifling matter. Religion is put off and made to give way to every thing else. One man pleads that he must pay his debts first; another must get his lessons first, or perhaps get through college first; and then, after all the more important things are done, he will attend to religion. Thus in practice religion is made the last of all things, and in time of being attended to it comes last of all. In theory, however, these same men will admit and even maintain that it should be first of all.

Now there can be no greater or surer mark of folly than to pursue a course directly the opposite of what we know to be right. This every sinner is doing.

You cannot conceive a more desperate folly in the universe than that of the sinner who has such a price put into his hands to get wisdom but who has no heart to improve it. Do you suppose there was ever heard of in the whole universe anything so shocking, so monstrous, so absurd, so foolish, so hateful, so devilish — devilish did I say? — so much worse than devilish, as this folly of the sinner who might buy heaven, but chooses to throw away his price and go to hell! O, this is the perfection of folly! Surely nothing in the line of folly can outdo this!

But we must pass now to answer the inquiry — “*Why is this* that such a price is put into the hands of sinners, when God who gives them the price foreknew the madness of their hearts?” Perhaps some are ready to think that God was not very wise to do so much for the salvation of the finally lost, and then leave things so that they do ultimately perish.

There are some things here to be taken into consideration in order to get the whole subject before us.

**1.** The making of these provisions has been instrumental in actually turning the hearts of many from sin to God. They could never have been saved if

no such provision had been made. Their eternal happiness is a great good to the universe.

**2.** God has put this price into the hands of a great many who never use it, because in no other way could He give the price to those who would use it. In every age and country where the gospel has been preached, “some have believed the things spoken and some have believed not.” How could the former have heard to their salvation, if the latter had not also been permitted to hear, although they refuse to obey and it issues in their damnation?

**3.** God doubtless designed to leave all sinners utterly without excuse. Hence He gives them the most perfect opportunity to secure their own salvation, and there leaves them — alone responsible for rejecting the gospel if so they choose, and thus deciding their own destiny. It is His policy to leave free agents to act freely and bear alone the responsibility of their own free actions. So shall “every mouth be stopped, and all the world” of the ungodly stand guilty before both God and the universe.

Again, it is plainly revealed that God’s design in putting such a price under such circumstances into the hands of sinners is to *glorify Himself*; that is, to pursue such a course as all the universe will approve as being perfectly holy and perfectly honorable to Himself. They will see that God was moved throughout by the purest love — that every act of His, breathes good will to man — that God plainly has done and has intended to do all He wisely could do for the salvation of all, even of those who will finally choose death and have their choice. All intelligent beings will be perfectly convinced that no sinner ever perished because of any want of love for his soul on God’s part, nor for want of any effort that God could reasonably and wisely make for his salvation. They will see that every lost soul is lost because they would not have salvation when God had done enough on His part, and nothing remained but for them to do theirs. Then, seeing all this, they will glorify God. They will most perfectly exonerate Him from all responsibility for the eternal death of the sinner. They will infinitely applaud and adore both the wisdom and the love of God in this whole scheme of salvation.

And yet we often meet with a sinner who is full of impious fault-finding against God. Let us pause and reason with such a sinner.

Why should you look up into the face of your Maker and say, “Did you not know that I should act just so?” Your Maker might answer, “yes, I foreknew it, but the universe did not, and they never would have known it if it had not taken place before their eyes. If I had forborne to create those who will finally perish and had simply told the universe who I foresaw they would have acted in case I had created them, no intelligent beings in heaven, earth, or hell, would have believed Me. If I had attempted to show them how you would have rejected My dying Son, and done despite to My Spirit; how long you would have resisted every effort I could make; how you would have hardened your heart under the richest mercies I could have shown you, and forced your way to hell through the strongest persuasions, and fiercest terrors I could have thrown in your pathway to ruin, no one would have believed it possible. Suppose I had done just what you now demand; suppose I had forborne to make provisions of grace for those who would despise them, and had forborne to create those sinners, who if created would not embrace the gospel, and instead of letting such sin and such grace develop itself in action, had simply proclaimed what it would have been; who would have believed Me?” Neither the folly of the rejecting sinner, nor the grace of the long-suffering Savior could have been believed if facts had not compelled belief.

It is doubtless infinitely wise in God to make the fullest possible manifestations of His own love and wisdom. He will so develop His own course towards the wicked that no stain can attach to His own blessed throne. He will so arrange all His course that no suspicion can arise in heaven, no murmur spring up in hell.

O what glorious developments there will be of the great fact that God is *love!* This alone will explain the reason why there is a price put into the sinner’s hands to get wisdom, though he has no heart to improve it.

## REMARKS

**1.** Incidental to this arrangement is the fact that the sinner’s refusing to improve the price put into his hands will greatly aggravate his own guilt. It must be so. No sinner can possibly avoid this result. If you will not improve your facilities for knowing and obeying God, and securing heaven,

you must become vastly more guilty than without this price in your hands you could have been. The Bible is most explicit on this point. “To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the final day than for those cities which Christ taught. Everybody knows that reason harmonizes on this point with revelation.

**2.** Your ultimate damnation will be greatly aggravated if you will utterly reject this price put into your hands for wisdom. It had been better for you never to have heard of the gospel — yea; better never to have been born than to have salvation made possible and then rejected by your foolish guilty choice.

Perhaps you would stop me here and ask, “why then did God give me birth at all? Why in such a land as this; why among Bibles, Sabbaths, and Christian friends? Why did He give me all these things when He knew that I would abuse them, and thus aggravate my own damnation?”

Sinner, does it become you to ask such questions as these? Are you not perfectly free in all you do? Is it not of your own free choice that you keep on in sin, despite of all God does to stop you and turn you back to obedience? Are you not most fully conscious that you pursue your career of rebellion against God, of *choice*, and of *choice* do not embrace the Lord Jesus as your Savior? Who then have you to blame but yourself?

You may lie down at last in hell, yet will God appear glorious in all that He has done. He will appear before all heaven, and all hell too, to have been kind and most sincere — most truly desirous of your salvation; yea infinitely concerned and anxious to save you. So anxious that He spared not His own Son, but made Him for a propitiation for the sins of the world. And *who* has fought God in all His efforts to save you? Who, but yourself? Who then is in fault? Who must bear the responsibility of the sin of your soul? Surely not its Maker, for He sent His own Son to save that soul! Have *you* done as much to save it? Have you not done everything you could to destroy it? Then on whom lies the guilt and responsibility of its eternal ruin?

Now, for the sake of relieving you of the burden of this responsibility and guilt, shall the Deity withhold these glorious developments of His own



wisdom and love? Shall He, for your sakes, rob the universe of the blessings accruing from these developments?

The text rather assumes than asserts the fact that the sinner has no heart to improve his price for salvation, yet this is an appalling fact. None can deny it. Precisely this is the great and the only difficulty in the way of your being saved. You need this salvation greatly, but you do not feel that need, you do not *care* for this salvation; you don't desire it and ask it with any earnestness which at all corresponds with its value. How can you expect to find by such seeking? You long for happiness — not for holiness. You would fain be saved from hell and not from sin. For a salvation from sin you have no heart whatever, you would like to be saved from hell by some scheme of your own providing; but this scheme of God's providing, you scorn. You cast it from you, and dash it away. You cannot bear to be wholly indebted to the grace of God for it, and you do not like another claim which it imposes, viz. that you should wholly die to sin.

Such an abuse of one's own intelligence or reason is the greatest curse a man can inflict upon himself. It is infinitely more wretched and cursed than to be a beast, nay, more than to be transformed to a beast. I have sometimes seen persons who were convinced of this. They saw themselves so guilty and so utterly without excuse that they envied the very beasts, and longed to become beasts themselves. Yes, they have sometimes cried out — O that I might become like the toad, or that dog which is kicked about the streets. O, sinner, if you will not yield to the law of your reason, how dreadful to you, must be the curse of having a reason! How fearful the guilt and the doom of being made a rational being, and of having prostituted your reason to the basest of folly!

Again it is impossible really and truly to respect impenitent sinners. Nobody can respect them. They do not respect one another. They do not even respect themselves. Their course is such as most utterly to forbid all proper self-respect. Self-respect demands for its foundation what by no means exists in their case. There can be no proper self-respect unless we are conscious of acting according to the best light we have. Every man who acts otherwise must be, in his honest moments, ashamed of himself. Hence a man can have no just self-respect, who knows that he has the price of

salvation placed in his hands, and yet is conscious of having no heart to use it.

Plainly then, a man who forfeits his own self-respect, and the respect of all mankind, has no right to demand the respect of his fellow men. You cannot respect him, any more than you can respect the devil. How would you feel if you should see the devil? Could you treat him with respect? Suppose you had before your mind in an instant his whole character — his towering intellect, and his utter perversion of it to hellish purposes — his whole career of malice and rebellion against God; could you respect him? Add to all this the supposition that Satan has had a Savior provided and offered, and that he has proudly and madly spurned this salvation; suppose that God has given him the Holy Spirit, and watched over him and kept him out of his deserved place in hell for half a century, “not willing that he should perish, but that he should come to repentance;” and yet Satan had only grown tenfold more desperate in sin. Then, knowing all this of him, could you respect him? Oh, no; your soul would recoil from such a monster in wickedness with horror! Oh, you would cry, what do I see? The very prince of devils — a being who has fought against God, who has spurned the redeeming love, and the redeeming blood of Jesus — who has resisted and grieved away the Holy Ghost, and has madly sought to ruin himself forever and ever! O what a being is this? Could you forbear to curse him? Your soul would so deeply execrate such conduct, methinks the spirit of cursing would burn in your soul, and you could not forbear to cry aloud; O cursed be the monster that can fight against God, and deny His Son, and do despite to His Spirit! Let curses scathe the being who can stultify his intelligence for the sake of being as wicked as he can be.

And in these feelings of deep horror at such dreadful sin and folly, there might be no malevolence; it might be only the deep response of the inner soul against such wrong, the burning testimony of uprightness against such horrible perversity. Listen to St. Paul. “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, accursed.” So the pure spirits in heaven feel. When they see your wickedness they will be horrified, just as you would be to see the devil himself, and to see disclosed the depths of his depravity.

Again, it is impossible that we should not intensely loathe the conduct of sinners. It infinitely deserves to be loathed, and all right-minded beings must loathe it.

Again, it is just as impossible that sinners should not loathe themselves whenever they come to take a fair and full view of their own conduct. Now, I beg of you, sinners, not to complain of others for not giving you that respect which you cannot give yourself. The fact is, that both you and we are so made that we cannot rationally have any other feelings than compassionate abhorrence of such a character as yours. All mortal beings must abhor you. All hell, all heaven, and if there be any other moral beings in the universe, they need but to see what you are, and what you have done, and they will utterly abhor you.

Let me go round and ask this assembly. Young friend, you have lived here these many years in impenitence, how ought this church to regard you? You have been rejecting salvation all your life. You have lived through several revivals in this place, hardening your heart more and more, and becoming more and more mad in sin. Four years or more perhaps you have spent in an institution founded in prayer, watched with tears, taught by men who labor for Christ, and supported by the “two mites” gathered from the humble cottages where there are tears and prayers for Zion; in such an institution you have passed your four years term, and still can scorn the service and the redeeming blood of Jesus. O, when you came up unto this stage to deliver your commencement speech, would it be strange if hosts of the “spirits unseen, who walk the earth” should break through the curtain that commonly veils them from our view and vent their hisses and curses upon you before the great assembly? Would it be an undeserved doom if God Himself should hurl you from this stage to hell?

It is at least safe to say that there would be bitter grief over the career of folly. How does that praying mother feel? I knew him well, she says, he was needy and I took him into my family and boarded him; he was sick, and I nursed him; he was far from God and I prayed for him, and with many tears have I besought him to return to his own Savior — O must it be in vain! And there is the agent who labored to collect funds to sustain the Institution. Faint and sick he held on his weary way, gathering up the little offerings made by piety and self-denial upon the altar of Immanuel.

He wanted to raise up a spiritual ministry; he felt that the world needed such a ministry and he would not shrink from being spent in such a service. And yet, to such an institution you come and pervert all its facilities for education that you may train yourself for mightier warfare against God, and for pulling down a heavier damnation upon your own head.

You know that these things are so. Then do not call this scolding, and let your heart rise up against it. No. It is not scolding, but is truth and deep compassionate sympathy. When you get to hell, will you parade yourself in your pride and supposed dignity? Nay; you will hide your head in shame and everlasting self-reproach.

When sinners set up a claim to the respect of their fellow men, they are dishonest. They demand what they know no man can honestly give. What then can we say of you? Only that you are a poor degraded fool.

Now, do not suppose from anything that I have said, that angels and spirits do not pity you. They do. I pity all the devils in hell. Often, as I have thought of their condition, I have said, “poor devils, poor devils, how much I pity you!”

Do the people treat you kindly? Everything that is better than the fires and curses of hell, is better than you deserve — is gratuitous kindness. Don’t imagine that this is real respect for you. No, it ought not to be, for you don’t respect yourself and never can, so long as you madly fight against God and against your own well-being.

It is an infinite pity that you should have this great price in your hands, and no heart to use it. O, what an infinite pity! You need salvation, and God has in great mercy, and at great expense brought it within your reach. What is that which the sinner holds in his hands! O, it is the price to get wisdom; alas, that he will not use it! Salvation is brought to his parched and burning lips, but he will not drink. Madness is in his heart.

Go to your closet sinner, and tell God — say to Him; Thou hast held me up from hell unto this day, and given for me Thine own Son to die. Christ put into my hands the price of wisdom — but Lord, I have not the least inclination to use it. I feel nothing in my heart but contempt of this great

salvation. I cannot forsake my sins today, if I knew I should thus secure the richest glories of Heaven.

Now, sinner, be honest enough to say this before God, and confess it before men. Fix your eye steadfastly on this dreadful pride and madness of your own heart, till you loathe, abhor, and forever renounce it.

# THE CHURCH BOUND TO CONVERT THE WORLD

*“And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:18-20.*

In discussing this subject I shall endeavor to show;

- I. WHAT THE COMMAND TO TEACH ALL NATIONS, MEANS.**
- II. ON WHOM IT IS OBLIGATORY.**
- III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.**
- IV. CONDITIONS OF OBEDIENCE.**
- V. THE CAUSES OF FAILURE.**
- VI. THE GREAT GUILT OF FAILURE.**

## I. WHAT DOES THE COMMAND, “GO AND TEACH ALL NATIONS,” MEAN?

In the margin of your Bibles, you will read, go and disciple or make disciples of all nations. This is undoubtedly the real meaning of the original. The word teach in the nineteenth verse, is not the same word which is rendered teach in the twentieth verse. The true meaning of the command is, go and make disciples or Christians of all nations.

## II. ON WHOM IS THIS COMMAND OBLIGATORY?

It was addressed by Christ to those of His disciples who were then present, but doubtless was intended for all Christians, for it is not at all

likely that Christ expected the disciples then present to do all this work. He doubtless meant to devolve the responsibility upon all Christians, to rest upon their consciences in all coming time until the work should be done.

### III. THE THIRD INQUIRY IS, WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS COMMAND?

- 1.** The command itself implies ability to obey it. Every command of God implies this in the strongest manner. It should be remembered that God is perfect in both love and wisdom: therefore He cannot be so unjust as to demand of us an impossibility, nor so ignorant as not to know the real limits of our powers.
- 2.** But again let it be observed that Christ assumes our ability to obey this command on the ground that He has all power in heaven and in earth and has promised to be with the church in this work. In the eighteenth verse He says, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." The command follows; "Go ye, *therefore*, that is for this reason, because I have all power in heaven and in earth, go and make Christians of all nations; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." We see then that Christ assumes our ability on the ground that He has all power in heaven and earth, and promises to be with us always even unto the end of the world; pledging His divine agency to work within us to will and to do, and without us to open the way providentially for our labor, and withal, to work by His Spirit in those to whom we publish the gospel. Thus Christ exerts His divine power in heaven and on earth so far as it is needed in accomplishing this great work.
- 3.** The command implies that the great work of the church militant is, to make disciples of all nations; in other words, to convert the world to God.
- 4.** It implies that this is their only work, that the only business they have on the earth is to glorify God in the world's conversion. They are to do or say nothing, and be nothing, more or less than is conducive to this end. To this their whole being, time, influence, and possessions are to be consecrated. In that solemn parting hour, Christ doubtless meant to give

them His whole mind in these few last words; Go, apply yourselves directly to the conversion of the world, and finish the great work which I have begun. I have given you the example; let your eye too be single, and your devotion unwearied and entire.

#### IV. I AM IN THE NEXT PLACE TO CONSIDER THE CONDITIONS OF OBEDIENCE TO THIS COMMAND

**1.** The first condition which I mention is, hearty and entire consecration to this work. The church will never accomplish it, until they go forth in the true spirit of the requirement, being devoted with a single eye to this work as Christ was. By this it is not intended that every Christian should be a preacher of the gospel, for there are a great many kinds of work to be done. Preaching is but a small part of the labor. Printing, and writing, the mechanic arts, agriculture, commerce, merchandise, and in short all the useful employments of this world are to be employed by the church as parts of this great work. But they are all to be pursued with the same end, that is, to convert the world.

Again, not only must ministers be consecrated to this work, but lay-men and women also. Whatever the immediate occupation of each individual is, let him pursue it with the same singleness of eye, and entire consecration to the great end of the world's conversion that ministers are bound to have in preaching the gospel. Everybody understands that ministers ought to preach for the glory of God, and ought to consecrate themselves to the work of the world's conversion, that this is their great business, and that they really apostatize in heart from their work whenever they fail of giving themselves up heart and soul to it. Now this is true of ministers; and it is equally true of all Christians. That Christian who tills his ground, or stands behind his counter, or writes, or prints, or does anything else, is bound to be as entirely consecrated to the glory of God and the world's conversion, as the minister ought to be, and unless he is he can never be saved. Lay-men and women judge right in respect to what is required of ministers in this matter, but they should understand that precisely the same is required of them. Until this is recognized by the church at large, and until the



followers of Christ in every sect consecrate themselves to this work, with as single an eye as that which ministers are bound to have, the work can never be performed.

**2.** Another condition is, *union of effort*. By united effort I mean the opposite of sectarian effort. By union among Christians I do not mean that they must all be in all respect of one opinion, but that they should be one in heart, and in respect to doctrinal opinions be agreed in all the fundamental points, also be agreed in tolerating each other, and allowing each other the most perfect liberty of opinion in respect to all points not fundamental. They must agree to differ on minor points without controversy or jangling. They must love each other so intensely and labor for the world's conversion so sincerely as not at all to stick on any of the minor points of Christian doctrine. If the church waits till all her members think alike on minor points, the world will never be converted; or if she expects to convert the world while cut up into sects and jangling parties, she is entirely deceived. A sectarian church can never convert the world to God, any more than so many Bramins could. If they convert them to their respective parties, this is by no means converting them to God; it only makes them sectarians. I am humbly of opinion, that until union prevails in the church in the sense above described, the world can never be converted. But more of this in another place.

**3.** Another condition of obedience to this command is, the realization of individual responsibility. The fact is that there is a strange shrinking away in this matter. Christians do not seem to realize that every man and woman of them is pledged on the solemnity of an oath to do his and her utmost to convert the world to God. In making a profession of religion they pledge implicit obedience to Christ. Now this is His last, and I may say, His great command. This is, as it were, a summary of all His requirements. It is the condensation of the whole of gospel duty, to convert the world. Now to the accomplishment of this end, every Christian of every age stands pledged. His whole being, influence, time, property, talents, resources, everything he has or is or can control, are pledged to this work on the solemnity of an oath. Nothing less than this is implied in pledging obedience to Christ and in making a public profession of religion. Now how is it that so few professors of religion have this idea standing out in strong development before them as the great idea which they are to aim

constantly at realizing? Until this comes to be the omnipresent idea of the church, the great thing at which not only the whole but every individual aims, and which all endeavor constantly to accomplish, the world will never be converted. Every Christian man, woman, and child, must address himself and herself decidedly and exclusively to this work, or it will not be done.

**4.** The church must not expect to effect this wholly, or even principally through the instrumentality of a learned ministry. It is perfectly absurd for the church to expect ever to send forth a sufficient number of men, learned in the common acceptance of the term, to convert the world. Some learned men are indispensable to the accomplishment of this work. We need learned men to translate the Bible, to write books, and critical commentaries, to bring forth everything that belongs to the literature and philology of the Bible. These men have their places and their use, and are very important, and indeed indispensable to the accomplishment of this work. Yet really but little more than this can be expected of that part of the ministry which is devoted to the literature of the Bible. They have not time nor are they the men to go right forth and reap the harvest. They are as it were engaged in manufacturing the tools and preparing them for the work. They are stationed here and there to do a multitude of things which the less learned cannot do. But it should not be for a moment supposed that colleges and theological seminaries are going to provide men enough for the world's conversion. The fact is that lay-men and women must come up to this work and make personal and direct effort, and really preach the gospel; or to use a less objectionable phrase, they must in every way suited to their circumstance, tell the story of the cross, and press the truth upon the consideration of men. The colleges and theological institutions have their places, and in their place they are very important. They are designed to furnish the indispensable number of learned men for the accomplishment of this work. But these men of learning after all, if the world is converted, will be found only as one to a thousand or ten thousand of the laborers that are to be employed in this field.

**5.** Nor need the church expect to accomplish this work wholly or perhaps even mainly through the instrumentality of any ministry whatever either learned or unlearned. There are no doubt hundreds and thousands of men who are not learned in the common acceptance of the term who are men of

sound minds, ardent piety, good judgment, great discretion, who may be safely put into the ministry, who ought to be put in and who must be put in before this world can be converted. But even these will not be enough. The colporteur system needs to be extended a hundred or a thousand fold. Indeed laborers should be sent forth and shed over the world like the leaves of autumn until the church, men and women, go everywhere, as in the early ages, proclaiming the word of life. Everyone who has read the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles attentively knows that the Apostles all labored for a considerable number of years in and about Jerusalem, while the lay-men and women went every where preaching the gospel. There had to be a great struggle at Jerusalem to prevent the light being put out altogether in Judea. The whole influence of the Apostles was needed there for several years. But when the persecution arose about Stephen, the infant church, except the Apostles, were scattered abroad. These under God were the means of diffusing the knowledge of Christ and the savor of His name in all directions.

**6.** Another condition of obedience to this command is, the exhibition of brotherly love and Christian confidence. Christ in His last prayer made this the condition of the world's conversion, and it manifestly is so. "Neither pray I," says He, "for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, that they may all be one as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.*" Where Christians manifest no mutual attachment and little mutual confidence, all their theorizing will only pass among mankind for mere theory. The gospel in their hands will never get hold of the mass of men until the world are compelled to say, "See how these brethren love one another." Christians will neither have nor deserve the confidence of the world till they both have and deserve the confidence of each other. If they will not confide in one another who shall confide in them? This question is natural and inevitable, so that I regard it as an indispensable condition of the world's conversion, that the church manifest every where intense brotherly love and perfect Christian confidence. This is so in every community. You will find the wicked everywhere impressed with a sense of the importance of the gospel in proportion to the union, affection, and confidence of Christians among themselves. If professors of religion manifest but little attachment to each

other, but little confidence in each other, the great mass of the unconverted are little or not at all impressed with the importance of religion; but if Christians are united, love each other with pure love, fervently, and show that they have the greatest confidence in each other, this impression arouses the world, and they begin immediately to inquire, What shall I do to be saved?

**7.** Another condition of success in this work and obedience to the spirit of this requirement is, confidence in the presence, power, and readiness of Christ to go right forward with the church to the accomplishment of this work. The Apostles and early Christians seemed to realize that Christ was in earnest in saying, "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth; Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, and lo, I am with you even to the end of the world." They seemed to understand that Christ was really in earnest in this matter, and that He really was ready, able, and willing, and that His whole heart was set upon the work, and that He was indeed with them, giving efficiency to what they did. When they were persecuted and commanded not to preach or to teach in the name of Christ, hear what they say; "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voices to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them. Who, by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed both Herod, and Pontius Pilate with the gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto Thy servants that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all." Here is a specimen of the manner in which they regarded and

treated opposition, and of their faith in Christ in respect to the performance of this great work. How could they fail of success?

**8.** Another condition of success is the practice of all needed self-denial. This is requisite in order to furnish the means and the devoted men and women to go forth to every nook and corner of the world where human beings are, and proclaim to them the gospel of salvation. We want men who are willing to take their lives in their hands, who have health and strength and heart to the work, and who can labor as some of our missionaries are laboring among the Indians, and as some of the African missionaries do, and as some others do in various parts of the world. We need hundreds and thousands of these men, men like minded, or rather men possessing a hundred fold more if possible of faith, patience and power than these already in the field. I would not find fault in general with the men that are engaged in this work, nor say any thing that should imply a want of consecration in them, but they are laboring almost single handed, greatly straitened for want of means, and their calls for help are unutterably agonizing. What do they tell us they could do under God in converting the world if they had the men and the means? But recently I saw an account of an address delivered by a British missionary from India, in which he affirmed that the obstacles throughout India to the spread of the Gospel were fewer than they were in England, that if twenty thousand missionaries could at once be set down in India they might go everywhere preaching the gospel to large and attentive congregations, in which not a man could be found that had ever heard the gospel before; that the land is all open, the fields are white and waving for the harvest, and nothing needed but men and means, and faith in Christ to fire the train and spring the mind, and as it were blow up the very kingdom of the devil. O what a call is this! O what a door is here opened for the church to enter and achieve the world's conversion!

**9.** Another condition is patience in the performance of this work. No man ever accomplishes anything in the kingdom of God only as he suffers patience to have its perfect work. It is predicted of Christ that He should neither fail nor be discouraged till He had set judgment in the earth. Whoever gets out of patience and begins to scold and find fault, or become discouraged, will immediately grieve the Spirit of God and altogether defeat his own success. Many revivals have been prevented in this way. The

laborers have not sufficient patience. They suffered themselves to get out of patience and to fret, perhaps to scold, complain, and find fault because things did not go as they would have them. This grieved the Spirit, and if there was a revival it was a revival of fault-finding and not of love.

**10.** Another condition is perseverance. They must learn to hold on and be of good courage till God strengthens their hands and their hearts in the work. Let me recommend to you Moffatt's account of the labors of the missionaries in Africa. That is certainly an admirable book, and the patience of Moffatt and his associates is worthy of all imitation. I don't know when I have been so instructed, so affected, and so rebuked as by reading that book. The admirable patience and perseverance of the missionaries is worthy of the churches' most attentive consideration. Often times on reading it I was ready to wonder that they did not abandon the field and conclude that God had not called them to that work. But no, they persevered against discouragements and embarrassments that would have overcome any but men filled with the Spirit which they had, and consecrated as they were to the great work of saving souls. May God bless them forever and prosper them until all Africa shall know the blessed gospel, and Ethiopia stretch forth her hands to God.

**11.** There must be constant and prevailing prayer. Did God promise to enlarge His church and convert the world? He has annexed this condition; "Nevertheless for this will I yet be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." There must be constant prayer. It must be the prayer of faith, of sympathy with God. It must be the effectual, fervent prayer — that wrestling agonizing travail of soul that has power with God. This must extend through the church. It must be universally diffused abroad, and prayer for the world's conversion instead of being confined almost entirely to the monthly concert, must be the labor and burden of every day. The church must take the world on her hands and upon her heart. The minister and the laymen and women, all classes and ages of Christians must really travail in birth for the world's conversion. It must absorb their whole attention; it must engross their thoughts, rouse up and set on fire their feelings, and pour itself out before God in a flood of agony before the world can be converted. Such prayer as is not commonly heard must be offered before this work can be done. We must have praying men and women, nay, the whole church must become a praying church, and be

gathered around the mercy seat and lie on her face, and pour out her prayers with strong cryings and tears. This must be persevered in until they have come up to the full spirit and meaning of what God says, “Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest until He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.” They must besiege the throne of grace with the promises in their hand. There must be a great lifting up of heart and soul and a thousand times ten thousand hearts must echo and echo, “Thy kingdom come, Thy kingdom come,” until this comes to be the universal cry of the church, until the heart of the church militant heaves like a volcano, and the gospel is like a burning fire shut up in her bones, and the promises are to them stable as the everlasting mountains; until she can plant her feet on them and stand and never retreat a hand’s-breadth till the work is done.

## V. I AM TO SHOW THE CAUSES OF FAILURE HITHERTO

- 1.** It is not for want of numbers. The church has always had numbers enough to have accomplished this work, if she had had a heart for it.
- 2.** It is not for want of means. She has always possessed all needed means for its accomplishment.
- 3.** It is not for want of a sufficient number of educated men to carry this work forward. The church has always possessed education enough, and the means of education sufficient to have accomplished this work.
- 4.** It is not because God has not been ready.
- 5.** Nor again is it for want of time, nor for the want of resources of any kind. All these things have always been at the church’s disposal. But,
  - 1.** A want of faith has been the fundamental difficulty, a want of real confidence in the truth that Christ possesses all power, and is always present, ready and willing to grant all needed aid for success.
  - 2.** A want of entire consecration to this work. The few individuals living in different ages, who have been manifestly consecrated to this work, have really accomplished much. I have recently been reading an account of the

spread and success of the gospel in every century since the commencement of the Christian era, and it is greatly edifying to see what individual effort has done — to see how much individuals who have really been consecrated to this work have effected. The fact is that wherever a man or a woman has had faith, and the spirit of consecration to this work, they have effected much. And it is very plain from what they have effected, that nothing is needed but the general consecration of the professed church of God to this work to have accomplished it centuries ago.

**3.** Sectarianism has been one cause of failure, perhaps the chief. Sectarian ambition, jealousy, collision — these and innumerable other evils have clustered around this growing abomination. Nine tenths, and perhaps I might say ninety-nine hundredths, of both ministerial and lay effort has lost its power by reason of a sectarian spirit. Go where you please over this great west and over the east too, and what do you see? Why! in a small village with a population perhaps just enough to make one respectable congregation, you find half a dozen or more feeble churches, of diverse sects with as many half-starved, and deservedly half-starved ministers, keeping up their sectarian bars, and perhaps undesignedly keeping alive the very prejudice that prevents the success of the gospel. One man comes on to the ground to attend to the Presbyterian or Congregational interests in that place and region. Another must be thrust in to attend to the Close Baptist interests and another to attend to the Free-will Baptists interests. Next there must be two or three Methodist ministers to attend to the Episcopal interests and the Wesleyan Methodist interests, and the low church Episcopal interests; next, but no least, the New School interest, and the Old School interest, and among them all, they seem very generally to attend pretty thoroughly to the devil's interests. I mean that by this arrangement the devil's interest is really in the best way secured; not that they really intended any such thing; God forbid that I should make any such insinuation. They really mean, ( as they profess) to secure the interests of their respective denominations. But in this way they most effectually hinder the success of the kingdom of Christ. In this way just those jealousies are kept up which grieve the Spirit, alienate the hearts of Christians from each other, weaken the hands of the ministers, disgust the impenitent, and please the devil. Now I have not the least doubt that in the great majority of cases, if not in nine cases out of ten, if



all the ministers but one, in such villages should leave the ground, and let him belong to one of the evangelical denominations, I care not which, he could do more, perhaps ten times more than they can all do together. If they would all go off to the heathen, or to destitute regions in our own country, and spread themselves out, and never again think of their denominational interests, we should never again hear such things as going out to nurse the interests of this sect and that sect. They would give themselves directly to the work of converting the world to God, and almost infinitely more could be done than is done now.

This subject used to be the burden and agony of my soul before I came to this place. When I first came here I was resolved on using whatever influence I had to secure the adoption of a creed that should comprehend only the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, and also to secure a most perfect toleration of opinion on all minor points, so that all true Christians could unite. Then, if ever sectarians crept in, they should not do it under the pretense that their members were excluded from our communion. They should take the entire responsibility of introducing into this community that abomination from the pit, a sectarian spirit. Here we are thus far one congregation, and see what a crown I have around me; but what should we do if we were divided into a half dozen congregations, with as many ministers to stickle for their sectarian peculiarities? It would be the curse and the ruin of the place, of the Institution, and of the cause of Christ in our midst. I wish to make a strong impression on this subject, and I would that I could succeed in making the church feel that sectarianism is doing more to prevent the world's conversion a thousand fold, than all the Infidelity and Universalism and Romanism, and every other *ism* that curses the world together. I fear this is not duly considered. Let any one man create among a people sectarian jealousies and prejudices, and he can never promote true and undefiled religion there. There is much delusion on this subject. Many who do nothing but promote sectarian interests seem to be fondly dreaming that they are promoting the cause of Christ. They think they are making real Christians, and converting men to God, but they are deceiving themselves. If they are creating sectarian prejudice, if they are merely fostering denominational interests, they may be compassing sea and land, and making many proselytes, but they are making them two-fold more the children of hell than themselves.

The fact is that the spirit of sectarianism instantly cools individual piety; it curses churches; it ruins communities; it swallows up a great part of the ministerial influence of the church. In most of the villages throughout the land, where they should all unite in one congregation, and where if they would, they are abundantly able to support the ministry and do much for the spread of the gospel abroad, being cut up as they are into little churches, they must build each of them a house, a little house, that will hold two or three or four hundred people, and get a minister, and measure out to him his sal and his potatoes, and he must preach on the Sabbath to some fifty or a hundred souls, and spend his week time chiefly either on a farm, or in some other lucrative employment to keep his family in bread. Now what do my brethren think themselves engaged in? Is this the way for ministers to be used up? What! when twenty thousand ministers are at once demanded in India, and hundreds of thousands in other parts of the world? Why, men and brethren, we might better than not spare eight tenths of all the ministers in the land, if they would clear out, and but one stay in a place. I have long thought that I never would consent to settle down and give myself up to preach the gospel under such circumstances as I have named. I would never occupy a position where there were a number of ministers, and the work might as well and better be done by one. I do not believe that God can ever bless any such thing as this, and I am agonized and pained to my very heart to see this the general state of the church over the whole land. I have known that many of my brethren have felt with me, distressed on this subject. The remedy is at hand. Let the true spirit of the world's conversion only take possession of the entire ministry, and the days of sectarianism are numbered and finished. Then the present ministry may be spread over a field five or ten times as great as that which they now occupy, and even then much more fully meet the real wants of the people than they now do.

**4.** Another cause of failure has been that the church to a great extent has lost sight of the true spirit of what Christ says in the text. As I was presenting this thought not long since, to wit, that the church was commanded to convert the world, and through the strength and grace of Christ had power to do so, a brother remarked to me, Why this is new! This is entirely a new view of the subject. The church has not understood this. Now I would ask, To whom is it new? The brother to whom I replied

did not mean that it was not the true meaning of the text, but that he and the church had not so considered it. I am afraid that it is new to hundreds and thousands of the professed followers of Christ. It would appear indeed that it has been lost sight of in a great measure. If I mistake not, Christians do not generally understand that the text requires them to make disciples of the sinners around them. But certainly this is its true meaning.

I fear many parents do not understand themselves to be required, even to convert their own children, and that churches do not generally understand themselves as being responsible for the conversion of the impenitent in their midst. But yet this is no doubt the truth of revelation. Who can deny that this is the true spirit and meaning of what Christ says in the text? If he commanded the church to make disciples or Christians of all nations, on the ground that He possesses all power in heaven and in earth, and will be with and aid them in this work, is it not our duty to convert those immediately around us? to make disciples of those in our own houses? who can deny it?

**5.** But not only has the command been lost sight of, but the annexed promise also, “Lo I am with you.” The true spirit and meaning of what Christ here says seems not to be generally recognized and felt. Neither ministers nor lay-men seem to take hold upon and anchor down upon what Christ really here intended. It is as if He had said, “I possess almighty power; Go forth, therefore, and convert all nations; and I will be with you and give you success.” It is true, therefore, that whenever we go forth to this work we should expect to accomplish it. We are to rest assured that Christ is with us, and that in His strength the work can be, will be, and must be done.

**6.** Another thing that has greatly hindered the work has been that too much has been expected from human learning, and not enough by any means from Christ or from the Holy Spirit. Human learning has its place, and its importance, but learned men are altogether too apt to place too much reliance on their learning, and to little on the Holy Ghost. This also is a great error. They are looking for a man of talents, a man of eloquence in the church, a man of learning, instead of a deeply spiritual, praying man. The choice that the churches make of men to preach the gospel, proves to a demonstration that they really place more reliance on human eloquence and

learning than they do on deep spirituality, and the power of the Holy Ghost. Where have you known a church in fact lay the principal stress on the faith, the piety, and deep spirituality of the man of their choice? No; the first thing sought is talents; the second, piety, last of all, deep spirituality and great faith and power in prayer. Now they have directly reversed the true order. Until they practically lay the principal stress on the deep piety, faith and spirituality of the man whom they choose as pastor, they may expect curses from God rather than blessings. The fact is, God will not give His glory to another; and where this stress is laid on human learning, and the idea of spiritual influence is thrown so much into the background, God cannot secure to Himself the glory, and therefore He will not work.

**7.** The work has been greatly retarded by a want of deep sympathy with Christ. The church as not loved a ruined world as Christ loved it, and as the Father loved it. Why, when parents will love their children as Christ loved them, they will make such sacrifices for their salvation as Christ made; nay, when they will but begin to approach this, they may expect their children to be soon converted. When the church really enters into sympathy with Christ, and so loves the world as to be willing to give themselves for its salvation, to live and to die for this purpose; when this spirit becomes common, and the church will go forth as Christ went, and live and labor as Christ lived and labored, and lay down their lives on the battle-field as Christ laid down His, then the work will be soon accomplished. I verily believe it might as well be converted in fifty years as in five hundred or five thousand.

**8.** But again, the church as been discouraged. She has had so little faith that her efforts by way of missionary labor have accomplished comparatively little. Her success has no doubt equaled her faith, and perhaps surpassed it, but still she has been so unbelieving that comparatively little has been accomplished. Little can be accomplished until she will believe the promises of God.

**9.** Conformity to the world in almost every respect has been another great, and I may say, growing impediment to the world's conversion. This subject branches out in so many directions, I can but just name it.

**10.** Another hindrance has been that the attention and efforts of the church are directed to mere outward reforms. At this I have often been unutterably pained. Instead of doing as the apostles did, directly addressing ourselves to the hearts and consciences of men; instead of beginning within to reform, the church has been to a great extent satisfying herself with a mere outward reform.

**11.** Worldly ambition in young men who are professors of religion has stood greatly in the way of the world's conversion. They are in such a state that they have come to look on the ministry as rather a driveling business, and not recognizing themselves as pledged to convert the world, as soon as possible, they turn aside into other professions, and to other business, and leave the world and the cause of Christ to take care of themselves.

**12.** Another difficulty in the way has been clerical ambition. The whole history of the church shows this. In almost every age of the Christian church there has been a grasping after power, even among the ministers of Christ. They have become jealous of lay influence and have taken everything into their own hands. It would seem that they would fain do the work alone, but they never can. That is the best and most successful minister, who knows best how to bring the greatest amount of lay effort to bear on the world, and who actually accomplished this. Ministers can do but a very small part of this work, and if they suffer themselves to become jealous of lay influence, and keep the lay-men and women still, and undertake to feed them and promote their piety without requiring them to consecrate their personal service to the work, they will surely find themselves greatly mistaken. It cannot be. It is contrary to the true nature of religion.

Every man and woman must have some spiritual labor constantly on their hands, or they cannot grow in grace. The great thing, it seems to me, which ministers ought to do is principally to plan labors for the lay men; to feed them with the sincere milk of the word; to give them spiritual food enough, and then press them up to perform the work.

I might mention a great many other causes of failure hitherto in this great work, but must not protract remarks under this head.

## VI. I MUST PROCEED TO THE SIXTH AND LAST HEAD OF THIS DISCOURSE, TO WIT, TO CONSIDER IN FEW WORDS THE GUILT OF THIS FAILURE

**1.** The truth we here insist on is this; that the blood of the world is in the skirts of the church. God informed the prophet that if he did not warn and do his duty to the wicked, the wicked should die in his sins, but his blood would He require at his hand. Now under the Christian dispensation the whole church are placed in the same position with the prophet in this respect. It was the prophet and the priest on whom principally the duty of warning the guilty devolved. But Christ has commissioned and commanded the whole church to do this. He has required her to teach and disciple all nations. This principle applied formerly to the prophet, must now be applicable to the whole church.

**2.** The great law of benevolence requires the church to do all in her power for the conversion of the world, and holds her guilty of the world's blood if she suffers it to be lost. Christ said of the church, "Ye are the light of the world. Ye are the salt of the earth." If therefore the world is not enlightened, it is the fault of the church. If it is not preserved from moral putrefaction, it is the fault of the church. If the name of Jesus is not familiar to every human being in every language and in every clime, it is the fault of the church. The church have had the time enough, have possessed all the requisite means, have had the promise of Him who has "all power in heaven and in earth," to be with them, and give them all necessary aid. Where then is the blood of the world but in the skirts of the church?

I must close what I have to say with a few

### REMARKS

**1.** This guilt attaches to every Christian to whom the command in the text has come, and who is not entirely consecrated to the work of saving souls. It is high time that every Christian should understand his duty in this matter, and the greatness of his responsibility. He should daily consider to

what he stands pledged, and the guilt he will incur if he suffers himself to be diverted from the great work for the accomplishment of which he is permitted to live in the world.

**2.** When God makes inquisition for blood, what will become of those professors of religion who have turned aside from this work and are attending to something else? I have said that the ambition of young men and I might add, of many young men who ought to prepare for the ministry, has turned them aside into law-offices and land-offices, and merchandise, and all manner of worldly employments, because these courses of life open to them prospects of obtaining greater wealth or worldly influence. To say the least, they have manifestly not taken the position in which they might most successfully and directly prosecute the great work of the world's conversion.

Now, young man, when God shall make inquisition for the blood of souls, He will say to you, Where is thy brother? The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto Me from the ground. Where art thou? What hast thou done? Wherefore hast thou not given thyself wholly and directly to the work of the world's conversion? "Take this unprofitable servant; bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The same may and must be said of all Christians who have turned aside from this great work of their own interests, and left the world in its blood to sink down to hell.

From this subject we can easily see how great a mistake was made by the church soon after the death of the Apostles. Various causes soon came into operation that developed an ascetic idea of religion. This immediately diverted the church from the great end of the world's conversion to seek after what they imagined to be a higher state of spirituality. Soon after the Apostle's days, as we learn from history, and indeed to some extent while some of the Apostles were yet living, the idea had gained considerable currency that the world was coming to an end; that Christ's second advent was at hand; and that He was coming to judge the world. This idea doubtless had great influence in bringing about the state of things which I am just about to mention. They seem to have given up the idea of the world's conversion and supposed mankind to be, at least chiefly, devoted to destruction. Great multitudes retreated from the world and betook

themselves to what they supposed to be a strictly religious life, practicing celibacy and various austerities, mortifications, and self-denials. They shut themselves out from society and lived in seclusion, seeming to suppose that to live in the world and associate with men as Christ and His apostles had done, was not consistent with the highest degrees of spirituality. They therefore betook themselves to an entirely different course of life, lost altogether the true idea of religion, and attempted to be spiritual without a particle of benevolence, or, in other words, without religion. They sought a spirituality that was anything but true Christianity. Instead of pressing the world's conversion with ardor, they began to build nunneries and monasteries and to establish institutions for the very purpose of secluding the spiritual ones from intercourse with the world. They shut themselves up in those places of spurious spirituality. Every reader of church history must be acquainted with the deplorable and fundamental mistake into what a great part of the church thus fell. Here, to a great extent, the efforts for the world's conversion ceased. Here a dark cloud shut down over the prospects of dying humanity.

**3.** From what has been said it is easy to see the mistake into which our Second Advent brethren of the present day have fallen. Many of them have given up altogether not only the idea of the world's conversion, and consequently all efforts to save the world, but have given up, and so far as their influence extends are endeavoring to persuade others to give up the idea and expectation of anymore sinners being converted at all. Now I would ask, by what authority do they shrink from carrying out the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the text? Suppose it were true that Christ is to come at any given time this year, or next year, is not the command in the text binding until He does come? And is not the annexed promise that He will be with us in this work good until the end? Has He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations until such a time and then cease?" I trow (think) not. Now whether it be true or false that Christ is soon to come, it is a wretched mistake for them to give up efforts for the conversion of sinners.

**4.** Does not the command with the subjoined promise in the text authorize and require the church to go forth to the conversion of the world, with the expectation that the world will be converted? Suppose the church should now arise and address herself to this work and lay hold of the promise of



Christ; can it be supposed that Christ would say, “O you are too late now. I shall not wait for you now to convert the world. I shall not go with you now. I said I would be with you to the end of the world, but I shall be with you no longer. You need not go forth to this work; it is now altogether too late.” Who believes that Christ would take back His promise and fail to go forth with His church to the conversion of the world?

**5.** From this subject we can see the mistake of those Antinomians who are waiting God’s time, and who are saying “The time has not come to build the house of the Lord;” and are accusing us of going to work in our own strength if we attempt to promote revivals, and of trying to take the work out of the hands of God, of interfering with His sovereignty, of compassing sea and land to make one proselyte, etc. Why, what do they mean! waiting God’s time! I have heard some of them talk in this way. They would insist that they must have an inward impulse or revelation to go forth to this work. They must wait to be sent of God. They don’t believe in going out to convert sinners unless they are sent of God. Now what an infinite mistake is here! Has not Christ commanded the whole church to go; and now, shall she say she must wait for a revelation from God before she can go? Must she overlook the true letter and spirit of this command and promise, and wait for some other revelation? Indeed, there are certain individuals who it seems would fain persuade the church not to go until she is sent by the Spirit, not to move until God moves, and are telling those who would do something for the conversion of sinners that God has not required this at their hand, that they must remain quiet and rest until God moves them to this work. Now here is certainly a great error, a great and ruinous error. If God has required us in His written word to do anything, are we to wait for any other revelation? If God commands sinners to repent, are they to wait for some other revelation of His will? If He requires Christians to go right forth and convert the world are they to wait eighteen hundred years and then continue to sing the lullaby, “wait God’s time, don’t run before you are sent”?

**6.** These notions of the Adventists and Antinomians are doing very much to retard the great work of converting souls to God. The Adventists seem not only wholly to have lost their confidence and interest in this work, but they have really shaken the confidence of a great number who are not Adventists, so far at least as greatly to have abated their zeal. I find it has

come to be very extensively doubted whether the nations are really to be converted to God, or can be. The Adventists, many of them, have boldly proclaimed that it cannot be; that the nations must be destroyed and cannot be made the disciples of Christ; that to Christianize the world is out of the question; that the world is too wicked to be Christianized. They seem to have taken up a view of the Christian religion which is the exact opposite of our Savior's representation. They boldly proclaim — I have heard them proclaim, that the tendency of things in this world is to run out the Christian religion everywhere; to extinguish its light, and drive it from the world. But Christ's representation is exactly the reverse of this. He says, The kingdom of heaven, meaning by this true religion, is like a little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened; that it is like a mustard seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when sown in the earth springs up and becomes a great tree. Daniel said it was like a stone cut out of the mountain, which rolled and grew as it proceeded until it became a great mountain and filled the earth. Now there are a vast many passages of scripture that thus speak of the kingdom of God, or of true religion in the world. These representations are exactly opposite to the representations of our Advent brethren. The only kingdom of God according to them, which can ever stand and prosper in this world, is a kingdom set up all at once, filling the whole earth by the destruction of the wicked. Is this like leaven? a little leaven hid in three measures of meal till the whole is leavened?

But to return to the point which I stated in the beginning of this paragraph, viz., that these brethren had done much to dishearten the church, to shake their confidence, to create doubts in many pious minds on this subject, and thus to weaken the energies of the church when she has just begun to awake to the importance of this great enterprise. In whose skirts shall the blood of thousands that will perish in consequence of it be found? With my present views, nothing could persuade me to put a damper on the rising hopes of the church in this direction.

**7.** I am fully persuaded that nothing but the absence of love, or in other words, of true religion, is the occasion of the sectarianism that is dividing and cursing the church. Nothing is wanting but for the church to be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of brotherly love, and of sympathy with Christ in respect to the world's conversion, to unite her energies, and

concentrate them on this great work. It is really amazing and agonizing that mere differences of opinion on points of minor importance, (as all are agreed,) should rend the church into parties, destroy her unity, and not only jeopardize, but awfully hasten and aggravate the ruin of the world.

The more I see of the working of things in the midst of us in this place, the more I am satisfied of the great error of division in the church in consequence of differences of opinion on points of doctrine not fundamental. Our Confession of Faith and Covenant were designed to embrace only those points of Christian doctrine that are supposed by us to be fundamental to the existence of the true church of God. We have by the blessing of God been enabled to live together now ten years as one church. Persons from nearly all the evangelical churches in the land have come and united with us. We have gone on without controversy and division hitherto, on the principle of the most affectionate toleration of theological opinions in respect to everything not fundamental. We have not yet found any difficulty in the prosecution of this work. There has been now and then a sectarian spirit here who has felt uneasy, and has made occasional efforts to introduce sectarianism, and put up sectarian bars in the midst of us. But the religious sentiment of the community has hitherto looked coldly on all such efforts, and the really pious among us, whatever their peculiar shades of opinion, have hitherto seemed to be united in frowning down all sectarian movements. Now why may not this be so in every village and every town in the land? I can see no reason why this should not be so.

**8.** If the ministers of all evangelical denominations would so thoroughly wake up to the world's conversion as to agree among themselves that two ministers should not occupy any field that could be supplied by one, and the Christians should not be encouraged to separate on account of doctrinal views where their differences are not fundamental, and if ministers should determine that they would no longer suffer themselves to be settled over little feeble churches where Christians are divided by sectarian prejudices; if they would resolve that no more than one minister of an evangelical denomination should be spared to one field, and if they would insist on it that where a village or town is not too large for one congregation but one minister should be left to occupy that field, such a state of things as this, would be as life from the dead. It would be vastly better for every village

and every town in Christendom that the ministers should take this stand, and if all the rest were in heaven, or in Hindoostan, or in any part of the universe, it would be better than for them to be huddled together, three or four ministers in reality supplying but one congregation or only souls enough to make one, and this too under such circumstances as must almost entirely exclude all true religion from the place. It does seem to me that ministers should resolve not to do this. When they find a town or a village occupied by a decidedly evangelical and pious minister where there are not people enough for more than one large and healthy congregation, they should refuse to settle under any circumstances to gratify the prejudices of a few sectarian spirits who wish to get up a church of another denomination. This is low business; it is anti-Christian. No; such sectarian spirits should rather be rebuked.

**9.** But again, I have often wondered how ministers could think themselves in the path of duty, in thus giving themselves up to minister to sectarian prejudices and to nurse the interests of a party — of one sect, instead of going forth in the spirit of true catholicism to pull souls out of the fire. There is no describing in words the folly and anti-Christian tendency of all such things as these. Just look at the church; see the ministers go from place to place, and where they find a few Presbyterians or a few Methodists or a few Baptists, they say, here are a few of our members; here we must plant a church. Here the interests of our sect must be nursed. They immediately set about gathering little churches, sticking up their stakes, putting up their sectarian bars and gathering around them all the paraphernalia of sectarianism. Now on comes a minister of another denomination and finds a few whose prejudices favor his sect, and he must gather a church, and then another minister does the same, and another, till you will see their little meeting-houses or other places of worship scattered here and there, with a few sectarian spirits gathered around a sectarian minister, all jealous of each other and making efforts as they say and as they suppose, to convert the world. Now what is the result? Why, one of these churches must have a protracted meeting. They must make an effort of a revival as the other congregations are perhaps gaining the advantage of them in point of numbers and influence. They must get the most eloquent preacher they can, and make an effort to build up their congregation, and establish their sect. The other churches look coldly on,

and directly begin to feel, as if their church and congregation were in danger of being encroached upon, so they must begin a similar effort and have a protracted meeting. They must, if possible, get a more eloquent preacher than the other. They must bluster and pray and visit from house to house and appear to feel for souls; when it is greatly to be feared that the real spirit of their efforts and their prayers is, "Lord, build up our sect, make our congregation popular, add to our numbers so that we can more easily support our minister, and give us decidedly the most popular and wealthy congregation in the place, amen." By this time another and another of these little churches begins to move in the same direction and for the same reason. They thus act on each other till they all become inflamed with great zeal, and greatly provoke each other, not to love and good works, but to sectarianism and party efforts. The result of the whole may be, some real converts, a number of thorough sectarian additions to the different churches, but much disgrace in the estimation of a thinking but impenitent community. Now how infinitely better had it been for but one minister to have occupied this field, no matter of what peculiar evangelical denomination. How much better were it if ministers would give no countenance whatever to the division of Christians into different sects in a place where they might just as well all unite in one church and in one congregation. It is almost ruinous to the cause of Christ to make these divisions. It is a stumbling-block to the church, a curse and an abomination the world, and when God makes inquisition for blood, then let sectarians be ready to answer. But it may be asked, what shall ministers do? If but one minister is to occupy a field on which reside only inhabitants enough for one congregation, a great many ministers will be thrown out of employment? I answer, all the better; they can be spared to go to the heathen, or to betake themselves to other necessary and useful employments. Why shall the church be obliged to support such a number of ministers where one can do the work better than all of them?

**10.** Christians stand greatly in their own light in dividing themselves into different churches where a truly catholic spirit would enable them all to dwell together and unite and labor harmoniously for building up the kingdom of Christ. Why will they load themselves with the burden of supporting two, three, or even a half dozen ministers in a town or village where the work might be more healthfully accomplished by one? Oh!

Christians are not aware how much sectarianism there is often times in their own state of mind, and how infinitely foolish it is for them to be so sticklish for dogmas in opinions confessedly not fundamental as to alienate the hearts of brethren from one another, to stumble the world and grieve the heart of Christ.

**11.** Another great evil is the influence of sectarian newspapers. This evil is a rapidly growing one. Each sect must have its great organ. As the sect increases, multitudes of smaller ones are got up, the conduct and policy of which is anything but Christian. Generally they publish but one side on any question, and in multitudes of instances keep their readers entirely in the dark in respect to the real questions and facts about which they speak. There is scarcely anything that appears more shocking and monstrous to me, more anti-Christian and God-dishonoring than the course taken by sectarian newspapers. It is not only grievous but truly shocking to see how often they are filled with misrepresentations. Now what is the effect of this, but to blind and mislead the different sects, destroy their Christian confidence in each other, sunder their hearts and their efforts; what but to chill and freeze and even drive the spirit of vital piety from among them. I have often asked myself, how can it be that the editors of these newspapers do not see, and that ministers do not see that to create such prejudices, to beget such misapprehensions, and to foster such a spirit in their churches is really to ruin them, to exclude all their real piety, and substitute nothing but bitter and sectarian zeal in its stead. With my present views, I would sooner have my right hand cut off and my right eye plucked out — indeed it seems to me that I would sooner have my heart torn from my body, than to put forth my hand to such a work as this, ministering to prejudice, alienating the hearts of brethren from each other, rending the church of God, nursing a party spirit. Oh! this is a work of death! When God shall make inquisition for blood, I say again, let those engaged in this work prepare to meet their God. My heart is full of this subject but I cannot enlarge.

**12.** Another thing has done much to retard the great work of the world's conversion. I mean a turning aside of Christians from their proper work, and from the direct effort to convert and sanctify the world to God, to various other matters of very questionable truth and tendency. I have been astonished to find that so many ministers have from time to time given

themselves up to lecturing on phrenology, mesmerism, and such like things; have gone around the country and into our cities and collected large audiences and given them a course of lectures on these subjects, with nothing more than now and then an indirect allusion to God and Christ, and the salvation of the soul. It does seem to me that this is gross apostasy from the great work of the world's conversion.

**13.** It hardly need be said, and it grieves me much to be obliged to say that Christians, and even many ministers have been altogether too much diverted, especially of late, by party politics. Indeed, nearly all the reforms of the day have taken on to an alarming extent the type of a mere outward and of course temporary reform. Multitudes of ministers have forsaken the direct work of converting the souls of men to God, and have gone into various agencies for the promotion of these mere outward reforms. I greatly fear that such efforts, pushed as they are at the present day, are after all making clean the outside of the cup and platter, while the "ravens and wickedness" within is left untouched.

Now, beloved, let us for a moment come right back to the question. What have we to do? What is the business to which we are to address ourselves? Here the command and promise of the text lie in all their force before us. We are to act as if Christ had just for the first time sounded this in our ears, and the church ought today to address herself to the work with as much zeal and earnestness and consecration as she would if Christ had for the first time this day stood on the earth and given out this great commission; 'All power is given Me in heaven and in earth; Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and Holy Ghost; and lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world.' Now let it be understood that no one who hears this command and does not obey in the true spirit and meaning of it, has a right to the name of a Christian, let him be who he may. If he does not consecrate himself to this work, if he does not hold on and persevere in doing what he can to accomplish it to the end of life, he has no sympathy with Christ, no regard for His requirements, and no title to eternal life.

# GOVERNING THE TONGUE

*“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” — James 1:26*

In remarking upon these words, I will notice:

- I. THE RULE BY WHICH THE TONGUE IS TO BE GOVERNED.**
- II. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH IT IS TO BE GOVERNED.**
- III. SHOW THAT WHERE THE TONGUE IS NOT GOVERNED, THERE IS AND CAN BE NO TRUE RELIGION.**

I notice —

## I. THE RULE BY WHICH THE TONGUE IS TO BE GOVERNED

**1.** The rule is that of perfect, disinterested, and universal benevolence or love. This is the unalterable law of right. Whatever responsible act of a moral agent is not conformed to this, is wrong; whatever is conformed to this, is right. Love, or benevolence is the fulfilling of the law. This is the one and only rule to which all responsible actions of all moral beings are always and universally to be conformed. This is the rule by which the tongue is to be governed. The tongue is directly and by a law of necessity governed by the heart or will. It cannot move unless moved by the will. It cannot be either good or bad without the will’s consent and impulse. No other power can govern it, nor can any other power prevent its being used in conformity with the action of the will.

**2.** The same rule stated in other language is, that of entire consecration to God and the good of being. This is only good willing or benevolence expressed in other language. Entire consecration to God and to the good of being, is an act or state of the will. It is the will in the attitude of devoting,



consecrating, offering up the whole being to the promotion of universal good. Entire consecration is the rule by which the tongue is to be governed. It should be consecrated by the heart to the glory of God and the good of being, and used for no other purpose whatever.

**3.** The Scriptures recognize this truth. “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Idle words in the sense of this text are useless words, words not spoken to edification, nor with a design to glorify God and benefit man. Some commentators over-looking the rule by which the tongue is to be governed, have supposed by idle words in this passage, are meant slanderous, or false, or censorious, or bitter words. But the language is plain, and should be understood in its plain natural sense; for then and only then does it come up to the manifest rule by which the tongue is to be governed. That the tongue is to be governed by the rule of universal love, or entire consecration to God, none can rationally doubt. All words then spoken for any other end than to promote the good of being are idle words, and are sin against God. To bridle the tongue then is to so check and rein it in, and control it, as that its use shall be wholly conformed to the law of God.

## II. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH IT MAY BE GOVERNED

**1.** The first condition indispensable to the government of the tongue in accordance with the rule as above stated, is perfect love in the heart, or in other words, that the will should be in a benevolent attitude — that the glory of God and the good of being should be its supreme aim, design, or choice. I have said that the tongue is governed by the will, by a law of necessity. The will is free, but the tongue is not free. It is connected by a physical or necessary law, with the action of the will. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth not only does but must speak, if it speaks at all. All our physical powers so far as they are directly under our control at all, are connected with the action of the will, by a law of necessity. At the bidding of the will they move, or cease to move. Now where there is perfect benevolence of heart, no power that is under the

control of the will can be used in any other than a benevolent manner. When the heart is in the attitude of supreme, disinterested benevolence, the tongue is used and cannot but be used for the glory of God and the good of being. But if this be not the state of the heart, the tongue cannot be used benevolently. All use of the tongue is idle and sinful when the heart is not in a benevolent state. No matter how much the tongue might edify men or glorify God, its use is an idle use so far as the speaker is concerned, if his aim be not benevolent. A man might teach mathematics, philosophy, or theology with a selfish heart, in which case the use of his tongue is sin, because his intention is sin. It is not conformed to the law of love, but is under the influence of selfishness. If God overrules this selfish use of the tongue to promote His won glory, no thanks to him who thus uses his tongue, for he means no such thing. His object is to glorify himself, to get a good name or a piece of bread. It should always be understood that any use of the tongue is sinful when the heart is not in a perfectly benevolent state.

**2.** The spirit of entire consecration is an indispensable condition to the government of the tongue. As I have already said, this is only another way of stating the same rule, and this condition is only another form of stating the spirit of the same condition. If the heart be entirely consecrated to God, the tongue will be, and must be, and cannot but be consecrated also; but when ever the heart is not entirely consecrated, the tongue if used at all, is used idly, with selfish intentions and not for the glory of God.

**3.** It is an important and often indispensable condition of governing the tongue that we abstain from very strong excitement. If the feelings become very strongly excited, they are very apt to control the will. At this point all virtue ceases of course. The will acts virtuously, only when it obeys the law of the intelligence, or in other words, the commandments of God as they are revealed in the intelligence. When the feelings instead of God through the intelligence give law to the will, there is no virtue. People are very apt to imagine that they are virtuous in proportion as they are governed by strong feelings; whereas exactly the reverse of this is true.

I have said that when feeling becomes very strong, it is very apt to control the will. The will then acts purely in obedience to the impulses of feeling, under no other law than that of obeying the most strongly excited

emotions. Now if the will in obedience to feeling governs the tongue, it is not governed by the law of love or benevolence. Be sure there is always feeling and sometimes strong feeling when there is true benevolence, and as the result of true benevolence. But the law of benevolence and not of feeling, should control the will and consequently the tongue.

Farther, when the mind is strongly excited we are apt to speak extravagantly and often falsely in fact, without ourselves at the time realizing it. We behold things through a medium which magnifies greatly. We almost of course represent them as they appear to us, which is usually a misrepresentation. For my own part, I can say that I seldom get strongly excited on any subject without having occasion afterward to repent of something that I said during my excitement.

**4.** A deeply considerate or reflective state of mind is indispensable to the proper government of the tongue. The man who speaks without consideration and without thinking, speaks idly and at random. Surely if he would speak for the edification of men and the glory of God, he needs to have his thoughts about him and to think well before he speaks.

**5.** Another condition is a sense of the divine presence. Let a man set God always before him, and realize that he is speaking in the presence of God, and he will bridle his tongue. His words will be few and well chosen. He cannot trifle, realizing that he is in the presence of the great, heart-searching God, nor will he speak falsely, censoriously, bitterly, or unnecessarily. Only let his heart be full of love, and let him have a conscious realization of the divine presence, and the law of love shall ever dwell upon his tongue.

**6.** Another condition of governing the tongue is the appropriate grace and strength of Christ. Indeed Christ must be in him, working in him to will, to say, and to do, or he will never govern his tongue. He must put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man. He must abide in Christ and Christ must abide in him. He must live a life of faith in Christ Jesus. He must walk in the Spirit and entirely mortify the deeds of the flesh. He must know what it is to yield up his whole body, "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."

**7.** He must have faith to lay hold of and appropriate the grace, strength, and promises of Christ for the complete subjugation of his tongue to the law of love. He must believe in Christ and receive Christ as the keeper of his tongue as well as of all his other powers. He will never govern his own tongue: he will never in this respect keep himself. He must have faith to lay hold of that class of promises which pledge sufficient grace to secure the entire consecration of all his powers to God.

**8.** He must have moral courage to dare to keep silence when he ought to keep silence. It is generally considered very odd and uncouth, unsociable and hateful for a man to keep silence when he has nothing important to say. The state of society seems to demand that to be good company, he must discharge from his tongue a perpetual stream of words. Volley after volley of sense or nonsense must be poured forth, or people will inquire, What ails you? You seem to be very silent, very unsociable; you seem to be brooding over some distressing subject; you need cheerful society and recreation, amusement or light-reading — something to give your tongue an impulse. Now in these days of incessant babble when the world is full of talk about beaux and belles, and novels and politics and every thing else, who does not know that it requires a good deal of moral courage to be silent when not called to speak for the glory of God and the good of man?

**(a.)** You must have moral courage to dare to speak when you ought, and what you ought. Men are often placed in circumstances where it is no small trial for them to speak what the circumstances demand — to reprove sin and hold up the truth in love. Now the proper government of the tongue, demands not only that we should abstain from speaking what we ought not, but that we should always speak when and what we ought. But to dare to do this, often requires no small amount of courage.

**(b.)** Again, you need moral courage to be as singular in all places, and at all times, as conformity to the law of love would make you. How eccentric a man would be called in these days, who should use his tongue neither more nor less nor for any other purpose than the glory of God and the good of man demand.

### III. WHERE THE TONGUE IS NOT GOVERNED, THERE IS AND CAN BE NO TRUE RELIGION

1. In proof of this position I cite the text. “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”
2. It is not intended that an occasional fall in the use of the tongue, proves that one has never been converted and is at no time truly religious; but that when he does not govern his tongue, he has at that time no true conformity to the law of God, and consequently no true religion. His heart is not then in the attitude of benevolence. It if were he could not misuse his tongue. But if he be not benevolent, he is not at the time truly religious. Again,
3. When the tongue is not habitually governed in accordance with this rule, there is no habitual benevolence — consequently no habitual true religion, which if the Bible is true, is the same thing as to say, there is no true religion at all. For the least that can be said of a true Christian, is that he does not habitually sin; that holiness is the rule and sin only the exception. “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”
4. I have already said that a benevolent heart will secure and by a law of necessity must secure a benevolent use of the tongue; that is, in such a case the tongue will be and must be used for the glory of God and the good of being. Where it is not so used, it is a palpable matter of fact that the heart

is not right with God. Nothing can be more certain than that a spirit of idle talking is inconsistent with a benevolent state of the heart.

## REMARKS

**1.** The Bible represents the government of the tongue not only as indispensable to true religion, but as its most difficult duty. Thus James, in chapter three, “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so, the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.”

**2.** The Bible says much upon the necessity of bridling the tongue. I will only quote two or three passages in addition to those already quoted. Ecclesiastes 5:2-3; “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool’s voice is known by the multitude of words.” Proverbs 10:19; “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”

**3.** If every idle word is sin, what multitudes of professors are living in sin! Great multitudes of professors give themselves up to unrestrained indulgence in talking, as really and fully as the great mass of sinners who make no pretensions to religion. Rely upon it, they will never go babbling

on to heaven. Idle talkers and vain jesters are not among the ransomed of the Lord.

**4.** What a world of evil would be put away if the tongue were governed by the law of love. It is indeed “a world of iniquity; it often setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.” The tongue is the great instrument of excitement. We excite ourselves and we excite others by talking. All the busy play of passion, and all its monstrous developments are aroused, and quickened, and thrown into overwhelming commotion by the idle use of the tongue.

Let the tongue be governed by the law of love, and what a change would be made in families and neighborhoods, in cities and towns, in all human society! What a change in our halls of legislation!

**5.** The government of the tongue is indispensable to entire sanctification; that is, no man is entirely sanctified unless he entirely governs his tongue by the law of love. Let this always be understood and kept in mind by those who profess to have attained, or who are aiming to attain to a state of entire sanctification.

**6.** It does not seem to be generally understood and believed, that every idle word is sin. Many who profess to keep a conscience void of offense, and to be from day to day not conscious of sin, seem manifestly often to use their tongues in a manner not conformed to the law of love. Who can believe that all the needless and idle talking that we hear among professed Christians is for the glory of God and the good of man, or that it is even intended to be?

**7.** Idle words are as really sinful, as false, censorious, or profane words. I say they are as *really* sinful. They may be vastly more sinful, or they may be less sinful according to the light enjoyed. One man may be in the sight of God vastly more guilty for levity in conversation than another for profanity. The degree of guilt depends upon the degree of light before the mind. There is great want of consideration upon this subject. If the most ignorant man tells a falsehood, or is profane, we cry out against him; and if he is a member of the church, we excommunicate him. Now this is all well; for the most ignorant man knows better than to lie or to be profane. But

others, with greater light than he, may be equally guilty and equally deserving of excommunication, for an idle use of the tongue.

**8.** From this subject we see the necessity of judging our character in the light of this test. Every day and every hour we should examine ourselves in the use of our tongues. We are almost incessantly using them, and unless we keep the rule in view by which they are to be governed, a world of iniquity will accumulate upon our souls before we are aware of it.

**9.** This subject is of great importance to families. The necessity of governing the tongue should be constantly inculcated in every family. Observance of this rule is indispensable to the life and power of family religion.

**10.** The indispensable necessity of governing the tongue, should be urged in common schools, and in all places where children and youth are associated together. If children are allowed to make an unrestrained use of their tongues in respect to levity and unrestrained talking, a most important part of their education is omitted. Why though they are taught that they must not lie, or be profane, or vulgar, or licentious in conversation, this is of little use, unless they are taught that their tongues are to be governed entirely by the law of universal love.

**11.** This subject is of great importance to ministers of the gospel. I have heard it said of some ministers — “When I see him in the pulpit I think he never ought to come out; and when I see him out, I think he never ought to go in.” There are some ministers, I hope not many, who preach well and solemnly; but when out of the pulpit, they are very much given to levity, to jesting, and trifling conversation, insomuch that their idle talk out of the pulpit completely nullifies the spiritual power of their preaching in it. My brother, unless you use your tongue for God’s glory out of the pulpit, you have no right to expect to be blessed in the use of it in the pulpit. Take care what you say, always, and in all places, and be sure you do not have the spirit of levity, and an idle gossiping state of mind; for if you have, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and the people will see it. Your Christian and ministerial influence will be destroyed, and you will become a stumbling-block to souls. O! a trifling minister — what a curse to human society — what a dishonor to God!



**12.** The tongue is a great occasion of backsliding. Let a man but open his mouth and give up the rein to the tongue in any company and at any time, and he will soon find that when he has done talking he cannot pray. Let him try it. I have no doubt that many professors of religion have grieved the Spirit of God an hundred and a thousand times by idle words — have found themselves away from God and without the spirit of prayer, with gross darkness covering them, yet do not realize the cause. Ask them what they have done to get away from God, and they say they can't tell. If they would but reflect upon the use they have made of their tongues, they would find cause enough. Let them take their pens and attempt to recall and record all the idle words, and they will soon be convinced that innumerable sins have accumulated upon their souls, and shut out from them the light of heaven.

**13.** An unbridled tongue is not only a great snare to him who uses it, but is a great temptation, a snare, and a curse to those who listen. One man or woman given to much talking, may divert the attention of hundreds of minds from God; may engage multitudes of tongues in replying to their incessant babble; and indeed a world or words, idle as the wind, if not hateful and blasphemous, may be occasioned by some one great talker. A great talker, in the common acceptance of that term is a curse to any family, to any neighborhood, to any church, to any community, to the world. His unruly tongue must be restrained, or he will scatter around him, fire-brands, arrows, and death.

**14.** From this subject we can see the great evil and the great sin of what are termed social visits. Who does not know that it is almost impolite to talk otherwise than idly on those occasions? To introduce and confine yourself to religion or any other topic of serious import, designed for the glory of God and the general good of man, would be considered excessively ill-timed and out of place. The fact is, that social parties are designed for the unrestrained indulgence of the tongue. They would soon cease to be attended if no other conversation were allowed than what is for the glory of God and the good of man. How often, think you, would the gay and thoughtless multitude assemble in social parties, if no other conversation were allowed but such as is in accordance with the law of God?

It is amazing to hear professors of religion defend and plead for what they call the cultivation of the social powers. It is manifest that they often mean by this nothing more nor less than the cultivation of that idle gossip, that chit chat, idle, frivolous course of conversation, pursued in what are called social parties. How any person that even pretends to be consecrated to God can give up his tongue, his time, and his powers to be used in that manner, has always been mysterious to me since I have know any thing about religion.

**15.** Many persons never keep their tongues still long enough to be converted. They talk so incessantly, that if at any time the Spirit of the Lord comes near and strives with them, they grieve Him right away by their idle talk. They ought to understand that the Spirit comes to convict and persuade; that is, to make men think, and see things in their true light. They should know that without serious thought and deep, intense reflection, they will never turn to the Lord. Thus the Psalmist says, “I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.” “Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways.” God complains of His professed people, that “they will not consider.” How can they consider, when they cultivate the habit of giving incessant license to their tongues? Many impenitent sinners seem never to have thought that they should restrain their tongues, and speak only when and what duty calls them to speak.

**16.** It is a great evil to be thrown into the society of a great talker. He will neither think himself nor suffer you to do so; but babble on incessantly, like the running of a brook. If for a moment you try to think, some impertinent question, some trifling thing which you neither know nor care about, is thrust into your face, and demands a reply. O, if such men once knew the luxury of deep and silent thought, and would sometimes retire within themselves and let others think, they would do the world a favor.

**17.** Great multitudes of professors of religion seem unable to grow in grace and become established in religion, because of the idle use of their tongues. This sin must be overcome; it must be put away. Professor, it is too hard for you to attempt it in your unassisted strength. No man can tame the tongue, but Christ can tame it. Christ governed His own tongue, and can govern yours if you will give it up to Him and let Him become its keeper. Will you do it? *When* will you do it? Will you do it now? Will you

consecrate your tongue to Him with the full understanding that you shall never use it any more but for the glory of God, any more than you would use it to blaspheme His holy name? Do it, my brother, my sister: do it *now!*

# DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST

*“Without Me ye can do nothing.” — John 15:5*

In discussing this subject I shall show:

- I. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT.**
- II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT.**
- III. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEVING IT.**
- IV. THE PRONENESS OF THE HUMAN HEART TO OVERLOOK AND PRACTICALLY DENY IT.**

## I. THE MEANING OF THE TEXT

The context shows that Christ means to affirm an impossibility, for He says, “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.” Now whatever metaphysical or philosophical distinctions we may be disposed to make here, it is plain that Christ intended to affirm the impossibility of doing anything without Him or independently of Him. This inability extends to everything, but the context shows that He means in this passage to affirm it only of holiness or goodness.

## II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT

The text implies that we are not required to do anything without Him. If it be impossible to do anything without Him, it cannot be our duty to do it; for it can never be a man’s duty to do what is impossible.

Again, that every command implies a corresponding promise, that is, if we are required to do anything by Christ, the very requirement is a virtual promise or proffer of all the aid we need to make it possible for us to

perform it. Indeed, the command in itself is an implied proffer of all needed help.

It is often said that the commands of God are addressed to us as moral agents, and that as such, because we are moral agents, we are bound to obey, irrespective of any assistance from God. Now rightly understood this language is correct; but it is extremely liable to be misunderstood. The inquiry is, What is implied in moral agency? There is a difference between acting morally, and simply having the natural powers requisite for such action. A man may have eyes, but without light he cannot see, and is therefore under no obligation to see. So a man may possess the powers of a moral being, but without light on the subject of duty he is not prepared for moral action. He is a moral being in the sense of having the requisite natural powers; but light is the indispensable condition of bringing these powers into action, or in other words light is the indispensable condition of moral agency. His moral powers can be exercised on no subject until he has light upon it. He is under no moral obligation further than he has light. A heathen who has never heard of Christ is under no obligation to believe in Christ, and in respect to Christ he has not the responsibilities of a moral agent. He possesses those faculties which will render him responsible as soon as Christ is made known to him; but without some knowledge of Christ, he can be under no moral obligation to believe in Him.

Light therefore, is a condition of moral agency, and, of course, of moral obligation. If supernatural light is needed, then supernatural light is the condition of moral obligation: if merely natural light or the light of nature is sufficient, then that is a condition of moral obligation. If the light of the written word of God is sufficient, then that is a condition. The kind and degree of light requisite to impose moral obligation varies upon different subjects. The mere light of nature may be sufficient to impose obligation in reference to a great multitude of duties; but on many of the great questions of the gospel, the light of divine revelation is needed to impose moral obligation, for without this revelation, the mind can know nothing of these duties.

To a right apprehension of many truths of the gospel, the illumination of the Holy Spirit is needed, and without His influence the mind does not and cannot comprehend the length and breadth, and depth and height of these

truths, cannot apprehend them in any such sense as that an individual can embrace Christ and know either the Father or the Son without the Holy Ghost.

Now when Christ says, “Without Me ye can do nothing;” He doubtless means to affirm that without divine light shining upon the pages of inspiration and upon the works of God — without the illumination of the Holy Spirit, holiness is impossible to us. The assertion of the text therefore implies that divine light is proffered to us, and that this light is given by Christ.

Again, the text implies the absolute Deity of Christ. If Christ is not God it is absurd, and false for Him to say, “Without Me, ye can do nothing.”

### III. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEVING THE DOCTRINE OF THE TEXT

**1.** If we do not understand that we are dependent on Christ, we shall not and cannot believe it. It is impossible to believe what we do not understand. This is sometimes doubted, but if properly understood, the proposition must be self-evident. We cannot believe unless the mind apprehends that which is to be believed. Yet I may believe a fact without being able to explain the philosophy of the facts. For example, I may believe the fact that Christ died for sinners without being at all able to understand the high policy of Jehovah’s government upon which the doctrine of atonement is based, or which rendered His death necessary. Now I am not required to believe anything respecting the philosophy of the atonement, but simply the fact — a thing which I can understand. It may be gratifying and useful for me to search out the philosophy of it, but it is not at all necessary to my salvation that I should believe anything more than the fact of the atonement. So I may believe thousands of facts and truths, the philosophy of which I cannot comprehend; but I am not able nor am I required to believe anything more in any case than I can understand. The doctrine of the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost, I can understand; that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God; but the exact sense in which these are three, and the sense also in which they are one, I cannot comprehend, nor am I under any

obligation to comprehend it, nor to believe anything more respecting this or any other doctrine than I can comprehend.

It is therefore of great importance with respect to the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ that we should understand the fact as a fact. Whether or not we are able to understand the philosophy of this dependence is of no consequence. It is enough for us to understand that such is the fact, that without Christ we can do nothing.

**2.** To understand this doctrine is more than to admit it. I may admit a thing in theory which after all I don't understand. I may admit multitudes of truths, yea any and all the truths of the gospel without really understanding one of them. The truth of our dependence upon Christ is generally admitted, but not so generally is it rationally understood.

**3.** Properly to understand it is to realize it — to perceive it's truth; and have in the mind a felt realization of it's truth.

**4.** To believe this truth is more than to hold it in theory. A man may hold in theory the whole Confession of Faith, he may defend it, may argue in favor of it, and suppose himself to believe it, while in fact, in the gospel sense, he does not believe a word of it. Many who professed faith in the doctrine of the Second Advent of Christ, have held it and defended it as a theory, but manifestly have not believed it. Faith is the yielding up of the mind to be influenced by truth apprehended by the intellect. It is the mind's confiding, trusting, receiving a truth. Now nothing is more common than for persons to hold and defend a truth in theory which they do not really believe. To believe the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ is to commit or surrender the mind up to the influence of this truth — to repose on Christ — to confide the soul really to His keeping.

**5.** To believe this truth implies the continual remembrance of it. It implies that we hold the mind in the attitude of dependence and trust. Suppose I am leading a little child by the hand, I give him my finger and lead him along upon the brink of a frightful precipice. I tell him, without me you will fall. Now if he believes this, he will hold fast to my hand. His mind will be in a constant attitude of depending, trusting, holding on to me. Now this illustrates what I mean by believing in our dependence upon Christ.

The mind that believes in this will not attempt to do any thing without Christ.

But take another illustration. Suppose here is a man who has but one leg. He never attempts to walk without a crutch. When he sits down, he lays his crutch by his side, or sets it up within reach. Whenever he attempts to walk, the very first movement of his mind is towards his crutch. Just so with the mind that believes in the doctrine of dependence upon Christ. It is just as natural for this mind to throw itself upon Christ, in the performance of every duty as it is for the lame man to throw himself upon his crutch.

Again, not to understand and believe this is real infidelity in respects to Christ. It is a real rejection of the gospel of Christ and of Christ Himself. No man understands and believes the gospel in any saving sense, who does not understand and believe his universal dependence upon Christ.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine renders the soul proud and presumptuous. If a man depends upon his own powers, unenlightened by the Spirit of Christ, he is depending upon the bruised reed of his own resolutions, and must inevitably find himself in perpetual condemnation.

Again, to reject this doctrine is to dishonor Christ greatly, and as I have said, to discard His gospel entirely.

Again, to reject or overlook this doctrine leaves the soul to neglect due watchfulness. If a man is not sensible of his constant dependence upon the indwelling Spirit of Christ, he will not feel the necessity of watchfulness and prayer so as to retain the Spirit of Christ.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine makes us the sport of temptation. A man is certain to be overcome if he attempts to resist temptation in his own strength, just as certain as a man of one leg would be to fall if he should attempt to run without his crutch.

Again, the rejection of this doctrine leads to ultimate discouragement. When persons make attempts to stand in their own strength and find themselves continually overcome, they are soon led to doubt seriously whether there is any such thing as standing before the power of



temptation. Finding themselves perfectly impotent in their own strength and not believing in Christ as they ought, they fall of course.

Again, the understanding and belief of this truth tends to results opposite to those just mentioned. To believe this truth causes the mind to be careful not to grieve the Spirit of Christ. It renders the soul humble and empties it of all its proud, self-righteous dependence upon self. It naturally engages the soul to love Christ, to honor Him, and watch carefully against doing any thing that might displease Him. It strips the mind of all dependence upon its own resolutions and unaided efforts; it teaches the mind where to go in the hour of temptation, and throws it upon Christ its all-sufficient support; keeps the soul out of bondage, begets gratitude, fixes the attention and thoughts upon Christ and engages the soul to live by faith in Him.

#### IV. NOTICE THE PRONENESS OF THE HUMAN MIND TO OVERLOOK AND DENY THIS TRUTH

In some sense everyone knows it to be true, and yet few realize its truth in any such sense as to make a practical use of it. This is evident partly from the fact that they do not think of it. They do not realize it as the lame man realizes that he cannot walk without his crutch. His dependence upon his crutch is with him an omnipresent reality. He always thinks of it whenever he attempts to walk. Now if an individual really receives this truth, it will be to him an omnipresent reality. The fact of his dependence of Christ will be so deeply settled in his mind that he will just as naturally and certainly turn to Christ for support as the lame man turns to his crutch.

But another evidence that few realize and believe this truth, we have in the fact that so little gratitude is felt and manifested to Christ. If our dependence were an omnipresent reality, we could not fail, having performed any duty, to feel our obligation to Christ for having wrought in us to will and do this thing. We should not take the credit to ourselves, but be grateful to Him.

Another evidence that this truth is not believed by many, is the fact that they are so little afraid to sin against Christ. It cannot be that they would

be so reckless of sinning against Him if they believed themselves absolutely dependent on Him for all their own right actions. Suppose that you were entirely dependent upon someone to lead and uphold you every step you take; could you suffer yourself to abuse your guide and supporter?

Another evidence we have in the fact that there is so little praying against temptation, so little looking to Him for grace to support and strengthen us at every step. The bible teaches that God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure — that all our springs are in Him — that He is our life, and that there is no good in us only as it is wrought in us by the Spirit of Christ. Now that there is not much hearty confidence in these truths, even in the church, manifests itself in many ways. For example, there is but little prayer comparatively for restraining grace, for upholding grace, for the indwelling and energizing of the Holy Spirit. There is but little of the spirit of thanksgiving for the constant aid and agency of the Spirit of God.

Again, if for a short time Christians are kept from a besetting sin, they soon cease to thank Him for sustaining grace, and lose a sense of the fact that He is truly keeping them above it. They think they have so overcome the temptation to that sin, that they are dead to it, and their tendency in that direction has ceased. Their taking up this notion often makes it necessary for Christ to withhold His restraining grace, in order to remind them that not they but He has kept them from falling. Thus He teaches them by bitter experience, what they will not learn from His word, that without Him they can do nothing.

Again, in proportion as they are kept above sin, they are prone to lose a sense of the fact that the grace of Christ upholds them. If they are supported just enough to feel the keen force of temptation and the necessity of cleaving to Christ continually, they do not lose a sense of dependence; but if Christ only for a short time lifts them so high that temptation does not seem to touch them, they immediately become forgetful of their dependence, wax self-confident, dishonor and grieve His Spirit, and fall into temptation.

Again, as we do not see, nor hear, nor directly feel the hand that supports us, we are constantly prone to forget that we are supported. The influence which Christ exerts is not a physical but a moral one. It is the power of

truth and persuasion, the power of divine light which sustains the mind. Now as we do not directly see the agency of Christ employed in sustaining us, we are very apt to overlook the fact that His invisible agency is our constant support.

Again, thoroughly to learn the lesson of our dependence upon Christ so that it shall be an ever-present reality to us, is one of the most difficult things in the Christian religion. There is nothing more contrary to the natural pride and independence of human nature. There is not a doctrine of the bible which we are more prone to disbelieve and practically reject than this. It may be admitted as a theory forever, without being ever believed.

Again, it is one of the most difficult things, always to remember practically that we cannot take one step in the path of obedience without depending on Christ, anymore than a lame man can take a step without his crutches

Again, Christ has more trouble with us on this point than perhaps any other. It is easy for Him to support us if He could persuade us to depend upon Him. He can easily guide us if we will keep hold of His hand. He can easily carry our burdens if we will suffer Him to do so. He can work in and for us all that we need with infinite ease, if we will but trust in Him and surrender up our mind to His influence. In short, the greatest practical difficulty in the Christian religion, lies in the right understanding and belief of the doctrine of our dependence upon Christ. I say a right understanding and belief, because to believe this in one sense and in a particular form, is Antinomianism: to understand and believe it in another sense, is sheer legality. Legality rests in Christ as an atoning sacrifice, but not as an indwelling, upholding, all-sustaining, and controlling Spirit. It receives an outward but not an inward Christ — a Christ in heaven, but not a Christ in the heart; a Mediator between God and man, an Advocate on high, but not a present sanctification in the soul. It is receiving Him in the latter sense which constitutes the right belief of our dependence upon Christ. Indeed, He must be received both as an atoning sacrifice — a risen, reigning, glorified Redeemer — a Mediator and Advocate with the Father; and also as an indwelling, sanctifying, constantly operating, upholding, guiding, renovating Spirit. He must be received by the mind's own faith, to dwell in the inward sanctuary of our own being, there to exert a constant sustaining

and sanctifying influence, to work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Unbelief as it respects this doctrine, in the form in which I now state it, is the occasion of all our failures and of all our sins. It is a want of apprehending this doctrine, and of thoroughly embracing it that leaves so many souls in bondage to worry and flounder along in the state described in the seventh chapter to the Romans, without ever finding their way to the experience of the eighth chapter.

## REMARKS

1. As I have already intimated, many hold this doctrine in theory, who never realize or practically believe it.
2. To this class of persons, this doctrine is a fatal stumbling-block. Holding as a theory the doctrine of their dependence of Christ, and yet not actually depending on Him, inevitably leaves them in sin; for their theory prevents their making any effort to help themselves, and their unbelief prevents their casting themselves upon Christ, so that they settle down into Antinomianism, in the form so generally witnessed among professors of religion. They make their dependence their excuse for not obeying God; whereas, did they really believe this doctrine of dependence, and actually cast themselves on Him, they would do their duty. Now this class of persons are laboring under a great delusion. They suppose they truly believe the doctrine of their dependence upon Christ, whereas, they only hold it as a soul-crippling, God-dishonoring theory, and therefore it is to them a most fatal stumbling-block.

Again, the real belief of it as a gospel fact, will secure a real as opposed to a theoretical dependence upon Christ. If a man believes his dependence upon Christ because the Bible asserts it; if he believes it as a truth of the gospel and a revealed fact, he will of course believe farther than this, that in Christ, and with the help of Christ, he can do all things required of him. The Apostle Paul says, that of himself he was unable even to think anything as of himself; but adds in another place, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me." Now it is very manifest, that if the doctrine of dependence is embraced as a truth of revelation, the other

fact will also be embraced as alike revealed; viz: That we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us. The belief of this will of course secure obedience to Christ.

From what has been said, we may learn what the true doctrine of natural ability is, namely, that every moral agent is really able to do whatever God requires of him; that when God requires us to believe in Christ He gives us so much light as renders us able to believe; that when He requires us to repent, He gives us so much light that we are able to repent; but that we are not able to work out that which is good by virtue of possessing the powers of a moral being, independently of divine light.

Again, we may see what I meant by the assertion that Christ is the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Every moral agent, in just so far as he is a moral agent, is enlightened by Christ.

Again, it is of very little use to speculate about the philosophy of divine influence in the soul, or the manner in which Christ upholds and sustains us. The *fact* is the thing to be believed, and although I have myself speculated much, and often very much to my own injury, upon the mode of divine influence, still I am convinced that to lay hold of the fact without concerning ourselves to understand the mode of divine operation is the great thing to be attained to.

Again, we need to settle it as a fact of as much stability as the fact of our own existence, that we shall and can do nothing if the divine support is withdrawn; and yet that it is always so proffered to us that we are perfectly responsible for every duty enjoined in the scriptures.

Again, it is of the last importance that we understand what it is to depend constantly on Christ. Now we can acknowledge our dependence without depending. I can hold in theory and in fact that I am dependent, without being willing to be dependent; without the act of depending, without casting myself upon Christ, and settling down upon Him. Now depending is an act of the will or heart. It is, as I have said, a holding on to Christ. It is an ever active state of mind. It is a cleaving to Him, and is as really an act of the mind as it is to hold on to the hand of a fellow-being. The child upon the precipice who holds onto my hand, must hold his mind in a state of dependence, or he cannot hold on to my hand. Did his mind let go of

me, the muscles of his arm would instantly relax, and he would let go of my hand. Now depending and holding on to Christ, is as really an active state of the will as if we used our hand to hold on to Him. This needs to be understood, and a want of properly understanding this is the reason why persons do not abide in Christ. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Now to abide in Christ, is for the mind to cleave to Him, to depend on Him not as an outward and distant Savior or atoning sacrifice, but as a present, inward, in-dwelling support, a help at hand, a God as near to me as I am to myself. This is the true idea of depending on Christ. Without this dependence we can do nothing; with it, we do all things. Brethren, think of this?

# COMING UP THROUGH GREAT TRIBULATION

*“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” — Revelation 7:14,15.*

In discussing this subject,. I shall attempt to show —

- I. THAT GREAT TRIBULATIONS ARE THE COMMON LOT OF SAINTS IN EVERY AGE AND NATION.**
- II. WHAT THESE TRIBULATIONS CONSIST IN.**
- III. THE REASONS WHY GOD CAUSES CHRISTIANS TO PASS THROUGH SUCH SCENES.**

## I. GREAT TRIBULATIONS ARE THE COMMON LOT OF SAINTS IN EVERY AGE AND NATION

It is most striking to observe how often and in how many various ways this fact is taught in the Bible. Everywhere throughout the writings of prophets or apostles, whether in its history or poetry, in the diaries of saints or in the precepts and promises of their Lord, the Bible teaches that the saints are moving on to glory through much tribulation. This fact stands out upon the very face of the Bible. You cannot read your Bible with any attention, without seeing it in bold relief on almost every page. It is every where implied; every where assumed. We are told how they passed through fiery trials; of Moses we are told that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin, as if to go with God’s people must be of course to suffer affliction. But I need not stop to quote passages of which the Bible is full. Christ told His disciples that they must expect tribulation. All the great leaders of the Church in every age have found it true.

## II. SOME OF THE THINGS IN WHICH THESE TRIBULATIONS CONSIST

One is, persecution. In every age the wicked have persecuted the righteous. This persecution may take on different types in various ages according to external circumstances; yet it is still true — the wicked hate and persecute God's people. It is vain to expect, while the world lies in sin, that anybody will live godly without suffering persecution. It may take the form of cold and sneering contempt; it may develop itself in the venom of slander, or in the malignity of opposition to the gospel; but shut in as it may be by external forces, it will still burst out somewhere and annoy the saints of God.

Another form is that of Satanic temptation. The true children of God must always expect to be tempted by Satan. He has small cause to tempt the wicked; generally he can lead them captive at his will with little trouble, so great is their selfishness and so controlling their constitutional tendency to self-indulgence; but let them attempt to break quite away from his grasp and they must expect a fierce and frightful struggle. Real saints always have conflicts with Satan, and especially when they are about to snap the last bond of his that holds them. Satan growls hideously when he sees them about to ascend the table land of promise beyond his control. At this point they should look for a fierce struggle.

Again, saints often suffer much from spiritual desertion. Saints in all ages have had seasons of spiritual desertion in which the light of God's countenance has been withdrawn. I do not mean that in these cases God abandons them so as not to be in them and with them, and so as not to be indeed a Father to them, seeking ever their best good. I only mean that for the best of reasons He hides His face, and leaves them to grope awhile in darkness and great agony. Some of the bitterest scenes of anguish I ever saw have occurred in such cases. One man I knew intimately who had lived for some time in unclouded communion with God, often enjoying visions of divine glory most enrapturing, but for some just cause God withdrew this light of His face, and His deserted child wailed and groaned in agony. He fell to the floor and rolled in anguish, refusing to be comforted. No physician ever saw a patient suffer more, or seem in keener pain.



I am aware that this is among the extreme cases; yet I have seen many of the same sort, and similar cases are by no means infrequent.

Abraham knew what it is to have a horror of great darkness come upon his soul; nor he alone. Many others know what this means. Saints in every age have known it.

These are among the most severe trials they have or can have. Often they would not suffer more in the flames of martyrdom than they do under these hidings of the face of God. The man whose case I just now mentioned might better have burned at the stake than have endured the agony he did. The history of the church has taught us abundantly that under any amount of outward losses and pains, the soul may still be calm and peaceful, nay joyful, if the light of God shine on it. What Christian would not promptly say, Give me the light of God's face, and then I can bear the loss of all things else. All are not so much to my present enjoyment each moment as my God.

Another portion of these tribulations consists in the Christian's struggle with his own weaknesses and infirmities. I allude now particularly to those which result from the flesh and from habits of sensual indulgence. It often happens that these pernicious habits, during a long career of indulgence acquire the rigidity and strength of iron. Hence it costs the convert a mighty struggle to overcome them.

Some years since a man came into this place and called to see me at my study, who had long been a slave to the habit of using tobacco. When he came to see the claims of God upon his conscience to exercise self-control and self-denial, he was thrown into a fearful conflict. He fell on the floor of my study, and groaned and wailed out in agony, "I am an undone man. I never can subdue this tyrant appetite." Nor is this a solitary or a very peculiar case. Every saint who attempts to overcome and hold in complete subjection to reason and the will of God all his constitutional tendencies to self-indulgence will find work enough for severe conflict. Indeed were the whole diary of some Christians to be written out on this subject, you would see the drawing of many a battlefield, and you might be amazed to learn that the subjection of the flesh costs so many struggles, tears, and groans, and so much prayer ere victory is gained.

The pastor of a church near Boston told me of one of his church members, a commodore in the navy, that in his struggles with one particular temptation, he often lay in agony whole nights, rolling on the floor and groaning like a wounded soldier in his blood, in such mental anguish and conflict as his athletic frame could scarce sustain. Yet he was a bold man, and could have faced the cannon's mouth undaunted. This was with him no quailing of timid sensibilities before imaginary evil; it was a real conflict with a hostile power of fearful strength in his own flesh.

Yet even in this case there is nothing very peculiar, certainly not in the *nature* of the conflict. Almost every person who has risen to adult years in the indulgence of his appetites, will find ample occasion for fierce struggles, groans, and agony.

There is no help for these protracted and terrific struggles, but in Christ. When His mild but mighty voice commands these agitated waves of passion, "Peace, be still;" suddenly there is a great and most blessed calm. O, how blessed if the whole church might learn that in Christ there is victory over both the flesh and the devil — indeed over every enemy that can rise up against our souls.

Again, many of these tribulations are occasioned by the perversion of the sensibility and the weakness of the intellect.

The sensibility have been grievously perverted by a long and greedy indulgence in sin, it becomes inevitable that God should compel its development in some other direction. Perhaps it is sometimes inevitable that He should wither our sensibility to some specific form of sinful pleasure by making us drink the bitter dregs of that same cup. He gives us the grief and disappointment which belong to that kind of indulgence and thus wakes up a different class of sensibilities. Through this pathway of flame, we may enter the haven of spiritual peace. How much it sometimes costs our Spiritual Teacher to bring us quite over from loving earthly good intensely, to loving as intensely the solid good of His presence and favor!

The intellect too, long crippled or perhaps knotted up by sin, must with much pains be unraveled and developed, and often in the school of tribulation. How many of God's people can testify that afflictions have

made them really *think* as they never thought before, and consequently take views of truth never before taken.

Again, we must not omit to notice that many of the Christian's tribulations results from impaired health, poverty, losses, disappointments. With this fact every one is abundantly familiar. It enters into the experience and observation of every day life.

### III. THE REASON WHY GOD CAUSES HIS CHILDREN TO PASS THROUGH SUCH SCENES

These tribulations are often, properly speaking, unavoidable. By this is meant that the state of the world being what it is, nothing less than a miracle can entirely prevent the occurrence of tribulations. Thus, the world being as wicked as it is and as absolutely under the dominion of the devil, it would need as many miracles as there are saints and particular events, to shield every saint continually from being persecuted by the wicked.

The same substantially may be said of all those trials which result from the usual course of nature and of providence; for example, from sickness, losses, bereavements.

But again, very many of these trials are sent from the hand of God as parts of our *needful discipline*.

The spirit of a child of God needs to be subdued. The Bible represents God's people as being like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, in which case of course, they need to be "broken" before they can be safely used in the service of their Master. It should be observed, however, that this expression is used of the corrupt state of the ancient Jewish church, and therefore, as used by Jeremiah, may denote a really unconverted state. This seems probable, especially because Ephraim is immediately afterwards represented as praying — "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:" and then as saying, "Surely after that I was turned, I repented." We may however plainly infer from the passage, that if God's real children apostatize into a rebellious state, God will follow them with His discipline till He breaks them into a submissive and docile spirit. Of course He can be satisfied with nothing short of this, and never ought to be.

Those of us who have children understand this. You know it costs you much trial and many tears often before you have completed the painful work of thoroughly subduing your children, as far as *you* can carry on the process. How much more then when God takes up the same sort of labor, and pushes it to the radical cure of the *heart*; when He does not stop short as you sometimes do with mere external reform; and much more still, when it is considered that you wisely undertake your task while your children are yet young and consequently pliable; while God often and indeed usually has to carry His course of discipline into the rigorous and fixed habits of adult years. He takes up a fresh case perhaps after years of woefully perverse training, after the worst of sinful habits are formed, and knit together into the very fibers of the soul. O what a work is this to tear out these strong roots of sin, and wrench off these attachments by which the soul has suffered itself to be bound to sinful pursuits and pleasure! No wonder it should cost the saint of God many a trial ere he can say; “My soul is even as a weaned child.” To subdue self-will is therefore the first step in this needful discipline

On this point however it should be well considered that this struggle will be long or short — will be sore, terrific, heart-rending, or will terminate soon in the sweetest submission, according as the individual shall attempt to do it mainly in his own strength, or shall take hold by faith of the promised strength of God. Let him fight out this battle alone by dint of resolutions, vows, mental struggles, and he will find toil enough to crush and weary out an archangel; but let him look up submissively and confidingly into the face of his Savior, saying, “Save, Lord, that I perish not,” — let him throw his arms round the neck of this Heavenly Helper, and before he is aware the work is done, and his “soul is like the chariots of Amminadab.”

The next object is to correct and duly develop the sensibility. After the will has been subdued in conversion, and yet even more thoroughly by a process of subsequent trial, the sensibility may be still but imperfectly rectified. It may have been long trained to a course of *monstrous* development, so as to exhibit a really monstrous enlargement towards some forms of sinful pleasure. The consequence of this must be a constant tendency to fall under temptations in that direction.

The only remedy is for God to subdue and purify the sensibility. This He does in part by trials. He throws the Christian into deep waters; gives him gall and wormwood to drink; stirs up and draws out all the keenest sensibilities of the soul, until its old habitudes are thoroughly broken up. He pushes on this work, overturning and still overturning; fouling every fountain of sinful pleasure, quickening the sensibility to other moods of action; pushing the law-work of conviction until the soul really feels the bitterness of sinning, and turns with irrepressible loathing from those pleasures which it has so long trained itself to relish. The convicting power of the Spirit, co-operating often with afflictions from God's providence, brings the soul into deep trouble; the searching process goes on and develops more and more the fearful fact that the sensibility is too keenly alive to earthly good and far too insensible to heavenly; still God pushes the trial, until the sensibility seems to let go the earthly and be satisfied with the heavenly. In a certain respect, this process renews the scene of the soul's first conversion: the individual is brought to loathe those sinful pleasures he once relished so keenly, and then he turns with all his heart to those pleasures which flow immediately from God's own right hand. Smitten by the law till sinful pleasures are embittered, he turns to the gospel of infinite grace and finds that now his soul can *feel* in view of these blessed realities.

The sensibility of most wicked men is not developed at all towards the great law of God. Keenly alive to every thing else, they are really dead to this. Its precepts and its penalties alike affect them not. Why? Because their sensibilities are strongly developed towards selfish pleasure and towards worldly objects, but little or perhaps none at all towards these spiritual objects. Hence such persons need to be searched and smitten all the pieces and their souls agonized with conviction, before they will let off their keen sensibility to sinful pleasure and throw their souls out in another and opposite direction. This work is not usually if ever finished at the soul's first conversion. The radical cure of the sensibility demands yet another, a longer, often a different process. As a matter of fact, God very often secures this result by afflictions. Almost all Christians who have had much experience in the divine life can testify to this. They know how God has dried up the current of their sensibility towards selfish good till He has

left them nothing but Himself to love, and then has drawn out their hearts towards Himself until they felt that this is bliss enough for them.

It is a sweet consideration connected with this point, that like a kind-hearted parent, God always prefers the milder mode of attracting the soul, rather than the more painful one of compulsion. The latter is adopted only as an alternative when the other utterly fails. It is only when the love and the cross of Jesus fail to touch and command our sensibility, that God pours wormwood into our cup of idolatrous pleasure, and compels us to give Him our hearts.

It often happens that Christians under trial fail to understand the philosophy of God's dealings with themselves. Hence they are greatly stumbled. Yet if they would study their own moral state and the manifest result of tribulations as developed in a thousand cases under their own eye, they would see that often the design is simply to discipline and rectify the sensibility.

Another reason for sending tribulations is to develop the intelligence. Unconverted men often think they know much on religious subjects, while in fact they know almost nothing. They are mere children. Perhaps their minds have never been thoroughly roused to action on any subject. Hence the necessity of great intellectual development. For this end how often does God make use of great tribulations. What Christian has not observed that when God would really wake up his intelligence, He first throws his soul into a state of deep agitation and agony, so that the mind seems to heave like a volcano; the intelligence is wrought up to a state of most intense activity, on the rack to get hold of the great and deep truths of God.

For this end deep and thorough discipline is requisite. Fiery tribulations are often the means employed by God to rouse up the intelligence and quicken its search for truth into an earnestness almost like agony.

So of all the other faculties of our whole mental and moral being. They all need discipline. Made originally right and tuned to mutual harmony, it has been the constant work of sin and Satan to wrench them out of place and order, and fill them with the dissonance of hell. God must put the whole instrument in tune. Every string, every wire, every tube, must be set right,

till under His master hand it shall pour forth the music of heaven. How beautiful the process! Yet sometimes how mysterious! The result will fill heaven with melody, and make the chastened saints more than thankful for all the pain of the needful process.

Thus is God perfecting the character and developing the whole being to fit the soul for heaven. Thus through much tribulation He develops *faith*. He shuts the Christian up in a strait place where he can find none else to trust but God.

Thus too He develops the *patience* of the saints. See that dear child of God on a sick bed. Days and nights of weariness are allotted; why? Perhaps only to cultivate and develop the grace of patience. There may be nothing else lacking to put that soul into complete tune for the harmony of heaven; and now when this last wire is fitted, when this last tube in the great organ is properly adjusted, He will say — “Now take it home. It will do for the choir above.”

So God disciplines His saints here for usefulness hereafter. He has work for them to do there. Only Himself knows just what it is, and just what training is requisite for its successful prosecution. Then let us leave Him to go on in this school of training us for a service which lies open before His eye but not before ours.

Again, it is most manifest that Christ is preparing the saints to be glorified with Himself. He passed through this same school of discipline to His work and reward on high; so He asks us to follow Him in His tribulations that we may be ripened for the same final glory. Having Himself suffered being tempted and tried amid tribulations, He knows how to sympathize with those who are struggling along the same pathway. Who would not follow cheerfully such a Leader! Especially while cheered by such sympathy, and conducted onward to such a weight of glory!

Once more; the unbelief of Christians is the real occasion of very many of their trials. The Lord in mercy sets Himself to cure this unbelief; and for this purpose employs the two-fold agency of external providences and the internal work of His Spirit. Providences from without press, and the Spirit within constrains us towards God. Oppressed with trials, we *must* seek

God and believe His word and promises; drawn by His Spirit, we renounce our unbelief and dare to trust our own Father.

Thus the Lord makes His providence and His Spirit conspire together to expel the Christian's unbelief and beget faith.

It is indeed a most interesting consideration that nothing can occur in the universe which does not tend towards this same result. "All things work together for good to those that love God." All the latitude given to external temptations is allowed and still controlled with reference to this very end. With every temptation, God will provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it; and having borne it victoriously, we learn to trust God more than ever. Thus every temptation through grace may serve to dispel unbelief, quicken faith, and ripen the Christian for future usefulness and final glory.

## REMARKS

**1.** The true picture of the Christian life is very seldom presented. Almost all Christians are prone to take partial, one-sided views of the Christian life; a fact which seems often to result from dwelling too exclusively on one particular aspect of practical religion. By consequence we fail to represent it accurately as a whole, and false impressions are given.

Thus, the Christian life is sometimes represented as almost wholly a state of bondage to sin. You are made to see the Christian daily groaning under a body of sin from which no deliverance comes or is hoped to come till death. You cannot help inferring that his state is one of the most pitiable forms of slavery the world every saw — with no emancipation possible in the present life. Now this is a great perversion of the real truth.

Or again, the Christian life is represented to be a bed of flowers, with no toil, no ruffling anxiety, no strife within or without. This too is an extreme and one-sided view of the case. The fact is that the Christian life is a checkered, varied scene — a storm and then a calm, a rugged mountain pass, and then a verdant valley — the light and joy of hope and of victory, succeeded often by fell conflicts with Satan or with lusts, forming the dark shades of the picture.



So the Bible sketches the Christian life; so all experience and observation testify; so therefore it should be represented.

**2.** In consequence of these defective representations, real Christians and especially young converts are often greatly stumbled. Not finding religion to be what they expected, their confidence is shaken. If they have been told that all will be joy, light, quietude, with no sorrows, struggle, toil, they will be greatly discouraged when they find the fact to be otherwise. Hence a strong temptation to let go their confidence and apostatize from God.

It would be of vast service to every young convert, and indeed to every Christian to understand the relation of all these trials to their own spiritual improvement. Every Christian needs to know that these are the wisest means which God can use for molding, chastening, and purifying his own heart for the work of faith here and the bliss of heaven hereafter. Then no one need be stumbled. All would love to see a Father's hand both wise and kind, in every form of tribulation.

**3.** These tribulations are not arbitrary or accidental. This is a great and a most injurious mistake. They always come from God, directly caused or at least permitted for some wise and good end. Nothing can come by chance.

Nothing can befall the children of God which is not suffered by God for their good. Whatever it be, God means it as an instrument for their greater sanctification and higher usefulness.

Hence it follows that God is just as good to His people in the afflictions He sends, as in those things which we are pleased to call mercies. They are all mercies. The only difference among them is that the one class *seem* for the present to be not joyous but grievous, though afterwards they yield the same peaceable fruits of righteousness. The other class may be a less unpleasant medicine. All alike tend to health, and God is just as benevolent in giving the bitter portion as the sweet.

Our experience meetings on Friday afternoons are exceedingly rich and instructive. In one of these meetings a few days since, a brother rose and said, "Rejoice, my friends, with me, for God has been peculiarly good to me of late." I wanted to reply at once, "Brother, you are mistaken — it is not merely of *late* that God has been good to you; He has always been as

good to you as he could be; always doing the very best thing He could do, and the pleasantest thing for your present enjoyment that the nature of your case would admit. Think not that God is fitful, capricious, — benevolent only now and then; peculiarly good by turns; no mistake can be greater than this.”

You think perhaps that God is sometimes particularly attentive to your case and to your welfare. No so; He is always attentive to you, as much so as if you were the only Christian who needed His care in the whole universe, and the benevolent sympathy and regards of the Deity were all concentrated upon yourself.

It is life the case of that fond mother who has only one child in the world — a darling son. See how she watches over him day and night; she joins him in his little plays and keeps her eye out against all harm; she kisses away his little pains; if he is sick, O, how she watches over his pale frame. But God watches over every one of His children with an eye as fixed, with love as strong, with assiduity as unwearied as the fondest mother ever had — nay with love infinitely surpassing that of the best of mothers.

Christian mother, God gave you one only son. It was a precious gift, and you thanked the Giver for His love. You watched over that dear boy with the buoyancy of hope till he could run about his play alone; and what then? Oh, you say, he seemed well — till one morning he was sick. His little hand was hot, his cheek flushed; he rolled his wild eye in agony. Ah me, I saw him die — and die too in so much suffering that I almost felt relief when his little bosom heaved for the last time. And do you suppose, afflicted mother, that God was any less good in taking away than in giving your dear boy? Nay, God has no fitful spasms of goodness; all alike is infinite love — the best thing for you that He can possibly do.

But the Lord hid His face from you, did He? But even then, He did not forsake His throne of love, nor revoke His promises, nor dismiss our great Advocate; so you might still have a God to seek and find. Nay, Christian, in those seasons of your bitterest agony, your Father was none the less kind and sympathizing. He chastens only for your “profit;” and not from His caprice. You will then (will you not?) learn to praise Him for both — for the affliction and the gift. O you must learn this, else the law of gratitude cannot be written deeply on your very soul. You cannot praise

God as you ought till you learn to praise Him for every thing and see His own kind hand in afflictions not less than in His gifts of providence. “In every thing give thanks,” is the inspired precept.

# HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE

*“Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” — 1 Peter 3:16*

The discussion of this text will lead me,

- I. TO DEFINE CONSCIENCE.**
- II. TO SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE.**
- III. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH WE MAY HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE.**
- IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE.**

## I. WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

I answer, conscience is said by some writers to be moral consciousness; that is, consciousness as exercised on moral subjects. Consciousness in general is the mind's notice of its own existence and of its own states. In its particular reference to moral states of mind, it might be considered as moral consciousness, and this is precisely the idea which some writers attach to the term, conscience.

In the popular sense, however, the term means more than this. It includes not only the mind's notice of its own moral states, but the accompanying state of feeling. Everybody knows that when a mind whose moral sense is not utterly perverted, notices its own right moral states, there springs up a delightful feeling of approbation; and when such a mind notices its own wrong moral states, there arises a feeling of intense and agonizing disapprobation. Now, in the popular conception of conscience, these feelings of approval and disapproval are associated together with the mind's recognition of its own right and wrong states as all included under the term conscience.

## II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE

**1.** That it be enlightened. Some persons hold such exalted or rather such perverse views of the sufficiency of human reason that they see no need of any divinely revealed light. Another class speak of conscience as being itself the light of God in the soul, and they deem this of itself amply sufficient for the perfect guidance of the human heart and life. Now, in opposition to both of these views, it is quite plain that we need the aid of a written revelation, and the yet additional aid of the Spirit of God to give its revealed truth efficiency upon the heart.

Especially is it essential to a good conscience, that there should be in the mind a well-developed idea of the spirit of the law of God. If the mind errs on this point, or has defective views, there must of course be what is called an evil conscience. For example, suppose a man has no idea of the rule of duty, except as it respects outward conduct; he does not regard it as reaching the heart at all; then his conscience is not enlightened, and cannot be a good conscience. Its decisions must fail in a most fundamental point. It is only when the true idea of the law as a rule of duty is well developed, that a man can have a good conscience.

**2.** It is implied in a good conscience that it be quick and tender. There may be a well developed idea of law, and this one important condition of a good conscience may be present, and yet the mind may be so sluggish and apathetic in respect to its moral relations that the conscience becomes almost perfectly inefficient. There may be various moral states which the mind does not notice at all. For example, it may not notice indulgence of appetite; feelings of envy; violations of the law of love in business transactions. Now it is essential to a good conscience that it be quick to notice any and every departure from the law of love; in fact, it should notice instantaneously all our moral acts and states of mind. It should be in an active state of attention, incessantly comparing the mind's states and acts with the rule of duty — always on the alert to know whether every thing we say, do, or even think is pleasing to God.

A child may understand its parent's requirements well, and yet may be so negligent as not only to fail to do the things required, but he may fail even

to notice his own negligence, and may not be really conscious that he is neglecting a most important filial duty. Now this, as every one must see, is a deplorable defective state of the moral faculties. The conscience of such a child is utterly wrong.

The same defects of conscience are often exceedingly apparent in our relations to God. The mind may understand the law of God, and yet may be so little disposed to attend to its own moral states and compare them with that law, that the man might as well have no conscience at all. In such a state the reason performs none of the functions that belong properly to the conscience.

**3.** It is essential to a good conscience that it be persevering. I may perhaps illustrate what I mean under this head by alluding to the will. Some individuals have a great will; a will so resolute and persevering that they never give up anything they undertake. If their will is set upon any object, they never relinquish it till it is gained.

There is something extremely analogous to this in the conscience of some men. Their conscience will never rest till its demands are yielded. It persists in its work until it gains the ascendancy, and the desired change is effected.

Now it is vastly desirable that the conscience should have this quality of unyielding perseverance. When the mind becomes conscious of any particular form of sin, the conscience ought to persist in rebuking it until it be thoroughly and forever abandoned. Our conscience will do us no good if it stops short of this.

**4.** It is essential to a good conscience, that we obey its dictates. It will ultimately be weary of testifying for God if we refuse to hear and obey its voice. When its demands are long resisted and its voice unheeded, it seems to retire as it were into its inner sanctuary — cease to reiterate its unheeded remonstrances, and employ itself only in putting on record for future use all the contempt and abuse it is receiving. Its accounts will one day show that it was not dead nor sleeping. It was silently preparing for the judgment scene, and the eternal state beyond, where its claims shall be reasserted and its grievances be heard.

### III. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH WE MAY HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE

**1.** There must be light; — a correct and thoroughly developed idea of duty. But,

**2.** There must be something more than the unaided light of the human understanding. The mind must have divine light, that light which God, and God alone can give. This light is promised to those who seek it, and all observation and experience show that without it, we seek in vain to find in any of our depraved race the true and well developed idea of moral obligation.

**3.** A third condition is indulgence. If I may use this term in this relation, I would say, you must indulge your conscience if you would give it efficiency.

It seems to be a law of all our mental and moral powers, that they must be indulged in order to be fully developed. For example, let the will be indulged, and its demands will become more and more imperative; its energy accumulates; its power is developed. On the other hand, let the will be suitably resisted, and in a proper way put down, and it yields — a great change takes place. Some children seem to have no will. They are perfectly submissive to the will of their parents. Their own will seems to be lost in their parent's will, so that the only will they have left is to do the will of their parents.

A similar change takes place where the soul really submits to God. It ceases to have any will of its own. Its only will now is to do God's will most perfectly. Nothing else can please such a soul.

Now, God must always bring the soul into this state before He can bless. Hence we see explained the thousand measures of His providence; they have for their end the discipline of the will. They are divinely planned to subdue the will and bring it to bow in perfect submission to the will of God.

While submission and discipline have this result, indulgence has the opposite. Indulgence strengthens the will against God, and against submission to any known authority but itself.

So of the sensibility. Indulgence greatly augments its power. Sometimes the emotions, by indulgence become overpowering, and the man loses all self-control. Discipline and restraint have the opposite effect.

The same law prevails respecting the conscience. Give it the moral supremacy which it ought to have — let it have its own way, and its efficiency and energy are greatly augmented. It speaks then with solemn authority as if it were indeed a voice of God in the soul. Its rebukes inflict keener pain; its smiles shed over the soul a sweeter joy.

Hence it appears that the conscience is under the same law as all our other mental faculties. Trample it down and it seems to yield; it rebukes you with less decision and authority. Continue to resist it, and it seems almost to die; its voice is hushed; it ceases to remonstrate.

We may hence appreciate the importance of this condition of a good conscience. We must indulge it and give it its appropriate place among the powers of the soul. That place is the throne of dominion. Conscience ought to bear rule over all our powers and their entire action. Hence it should be obeyed, and its demands always treated with profound regard.

#### IV. WE NEXT CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A GOOD CONSCIENCE

1. It is intimated with great justice in our text that a good conscience is indispensable that we may commend ourselves to the consciences of other men. Nothing can be more true than this. To good men, especially, we never can commend ourselves, unless we have an enlightened and good conscience.
2. A good conscience is indispensable to self-respect. No man can really respect himself who does not keep a good conscience. It is impossible that he should. He may flatter himself in his own eyes, but genuine self-respect he never can have unless the foundation for it be laid in the ennobling



consciousness of aiming evermore to do right, according to the dictates of an enlightened conscience.

**3.** It is essential to peace of mind. That real equanimity — that well-founded peace of mind, which he may have, who always obeys a good conscience, can never be had on any other conditions. The man who violates his conscience cannot have it.

**4.** A good conscience is essential to usefulness. Without it, you can have but little influence over others. Those men whose moral sentiments are loose will practice loosely wherever their interest prompts them to do so, and will surely lose the respect of the community. This once lost, the less they say about religion the better. The less they do to urge other men to be just and holy, the better. If their life and spirit is such that whenever they say a word to recommend religion, the thought rushes into everybody's mind, "Physician, heal thyself," that man may as well hold his peace. His first business should be to heal himself. Let him first set his own conscience right and live according to its dictates; then the time may come when people will hear and regard what he says.

When Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel at Phillippi, a sooth-saying woman was employed by the devil to frustrate their efforts. She had long been imposing upon the people until her character had become perfectly odious. Of course she was a good tool for the devil to use. He sends her after the Apostles, and just when they are getting the attention and the hearts of the people, he sets her a shouting — "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." The people are at once repelled; they will not believe the best truth in the universe coming from such a quarter; they turn away, and the Apostles seem likely to be utterly nonplused in respect to introducing the gospel there. Paul is "grieved," and turning to the woman, commands the evil spirit in the name of Christ to come out of her. Then the word of the Lord had free course.

Now what this woman said was true enough — but, Oh, to have it said by such a woman! It was enough to undo and nullify all that the best preacher of the gospel on earth could accomplish.

So every where and in regard to all cases where men of a loose and evil conscience would fain try to do good. Let a drunkard blow his putrid breath into your face and exhort you to be a Christian. He could not do a worse thing for your salvation. Let a man of known dishonesty get up in your prayer and conference meetings to speak for God, and all that love the cause of God are agonized, and all that hate it are made full easy of their consciences. Let such a man go about in your families with ever so many good things on his tongue — yet if his dishonest life gainsay his fair words, it were infinitely better he should never say a word. Often has the cause of religion ample occasion to say, Deliver me from my professed friends.

If a man has loose notions of morality on any points of practice, he will be known, and his talk in favor of religion might as well be spared. It matters little whether he speaks for religion or against it, his life is against it, and his own words in its favor can be nothing better than a scandal.

**5.** Men who do not keep a good conscience must become odious to any good society. Such men could not be respected even in hell. Everybody knows that in a community of thieves and robbers they would be despised. Every community is constrained by the demands of self-preservation to insist upon obedience to conscience in at least some points. Hence the worst communities known to us in the universe have their moral regulations which it is utterly disreputable and even scandalous to violate. Deeply as our moral nature has been corrupted by sin, it still retains some of the outlines of its original structure. Under some circumstances it will yet abhor and condemn wrong doing.

**6.** If we do not keep a good conscience we must be odious to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves. Our state is odious in itself and it cannot appear otherwise than odious to any beings under whose observation it may come.

**7.** A man who does not keep a good conscience becomes a nuisance in society. You know there are such things as natural nuisances, as a pond or a marsh that breeds the ague, or a vessel that brings into port the yellow fever. So also there are such things as moral nuisances. The former acts injuriously upon the health — the latter upon the spirituality and piety of the people. A man of an evil conscience is a nuisance of the latter class. If

our jurors could wisely take cognizance of such things they might complain of every such man as a moral nuisance to the community in which he lives.

**8.** Having a good conscience will secure the favor of God and peace of conscience. It secures these rich blessings by a law of necessity. God can never fail to bestow His smiles upon him who keeps an enlightened conscience void of offense, and surely he who maintains such a conscience will have the joy and peace of self-approbation.

**9.** Yet again he will have the respect of other men. The case may be such that he will have nothing else about him to command respect; yet even then he cannot fail to be really respected for maintaining a good conscience. You have all seen cases of this.

Such a man will of course be useful. His example is a blessing though he should never speak, or had not even the power of speech. The reputation of a good conscience will give any man such a character that what he does say will have weight. Hence he is furnished with a most valuable power of influence for doing good.

**10.** One consideration more. Maintaining a good conscience is absolutely indispensable to salvation. No man can be saved who does not mean to do right, and who does not take pains to know what is right in his own case and in all its varied circumstances. What! a man be saved without a good conscience? Then it is a vain thing that God as said — “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” What sort of a heaven is that man fitted to enter who does not keep a good conscience? How could he dwell in that city wherein shall “in no wise enter anything that worketh abomination or maketh a lie?” No; let that man lay it deeply to heart that if his conscience be not heeded — if its decisions are not obeyed, he has no possible ground for expecting to go to heaven.

## REMARKS

**1.** Those who have not a good conscience are not aware how they appear to others. I have not infrequently had occasion to expostulate with persons of loose conscience, and when I have told them how they were regarded in

the community, they have been astounded. They had never so much as thought of this. It had never been told them, and they had not the discernment to see it themselves. Having managed to keep a pretty good opinion of themselves, they have been so blind to their own real character and have so misinterpreted its commonest developments that they have not been aware of the impressions which themselves are making upon the public mind.

Not long since I was in a community where a man lives whom I have known for many years. He is unlike any other man I ever saw. A neighbor said of him — “He seems to have no friends. Nobody loves — nobody respects him.” Now this is precisely the result which ought to have been anticipated. Anybody else but himself would anticipate it, but he did not. He seemed not aware of the state of feeling towards himself, although this feeling was so strong that people could hardly meet him in the streets without giving vent to their disesteem and even contempt. The trouble with him was, he had no conscience. He seemed incapable of appreciating the rights and interests of others if those rights or interests came at all into competition with his own.

So not infrequently some persons run so low in point of conscience that they are universally despised and yet sometimes are so stupid, or self-conceited, or blind as not to be aware of the fact. They should be pitied and often blamed too.

**2.** Such persons are often annoying and harassing their neighbors exceedingly. Their own selfishness seems to have blinded their own eyes so much that they can see no other selfishness but their neighbors, they never see their own, even though it may be so prominent, and so glaring as to amaze the whole neighborhood. It sometimes seems as if such persons would not scruple a moment to bring the small-pox into a neighborhood if it might in some perceptible degree subserve their own interests. The inquiry about the interests of others, either does not strike their mind at all, or if it does, it awakens not the least solicitude. What a conscience this!

Sometimes such persons will even go so far as to complain if they are not allowed to violate the most manifest principles of right and equity — as if they alone of all the world had a perfect right to trample on all other interests but their own!

It is indeed a great and sore trial to be so situated as to have much to do with men or women of this description. One needs in such a case to let patience have her perfect work. Surely there is any amount of occasion for its exercise.

There is one man who will keep unruly cattle, and let them run among his neighbors to destroy their crops. One such man is enough to chafe a whole community, and keep the body politic forever sore.

Others there are, and many others too will not pay their debts. Ministers and men not engaged in business are not apt fully to appreciate the evil of negligence in this thing. But business men feel the force of this. It is no wonder therefore that men who have much to do with commercial transactions should have the importance of perfect promptness and punctuality in this point thoroughly developed. But ministers and perhaps students too who are preparing for the ministry are notoriously delinquent, and very often greatly to their injury. Business men will not respect them, and are often so chafed by this negligence in ministers that they are thrown quite beyond the reach of any good influence from their preaching.

It is a great calamity for students preparing for the ministry to run into debt and keep in debt as some do throughout their course of study. There is the greatest danger lest they acquire a looseness of conscience in respect to paying debts, and learn to content themselves while they are wronging and perhaps distressing, or at least chafing and harassing those to whom they are indebted.

The evil in the case of students really becomes terrible when they get into such a state of mind that having means in their hands to pay their debts they can quietly go on, and spend their money in extravagant dress, riding for pleasure, or indulging their appetites. Such young men must have made utter shipwreck of a good conscience. If they go into the ministry with such a conscience and with such habits, they cannot fail to curse the church and scandalize the gospel.

This matter of recklessness in paying debts is a sore calamity among any people. Especially when it prevails among professors of religion, it brings a grievous scandal upon the cause of God, and breaks the right arm of

Zion's strength. She cannot hold up the glorious law and gospel of God as a burning and shining light so long as there rests upon her own name, the stain of daily and manifest dishonesty in business transactions. How can Christians hope to reach the consciences of ungodly men, while standing in such ill odor for looseness and perhaps rank injustice in business transactions?

Again, I remark that a virtuous community will very soon by a natural process throw off such persons as the scum of society. It is a curious process in the social action of a community, yet you may often observe its operation. As the scum in a vessel under fermentation, or as the chaff under a strong wind, so men of loose consciences seem to get loosened up on a community; they rise to its surface and soon disappear. The fact is that they see they are not respected, nor wanted there. They get chafed, restive, uneasy, and are glad to make it convenient to be off. This is the natural process of things where there is virtue enough to create a strong public sentiment in favor of right. Then those who will not yield to this sentiment will find it very inconvenient to stay.

Where there is not health enough in the community to throw off its social scum, it must be in a very bad state. Just as in the physical system, if there is not enough of the vital energy to throw off disease or poison, the man must die; so in the social state, if there is not enough of the vigor of virtue to throw off moral nuisances and moral poisons, languishing and death must ensue. Often this process of moral corruption goes on until the pernicious results become so apparent and so glaring even, that a reaction follows, and people seem frightened by the horrid consequences of vice and learn in some measure to appreciate virtue.

It is a rich luxury to have a good conscience. How mellow and glorious is the sun-light which it pours into the soul! Few only seem to know its blessedness — yet there are some who know it well. It is as you have sometimes seen the sun break forth from a cloud and all is glory before him. The universe seems to be lighted up into smiles of joy to greet his coming. Such is the atmosphere of peace and glory in which the soul seems to bathe itself when it enjoys the luxury of a good conscience. There is in fact no apparent distinction between this and the broad sun-light of God's own presence upon the soul.

Scarcely anything will produce tears of joy more suddenly than for conscience to pour its sun-light approvingly upon the mind. When you have passed through a scene of great trial, through grace victorious, have you not found a delightful mingling of deep humiliation, and of overflowing gratitude to God that seems almost too rich a luxury of bliss for your heart to endure? You felt infinitely unworthy of such sustaining grace — you wondered how God could bestow it on such a one as you — yet was your inmost being stirred up to praise God for this grace, and you deemed it the richest joy of all, that God both deserved and would receive all, *all* the glory and the praise for all the good wrought in you by His Spirit and done through your being upheld by His power.

Your conscience approved of what through grace you had done, yet was there no pride — no self-gratulation; you cast yourself lower perhaps than ever at Jesus' feet to praise that grace which gave the victory.

The man who has a good conscience can be comfortable under any degree of outward reproach. Let all the world reproach him and cast out his name as vile, yet if conscience within is peaceful, all will be well. Let the men of his generation disown him — yea, let them wax hot in their rage against him and hustle him out of the world, yet may he be calm as a summer evening. What has he to fear? The deep foundations of his bliss are within — where no wrath or scorn of man can ever reach them. It is enough for him that conscience approves, and that his own infinite Father smiles upon his soul.

But right over against this, let that man have a vile conscience and he cannot have peace. Let all who know him conspire to approve and applaud him it is of no avail. Should angels from heaven mistake his character and give him honor, and devils from hell hide their faces before him in awe of his supposed virtue as if he were a bright angel, yet would his inmost being cry out and proclaim its earnest dissent against all such praise. Yet would his conscience upbraid him, and the lack of its approval, like the lack of Mordecai's homage to Haman, would be enough to poison all the joy derivable from all other honor and approbation. So vain a thing it is for any man to hope to be happy without a good conscience.

The most damning guilt of all belongs to those whose consciences are enlightened but are not quick and tender, and who do not obey its dictates.

They know their duty but they do it not. With light enough to be angels in virtue they have stupidity and moral hardness enough to sink them to the rank of devils. No guilt can be so black as that of knowing the claims of God, and yet deliberately setting the mind, despite of conscience, to trample those claims under one's feet. No moral state can be worse than that of having a conscience thus abused, thus violated of its virtue so to speak, and rifled of its purity, till it ceases to persuade towards the path of life.

Are any of those impenitent sinners who hear me, going on this moment in that career of death? Sinners, beware!!



# ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until He come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” — 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.

This text gives us the original institution of the Lord's supper. In discussing it I shall,

- I. EXPLAIN THE DESIGN OF THIS ORDINANCE.**
- II. SHOW WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN AN ACCEPTABLE RECEPTION OF IT.**
- III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN COMING TO THE LORD'S TABLE ACCEPTABLY.**
- IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF AN UNWORTHY PARTICIPATION.**

## I. THE ORDINANCE APPEARS TO HAVE TWO GREAT OBJECTS;

One, to show the bearings of the death of Christ in its governmental relations, as a substitute for the death of all who else must die; and the other, to show forth the spiritual relation existing between Christ and His

people whereby they live by faith on Him. The breaking of this bread and the pouring out of this wine may well represent the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood, and these emblems so far considered, doubtless set forth the atoning death of Christ as a sacrifice for our sins.

But the ordinance includes another important part; this bread is to be eaten, and this wine His people are to drink. Now the frequent instructions of Christ to His disciples have made us quite familiar with the use of this emblem to denote the life of faith; the fact that the hearts of Christ's people are purified, and animated with the spiritual life of the gospel, by means of receiving Jesus to their souls thus to purify and animate. Of this spiritual life, He is the living bread. Whoever eats shall live forever; whoever eats not, has no spiritual life.

Now the fact that Christ had already made so frequent use of this emblem and had so abundantly explained it, leaves us at no loss to assign this same relation as a secondary design of the ordinance of the supper. The breaking of the bread which He said denoted His body, might of itself indicate His death, and might suffice to exhibit its governmental relations; but the other great idea — the life of faith sustained by its appropriate spiritual food, required for its full illustration that these emblems of the Savior's body and blood should be received as food and incorporated into our very being.

Hence this ordinance not only shows forth Christ's death, but shows that by His death we live. If the question then be asked — Why do you eat this bread? The answer might be — To show that we live by Christ. In Him in a most precious spiritual sense, we live and move and have our being.

Again, this ordinance is intended to remind us of our sins, and of our relation as sinners to the death of Christ. When He gathers us round His table and spreads before us those elements which represent His mangled body and His flowing blood, and says so mildly and impressively, "This is My body which was broken for you," who can fail to think of those sins of his own for which Christ died? And who can be so hard of heart as not to be melted under the thought — *my life, and peace cost the Son of God such a death — a death of fearful agony!*

Yet again, this ordinance reminds us how hopeless was our condition as sinners, without Christ's interposition. Surely we cannot fail to reason

this; — The Father would not have given up His well beloved Son to such a death if any sacrifice less costly could have sufficed. If man could have wrought out his own redemption; or if there had been any other eye to pity and other arm of adequate power to save, then would the sacrifice of the blessed Jesus have been spared.

The hopelessness of our condition sent up its imploring cry to the throne of God for help. Deliverance could come from no lower source.

Still another object of this ordinance is to awaken and quicken our compassion for sinners. Around this table we see the fresh manifestations of the Savior's compassion for sinners; this should enkindle ours. Did *He* feel compassion for sinners, and shall not *we* also? Did His compassion burn so deeply and so strongly that He could die for sinners, and shall not our compassion at least move us to pray and weep and toil and deny ourselves that they may live? Shall there be no power in Christ's example to make us feel as He felt?

Yet again, this ordinance should keep alive in our hearts a sense of that great love which Jesus had for His enemies. We must not forget that it was for enemies — for us while we were yet sinners, that Christ died. Let us never lose sight of this fact, nor of the lesson it reads us respecting the feelings we should cherish towards all the enemies of God.

Oh, what a flood of light does this great fact shed upon the infinite compassion of Jehovah! Could He send His own Son to die for His enemies! Then we may hope in His mercy — if we will repent and trust Him.

Again, this ordinance is valuable as affording conclusive evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. Everybody knows that this ordinance exists. No fact of history is better attested than that it has existed as far back as the death of the Apostles.

But even if it were otherwise — if the historic evidence were very much less than it is, we should still stand on solid ground in affirming the utter impossibility of imposing such an ordinance upon mankind, if it had not been instituted by our Lord Himself. The fact of its existence therefore stands an incontrovertible proof of the great facts of the gospel scheme. It

proves that Jesus Christ did die for the sins of men — and that He desired His followers to show forth this great fact to the end of the world.

## II. WE PASS NOW TO ENQUIRE WHAT IS NOT IMPLIED IN AN ACCEPTABLE COMING TO THE LORD'S TABLE

It does not imply an avowal on our part, of Christian confidence in all those who come with us, or of Christian fellowship with them. I have often met with persons who hesitated to come to this ordinance; and when I have asked them why they hesitated, they have replied — “There are persons there of whose piety I stand in doubt. Therefore I do not feel free to come.” Now this position assumes that in coming to the Lord's table we endorse the piety of all who come with us.

But this cannot be correct ground. Judas was present when Christ first partook of the supper with His disciples. The disciples to be sure might not have suspected his hypocrisy, but Christ knew it well. The example of Christ therefore in coming and allowing His faithful eleven to come also and eat with the known traitor, forever settles this point.

Suppose the disciples had known Judas' true character. The circumstances might still have been such as to justify them in coming with him to the table. This is not the place to go into detail upon the duty of disciplining those who give evidence of hypocrisy; suffice it only to say that we do not of course make ourselves responsible in coming to the Lord's table for the sincere piety of all who come. They come on their own responsibility.

If I held the views of which I am speaking, I could not commune with any church I ever saw. I could not administer the supper to any church with which I have ever been acquainted. I may believe the church to be a church of Christ, and yet may not have satisfactory evidence of the piety of some of its individual members. The general confidence I have in Christian character of the church justifies me in administering the ordinance, or in communing with them.

Yet such scruples as I here refer to are very common, and are the alleged reason why many absent themselves from the Lord's table. The reason is

not a good one. If the devil should come, I would come too. Why should I be kept away by him! If he comes, let him bear his own responsibility.

### III. WE NEXT ENQUIRE WHAT THINGS ARE IMPLIED IN COMING TO THE LORD'S TABLE ACCEPTABLY

**1.** A living, efficient faith, as opposed to a faith that is dead and inefficient. A dead faith is a mere opinion, held in the intelligence, but not affecting the heart or the conduct. Men sometimes hold certain opinions, and suppose themselves to hold them with entire sincerity; yet those opinions have no efficient influence upon their life. Such a faith is of no avail.

On the other hand a living faith is a vital, efficient belief which at once affects and controls both the heart and the life. In every case of living faith, the mind receives the truth in love and cheerfully obeys it. This receiving the truth in love is a living faith. It is a trusting, confiding, committing the mind to the influence of truth. The efficiency of such a faith will be manifest.

It overcomes the world. "This is the victory that overcomes the world — even our faith."

This faith worketh by love — being efficient because love and trust are sweetly blended together, — this constitutes a fitness for acceptable coming to the Lord's table. But no amount of knowledge — faith being inefficient — can fit the soul to come to this table of the Lord.

**2.** Sympathy with Christ in His love for His church. All who come acceptably must have this. Christ's love was so great that He is represented as giving Himself — His very life for His church. Oh! what love is this! Love that could induce Him to lay His life down for His people! Let no one expect to be accepted at His table who does not sympathize deeply with Christ in this great love of His for His church.

**3.** Sympathy with Christ in His compassion for sinners. On this point we need to get before our minds the state of feeling in which Christ laid down

His life for the lost and guilty. Into this feeling we must enter most fully if we would enjoy His presence and His smiles of love at His table.

In short you need to have a sympathy with the whole mind of Christ. Go back to the scenes of the last supper. There are His disciples. How intense the Savior's care and love for them! He would not leave them orphans — He could not part from them until He had promised them an abiding comforter — poured out His soul for them in prayer — giving them the largest promises, even assuring them that they might ask what they would in His name, and it would be given them.

Conceive too of the spirit with which He had all along anticipated the cross. Ready to sacrifice Himself — ready to be arrested, dragged like a lamb to the slaughter; — ready to be insulted, tortured, nailed to the tree — ready to endure anything — I mean not merely, anything short of death, but anything with death itself — any form of dying however full of agony. And all this for sinners! Oh what an emptying of self! What a consecration to the good of the vile and the guilty! Was every love like this! With all this love we are to sympathize if we would come acceptable to His table.

Take still another view of this point. Suppose the disciples when they came together for the first time to this supper of their Lord, to have understood its design as well as they did afterwards. Then conceive how they must have felt. There sat the meek and lovely One, around whose feet they had so often gathered to hear His precious words; He is preparing to sacrifice Himself. It is as if a man were making ready his own winding sheet. He is thinking of a memorial by which His death for them shall be had in perpetual remembrance through their lives and throughout the lives of all that should believe on Him through their word down to the end of the world. Now if the disciples had well understood all this, with what emotions would they have gathered round that table! With emotions much the same should we now celebrate the supper He then instituted. If your souls, beloved, were thoroughly to enter into these sympathies, you would find yourselves drawn into most deep and blessed communion with your Savior at His table.

**4.** Another condition of acceptable communing in this ordinance is a deep sympathy with Christ in respect to the progress of His kingdom upon

earth. One great and leading desire of this ordinance is to promote the progress of Christ's kingdom. It aims to quicken the faith, the zeal and the love of His people, and to testify before the ungodly to the great fact of the death of Jesus Christ for their salvation if they will come and receive it. We cannot therefore come acceptably unless we come in sympathy with Christ in this respect.

**5.** Every church must maintain wholesome discipline. If they neglect this they ought not to come to the Lord's table at all. They are guilty of greatly dishonoring Christ and His cause. How can it then be anything else than mockery for them to publish to the world their professions of honoring the Savior, as they do in coming to His table? If I as pastor should find that a church refused to maintain wholesome scriptural discipline, I should feel it my duty to refuse to administer to them this ordinance. I could not make myself accessory to their contempt of the Lord's authority and of the rules of His house.

**6.** Stumbling blocks must be removed. If any members of the church have openly disgraced religion they must reform and put away the disgrace they have brought on the name of Jesus. Else how can they hope to meet His smiles at His table!

**7.** All difficulties between brethren should be amicably settled. The church ought to insist on this, before they come to the communion table. All hard feelings should be all means be allayed before brethren meet together at the Lord's table. How can they appear before their Lord with such feelings cherished towards one another! And do they think to secure the smiles of their Lord, coming themselves in such a spirit?

**8.** Self-examination is always an indispensable condition of coming acceptable. So Paul taught; — "But let a man examine himself and so eat of that bread and drink of that cup." This self-examination ought to be a most thorough scrutiny into one's own heart and life. We ought to know where we are and what our spiritual state is, before we come to the Lord's table to meet our Savior face to face. We ought to know whether we are prepared to come; we ought to know what blessings we need to seek from our Lord when we meet Him at His table.

**9.** It is always important to renew our covenant at these seasons of communion with Christ. I do not believe that Christians can come acceptable unless they do virtually renew their covenant with Christ on such occasions. It is eminently fit and proper at these seasons to review our past life — to see what sins we have committed — to repent of them; confess and forsake them and again solemnly renew our covenant to be the Lord’s fully and forever. All this is so fit and proper that no Christian in the right frame of mind for acceptable participation can fail to do it. You sit around the table of your crucified Lord, and before you are the elements which bring to your mind the scenes of Calvary. You stand as it were by the side of the sacrificial Lamb, and as the Jews of old, so you now lay your hand on the head of the victim and “there confess your sins.” How appropriate and solemn to confess one’s sins over the broken body of Jesus Christ! What place can be like this for breaking one’s heart for sin, and earnestly putting it forever away! Oh let us never come to this impressive scene without improving it for penitence and confession, and for solemn renewal of our covenant with our Savior!

**10.** Restitution should be made amply for all wrongs done, as far as it lies in our power to make it. “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” These precepts of our Lord’s applies pertinently to any act of worship, but preeminently to communion with Christ at His table. Its meaning none can question, for nothing can be plainer than His language — nothing more reasonable than its obvious meaning. If you have done your neighbor wrong, so that he has reason to have somewhat against you, stop where you are — go not forward a step in your professed worship of God while wrong toward your brother lies unretrieved — go and make this wrong right as far as you can; make all reasonable or possible reparation and the most ample confession; become reconciled to thy brother; then mayest thou appear before thy God acceptably — not otherwise.

How can anyone who has ever read this precept dare to come to the Lord’s table until he has first made restitution for all known wrongs against his fellow beings?



Restitution should also be made to God. By this I do not mean to imply that we can remunerate God for injuries done Him; but I do mean that we can restore to His cause and service what we have wrongfully withdrawn or withheld. If you have in your hands of the Lord's wealth which of right ought to have gone into His treasury for the use of His poor, or of His laborers; or if, as the case may be, you have been squandering this wealth upon your taste or your passions as you have reason to know God would not have you, then you have wronged your Maker and robbed His cause; and it becomes you to make ample restitution before you venture to meet your Lord at His table.

So if you have backslidden from the Lord, and your heart has gone after other gods, what business can you have to come to the table of your Lord, except you can come in the spirit of most deep and humble repentance? How can you come acceptably, unless it be to re-consecrate your heart and all your powers to your dying Lord? In coming to the table of the Lord, you publicly profess to sympathize with Him; if this profession is mere mockery, can you hope to be accepted?

#### IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF COMING UNWORTHILY, NEXT DEMAND OUR CONSIDERATION

One of the results to be expected, one indeed which always follows an unacceptable coming is great spiritual blindness. This is true of all religious duties; performed in a wicked state of mind, they induce great spiritual blindness. But I have often thought that an unsuitable attendance upon the Lord's table must harden the heart beyond everything else. There are many in the churches who do this; who come to this table, conscious most fully that they are in no fit state of mind to come acceptably; but they feel that they must come — they fear being disciplined if they refuse to come; or at least, they fear the loss of their Christian reputation; hence they come, and consequently, become dreadfully hardened.

Do you meet with a professed Christian who is in deep and awful darkness, or whose conscience seems to be seared as with a hot iron? Search out his history, and you will find in most cases that he has allowed

himself to come to the Lord's table in a careless, wicked state of mind, and having thus trifled with the most solemn and effective means of melting the heart, he is now hardened fearfully — perhaps so much so that no means or influences can ever reclaim and restore him. When one comes to the table in this wicked state of mind he is likely to go away more bewildered and hardened than ever. The curse of the Lord is upon him.

On the other hand, coming acceptable has the opposite effect. It quickens our spiritual sensibility — melts the soul in godly sorrow; and makes every grace thrive and grow like the cedars of Lebanon. Those that be planted thus in the courts of the Lord shall flourish in the house of our God.

The judgments of the Lord will follow the deliberate or reckless abuse of this ordinance. So the text plainly teaches. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself."

There can be no doubt that in the primitive church, not merely spiritual but physical judgments befell those who abused this ordinance. For this cause said Paul, are many weak and sickly among you, and many asleep — doubtless in death. There is no reason to doubt the fact that God often sends judgments upon people in this world for their sins; and especially for the sin of perverting or disregarding this sacred ordinance.

Another danger of most fearful sort awaits those who abuse this ordinance. It is reprobation. They are in the greatest peril of being given up of God. When the best means which the Lord can use to melt the heart prove unavailing, it only remains to give over the helpless reprobate to his fit doom. If the view of his crucified Lord, dying for his sins fails to move and melt his soul, there is little if any hope of his ever being brought to repentance. In the judgment day we shall find a great many professors at the left hand of the Judge — because of their hypocrisy at the table of their Lord, and of the judicial blindness and hardness of heart thus produced. Hence followed reprobation, and their place on the left hand. They may plead — "We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence and Thou hast taught in our streets;" but He shall say, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.

## REMARKS

**1.** Satan tries often to keep weak believers away from this ordinance, and especially young converts. He makes them doubt whether they are real Christians, harasses their mind — accuses them of playing the hypocrite; makes them feel that it would be a horrible thing to come to the Lord's table; and perhaps ultimately succeeds in inducing them to forsake the table of the Lord and even prayer itself, and other religious duties. Now young converts and indeed all Christians ought to be on the alert that they be not caught in this snare. They should repel Satan by saying — I know I am in danger of being deceived; therefore I will flee to Christ now. Now if never before, will I repent of my sins, and take hold by faith of the offered gospel salvation. Now I will lay hold of the arm of the Lord for my help, crying, "Search, me O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I know it is a solemn thing to come to the Lord's table, but Jesus invites me and I cannot stay away. I cannot forego the spiritual blessings which may be obtained there; there is no reason in the universe why I should. I will indeed be on my guard most diligently lest I come and partake unworthily, I will go to Jesus and confess my sins; my soul shall lie in the dust before Him; and if my brother has aught against me with any good reason, I will go and be reconciled to my brother before I come to that divine table of the Lord; but how can I be persuaded to stay away and starve — while I know there is bread enough and to spare in the banqueting house of love?

In this way, Christian brother, you may quite baffle Satan, and make his temptations a blessing and not a curse to your soul. If you will be really honest with your God and with your own soul, you shall have nothing to fear.

**2.** Satan often tries to embolden real hypocrites. The true convert he will try to harass with the fear of being a hypocrite; but with the real hypocrite he plays another game. He tells him to fear nothing. He helps such persons to come to the Lord's table with heedless self-confidence, as careless, as to any common meal. Horrible presumption! Perhaps they never really ask the question, "Am I prepared in heart to commune with Jesus Christ at

His own table?" If their mind does glance at such a question it soon glances off again, and they do not give themselves solemnly to self-searching in the light of God's word, and with prayer for the Spirit to guide their minds deeply into the secret things of their own real character. Those who never examine themselves may know, if they will believe it, that they are deluded by Satan and may expect to lift up their eyes in hell in the awful agony of final, remediless disappointment.

**3.** Satan often plays a game with backsliders which is adapted to keep them forever in a backslidden state. He says to men — This is a means of grace — you must by all means go. But he is careful not to tell them they will need to prepare their hearts by solemn self-searching and deep repentance before the Lord. He keeps this idea quite out of sight — if he can. His plan is to make them trust in external means for their salvation. Prayer he tells them too is a means of grace; hence if they will pray in form — enough to keep conscience quiet — all will be well. Thus he keeps them away from real repentance — lures them along in their backslidden state, and puts their souls in infinite peril of final perdition.

**4.** Those who know themselves to be backsliders have no right to come to the Lord's table, unless they mean to return to the Lord when they come; for coming in any other way, they really play the hypocrite; and what right have they to do this?

**5.** This ordinance is often a great curse to the church. The best things perverted, work the greatest mischief. The more precious the institution, the more shocking and pernicious its perversion. The same is true of every doctrine of the Bible; the best and richest for practical benefit, become when perverted, the very worst. It is on this principle that no one can come under all the solemn and impressive influences of the Lord's table and resist with a cold, unmoved heart, and not be awfully hardened and fearfully cursed by that which Christ gave us for the choicest blessings.

**6.** This ordinance is peculiarly precious to the saints. Here they meet Christ under most affecting circumstances. It is as if they were to meet Him at His own funeral or at His cross. What can be more precious! How do the most melting considerations cluster round the heart as you come to meet Jesus and remember His dying groans and His tender love for His people at His own table.

**7.** This ordinance must have been most affecting to Christ. Think of the circumstances under which He first instituted the ordinance. Beside Him sat the traitor; before Him lay outspread in full and distinct view that foul and cruel treason — the rush of the chief priests and of their armed men to seize Him — the mock trial — the insults — the scourging — the dying agonies — the being forsaken of God; but these were not the only objects of His deep solicitude. Around Him sat His eleven faithful ones, and His heart sympathized deeply with their coming trials and with their yet more remote labors, persecutions, and temptations in His service. He foresaw the need of giving them some memorial of His own death, for He knew that so long as they remembered this and saw it in all its proper relations, they would be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Hence He sets up this impressive memorial, and inscribes on it the sad yet glorious and heart sustaining fact of His own bloody death for the salvation of a world.

Yet again, let us consider how affecting is this memorial in its form, and in its natural associations. “Come,” He says to His beloved ones, “come sit down with Me at My table. This bread betokens My body which I am about to give for the life of the world. This wine, which I now pour out foreshows the shedding of My own blood — indeed! — My blood, which is soon to be shed for you.” Oh how He must have felt amid these scenes! And how must they have looked on and listened with mingled amazement, gratitude and love, as the great idea began to break into their mind that their Lord might ere long die for them; and as they saw in His eye and His tones that love unutterable was swelling in His heart and compassion yearning in His bosom. Viewing this transaction in all its bearings, what a scene! Did earth ever witness another such?

**8.** The celebration of the Lord’s supper may be a most interesting scene to the Savior now; perhaps in many respects as interesting now as then. Why not?

When Christ sees a church in a suitable state to come acceptably, when He sees the humble, broken heart, and the uplifted eye of confidence, trusting in His word and atoning blood, think you not that His heart is affected with tenderest sympathy? It must be an interesting scene for the exalted Redeemer to see His church on earth still celebrating His death age after age, still breaking the symbols of His body and pouring out the emblem of

His blood as if they could not and would not forget the love and compassion of that wondrous death — as if they *lived* in and through the life begotten by that wondrous death!

Beloved, your risen Savior sees you eating of His symbolized body, and if your heart is in sympathy with your act, His eye regards it and His heart beats in sympathy with yours!

**9.** But on the other hand it must be exceedingly abhorrent to the mind of Christ to see His professed people come in a hard, unfeeling, unbelieving, ungodly state! To see them coming as it were to attend His funeral, without a tear, and without showing or having the least feeling adapted to such a scene! Oh what mockery of the dying Jesus is this! They come and stand before His cross — they can see His blood flow — they come and look into His open grave — but all, with hearts unaffected! Oh, how could they testify more strongly that they never loved this blessed, dying Savior! This I need not say must be utterly abhorrent to the heart of the Savior.

Brethren, are you prepared to come to the table of your Lord this afternoon? Have you such sympathy with Christ that you can come with broken hearts — can abase yourselves most spontaneously before your Savior — can pour out your tears of penitence at His feet, and then can trust and love and adore?

Come, brethren, for the voice of love invites us — come, but let none abuse the call.

# THE NATURE OF IMPENITENCE AND THE MEASURE OF ITS GUILT

“Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.” — Matthew 11:20-24.

In speaking from these words, it will be my object,

- I. TO SHOW WHAT IS INCLUDED, OR IMPLIED, IN A STATE OF IMPENITENCE.**
- II. TO POINT OUT THE GUILT OF THIS STATE OF MIND, AND SHOW THAT IT IS IN PROPORTION TO THE LIGHT UNDER WHICH IT IS INDULGED.**

In a recent sermon I aimed to show what repentance is; I now wish to show what constitutes impenitence.

- 1.** It is not, as many seem to suppose, the mere negation of repentance. It is not a negative, blank state of mind — a mere nothing; but is absolute and positive. It involves moral action of the most positive kind.
- 2.** It is that state of self-seeking into which men not influenced by the Spirit of God, always fall. In this state men make themselves and their own supposed good, the object of supreme regard. Their ultimate design in all they do, is their own gratification. I mean all this, and precisely this; in all they do for others, and in all they think themselves to do for God, their

own self is the supreme and ultimate end. Everything terminates in self — or they feel no interest in it.

In other words, impenitence is a state of *consecration to self*. Beyond all controversy, impenitent men are entirely consecrated — only it is not to God, but to self. To their own gratification, and their own supposed interests, they are supremely devoted.

It is a great mistake, to suppose that impenitent sinners are not devotional. They are most profoundly and perfectly so. You could not ask for more perfect specimens of devotion to a given object — *but* the object in their case is their own self. It cannot be said that they fall short of entire consecration. With them consecration is never unsteady, fitful, imperfect. Self being their idol, the worship they pay is always ardent, hearty, and consistent with their whole life. Furthermore, the impenitent man consecrates not only his own efforts and interests to himself, but the interests of every other being — of God as far as he can, and of his fellow beings also. All sentient beings in the universe within his reach are laid under contribution to minister to his supreme deity — *self*. He cares not for God, only as he can make God subservient to himself. He would pray to God, if he could thereby make God his own servant — not otherwise. If he does good to any of his fellow beings, you may be sure he has himself for the ultimate object — this is all; he cares for nothing in the universe, except so far as he can make it subservient to himself.

**3.** Impenitence is a state of self-exaltation. In this state the man sets himself above everything else — even above God, and every other being or interest in the universe. Every impenitent sinner makes his own interest and his own will supreme; neither God nor angels, earth nor friends, are placed above self; all are placed in his esteem below himself, and made to bow down in homage and subservience to his own shrine.

**4.** It is a spirit of self-will; a state in which a man will have everything in his own way. This man would be ready enough to be a Christian — in his own way; would go to heaven very cordially if he might go as Universalists expect to go, or as infidels dream of going; his own will being supreme, and his own way being granted him.



**5.** It is a spirit of self-indulgence. I am aware this sentiment has been expressed in other language; but you will allow me to turn this subject over and over, that you may see all sides of it, and all the terms under which it has been clothed. Now the impenitent man does not always indulge himself in the same way. He may not always choose the gross and scandalous forms of self-indulgence; he may not everywhere be a glutton, a drunkard, a debauchee; he may deem it more for his interest to taste, to consult his love of reputation, and may choose to indulge this. This may be his strongest passion, and if so, thorough self-indulgence will make him hold in check his grosser passions and appetites, especially if he resides in a truly moral community. But if a good name be his ruling motive, his decent moral conduct, having this for its end, is as real self-indulgence as you ever see in the veriest glutton or debauchee. No matter what the *form* of self-indulgence may be — its moral character turns upon the fact that it is self-indulgence, and not at all upon the greater or less decency it may have in the estimation of men.

This point ought to be thoroughly understood. Impenitence is self-indulgence in some form, and what the form shall be, will turn upon the relative strength of his several passions, and his estimate of the expediency under his circumstances of gratifying one rather than another. He may love money too well to be a drunkard, or his reputation too well to be licentious; but while in impenitence, whether he drink or abstain, it is to indulge himself; whether he be a glutton or be temperate in food; whether he be avaricious or prodigal; moral, or immoral; self-indulgence is evermore the one ruling end of his life.

This is equally true of all impenitent men. All the forms of morality you see among them, have the same, and no other root. Whether he go on a pilgrimage, or immure himself in a monastery, or subdue his flesh in his asceticism; each, or all, are only forms of self-indulgence, one or another being chosen, according to his taste or his faith in its efficacy to subserve his great end of life — selfish good. All is self-indulgence. That devotee who crawls on his knees a thousand miles, and dies, still crawling, does it all for the same end as he who gives himself up to gluttony, or to intoxication — the main difference being that the one expects his good to come now — the other is content to wait for it, say till after death. The woman who takes the veil and goes for life into the nunnery, may go for

the very same supremely selfish end as she who betakes herself to the haunts of ill fame. With each her own gratification is the supreme end — if the mind be in a state of impenitence towards God.

**6.** Another phase of the impenitent spirit is its self-dependence. It never depends on God — always and only on self.

Again, it is a spirit of self-righteousness. It everywhere and always rejects Christ's righteousness, and goes about to establish its own.

It is a state of mind, finally, which cleaves to self, despite of all the claims of God, or of all the universe. Nothing is permitted to sever, or even weaken its supreme regard for its own self.

## II. I AM TO SHOW THAT THE GUILT OF AN IMPENITENT STATE IS ALWAYS PROPORTIONED TO THE LIGHT SINNED AGAINST

It is plain that this state of mind in which self is preferred to everything else, begins in the infant mind, where there is no light at all — when the idea of right and wrong is yet undeveloped. There the little infant chooses his own gratification, by the same law that all other animals choose theirs, and for ought we can see, as innocently, until its reason is in some degree developed, and duty to other beings and other interests is seen to impose a counter claim. We cannot tell how early the reason may begin to develop itself; it is not incumbent upon us to do this; but whenever it is, there moral agency commences; there impenitence begins in the selfish preference of its own little interests, to the greater interests of God, or of other beings. And as ray after ray of light breaks in upon that young mind, setting forth the claims of God right over against the demands of its own self-gratification, guilt is every moment increasing, if this light and the divine claims which it reveals are resisted. Nothing can be plainer than this.

The text obviously teaches this doctrine. It assumes its truth, and bases its augmented woe, upon the cities where Christ preached, on this very ground. So on another occasion Christ said, "If I had not come and spoken among them they had not had sin; but now have they no cloak for their sin."

Again, as light increases, the obstinacy of the sinner's mind increases, or he cannot remain in a state of impenitent resistance. He must gird himself up to resist, or he could not withstand the force of this light. How much I have seen of this in revivals of religion. Light pours in — the sense of obligation is quickened — conscience lifts her voice; but the sinner girds himself for desperate resistance, as he never did before. I have seen it often in this place. Young men here, pressed by truth and the Spirit of truth, to yield to God, band themselves together, as if they could not hold out if they stood alone. They hold each other up — taking the same course that devils themselves would take — they gird up their loins for more vigorous effort to resist the claims of God, and maintain their position of impenitence. Of course the guilt of sinners thus resisting, is augmented with fearful rapidity. The woes of Capernaum fall thick and fearfully upon their heads.

Again, as light increases, impenitence continuing, hardness of heart increases. This is only the same thing in other words. Greater and growing resistance of truth involves greater hardness of heart.

Yet again, as light increases, and the sinner girds himself to resist it, God has the greater reason to be incensed against him. How could he provoke God more and worse than he does! He sets at naught both the justice and the mercy of God, and seems determined to thwart every effort God can make to save him. Why should not a holy God give scope to law and justice?

As light increases, sinners see more and more of the folly and madness of their own impenitence. I once fell into conversation with a lawyer of eminence in the State of New York. He began to cavil resolutely against the claims of the gospel. I headed him in on every side, and showed him that all his cavils only rebounded upon his own head, and aggravated his own guilt. He saw it, and finally acknowledged it, saying, "Well, I know my system will not do to reason upon; I may as well stop as try. I know there is no foundation for my cavils." You do, then, replied I, understand that you have no foundation for your objections against God and His gospel? Yes, I do. Now if this man goes on still in sin, he is in the most guilty state conceivable.

Thus, as light increases, sinners see more and more of the infinite reasonableness of God's claims.

Often, for a time, sinners almost believe their own lies. Perhaps they really labor under great errors of opinion in many points, and these serve to weaken the pressure of God's claims upon their consciences. They see perhaps, a great many difficulties in the way which they know not how to surmount. I know but too well from my early experience, that sinners may involve themselves in error and darkness, from which they cannot readily extricate themselves. As the Bible says — "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble."

But often, at last, they open their eyes and see the infinite reasonableness of truth. I never shall forget the hour when in my own case the truth broke upon my mind — when I saw that all my cavils were groundless — that all God's ways were right, and all mine wrong. I had been brought up in great darkness, yet in the midst of a Presbyterian congregation, often listening to Old School preaching. But the strain of it was — "You can and you can't," and it filled my mind with utter confusion, and put every great truth of the gospel out of joint, in my mind. It seems to me now, that in all those years of my youth, I never heard one gospel sermon, not one that I think presented the gospel in its clear and true light. It threw me headlong into all the absurdities of Old School theology, and there I stumbled along, only getting deeper in the mire. I at first got a Bible and placed it among my law books, to study law out of it. This led me to read portions of the Old Testament, and from this for a time I derived no benefit. But at length I took up the claims of religion as I would any point of law, and while I sought to justify myself in sin, I found, to my surprise, that truth and reason were all against me. Conviction broke on my mind, that God is all right — that I am all wrong. And do you suppose that I was easy under this conviction? Infinitely far from it. My mind chafed like a chained bear; truth had harpooned me, and I could neither escape nor rest. I fretted, raved against the truth, abused professors of religion; but all this neither changed the truth, nor helped me. My mind rushed one way, and then another way; but in vain, for God, by His Spirit, had anchored His truth deep in my soul, and I seemed to have no power to dislodge it. My mind worked like a steam engine, and seemed laboring under a mighty pressure. So you may have seen the sinner agitated and struggling — God attempting

to break him off from his sins, but his iron heart resisting, and holding out in stern rebellion. But guilt is all this while accumulating with fearful rapidity.

Once more; as light increases, impenitence becomes a hard and troubled course. Conscience is ill at ease; the sinner must needs brace himself up against the heaven-sent impulses to repentance; it costs him fresh and painful efforts to remain in impenitence. O what guilt this sinner must incur who will fight his way down to hell against such influences put forth by God to save his soul.

## REMARKS

**1.** Impenitence is the whole of sin. Nothing else in all the universe is sin but this. Outward actions being only the evidences, or manifestations of the inner moral state, we must turn our eye away from these, and look only at the heart. Then we see that nothing else is sin but impenitence towards God — that supreme regard for self which puts the mind in the attitude of rebellion against God, and against an appropriate regard for any other interests but those of its own self. Self-gratification becomes the one controlling law of action. No matter what form it may take on; its nature changes not. There is only this one thing sought as an ultimate end, by any sinner in earth or hell — self-gratification. The only difference among them all turns upon the different degrees of light sinned against, and this difference affects only the degree, not the kind, or moral quality of their conduct. So, the angel in heaven, and the saint on earth, so far as he is a saint, have each and all but one end in view — to please and glorify God; and here, too, the only difference turns on the different degrees of light which they may enjoy. The saints in earth or heaven, pursue a course right over against that of the sinner; but each class has but one heart — one supreme intention, for this is what is meant by heart. This is uniformly the Bible representation of saints and sinners.

**2.** There is no difference among sinners, only that the guilt of those who have had greater light, exceeds the guilt of those who have had less. It is vastly important that people would break through the shell and see the kernel of this truth. It ought to be seen by all, and may be. As I said

before, no matter where the sinner is, whether in earth or hell; nor who he is, nor what his pursuits are; all is perfect sympathy among sinners of every name and grade and place — even between sinners in hell, and sinners on this earth — just as much as there is perfect sympathy between saints on earth and saints in heaven. Developments and degrees of guilt will vary according to light possessed and controlling circumstances; but no other difference will or can be found.

**3.** Outward acts are not sin, but are merely the evidences of the mind's state. There is not a particle of sin in your muscles. Even though they may be nerved up to stab your neighbor, yet those muscular movements are not your sins — these lie in an impenitent or selfish heart.

**4.** Outward acts and manifestations will of course be modified by circumstances. Suppose a man has for his supreme end his own gratification. Place him under one set of circumstances, and you will see one development of character; change his circumstances, and you will see another development of character. Take a man who in a loose community has been of loose morals himself, and transfer him to a religious and moral community, and you may anticipate a marked change, not in his character, but in its manifestation. If his love of reputation is strong, he will conform to his company enough to secure reputation as well as he conveniently can. He will be likely to become outwardly a religious man. He will probably become very moral, and perhaps a professed Christian. Why? Because his love of reputation is a controlling principle

The truth will justify a still stronger supposition. Let an impenitent man change his circumstances as we have supposed, and it will not merely affect his outward conduct, but will lead him to sympathize very strongly in his feelings with Christian people. This will be a natural result of his association with them. And yet the man may not be at all aware that it is his love of reputation that has brought him to this state of feeling, so changed from what he experienced when associated with wicked men. Hence it will be no strange thing if he comes to think himself a Christian. And indeed a great change has come over him, if you look only at his external conduct and his sympathy with his associates.

We may suppose that before a young man comes into this community, he was in the habit of frequenting balls, often drank freely, and nearly to

intoxication and spent his money generously so as to be thought a hale fellow among his comrades; but he comes here — finds a different set of associates — breaks off his former habits and falls in with theirs — finds that his sympathies set almost as strongly with his new associates as they did with his old ones, and, amazed, he cries out — How changed I am! Surely this must be religion! It must be that I have become a Christian! I have no taste for strong drink; can do without my cigars; am just as happy without balls and routes; indeed I seem to take much the same pleasure in religious meetings now as I did in my social convivialities then; it must be that I am indeed converted! Now this man does not consider that all this change in him may result from the change in his circumstances, and that under the influence solely of his love of reputation and of the law of sympathy with associates he may experience all this change without a particle of religion. Indeed if he loves his own reputation and is a thoroughly selfish man, he will naturally modify his course to suite his changed circumstances.

Again, as selfish considerations alone produce this change, the improvement made in his deportment or in his sympathies may not make his guilt at all the less; nay, it may be really greater now than it was before. If his light is greater, of course his guilt will be.

Let us look at this supposed case again. That young man who came here used now and then to get drunk — to visit her “whose house is the way to hell” — to laugh and jeer at prayer and piety; but now mark the change; — he comes into a religious family and bows the knee with them in prayer; he goes regularly with them to social worship, nay perhaps he even prays sometimes in his closet; the profane oath, the derisive laugh at religion and the daring deeds of sin are abandoned; and with one voice the people say — how much this man is improved! But mark ye; if his light has increased and he has not repented of his sins before God, his guilt is greater than ever before, instead of being less. He is just as selfish — just as really opposed to God as he ever was, and the fact that he manages it in a more decent way and has adopted a mode of sinning which conforms itself to his circumstances only shows that he uses some discretion in carrying out the ruling principle of his heart.

But we may take a case even stronger still. Let a man come into Oberlin who has been an atheist and a pirate — for most pirates are in principle atheists; take one who has been raised among bloody men in the Spanish West Indies, who boasted in New York city that he had murdered five hundred men — let this man come into Oberlin to reside among us. He has a friend here and after staying awhile with his friend, he takes it into his head that he will get an education. You may look into his trunk and you find it full of bowie knives and pistols; examine his overcoat, you will find his pockets freighted with death-weapons; he wears them for awhile, but soon is ashamed to do what nobody else here does and lays them carefully away where none will ever see them. By and by you see him in a prayer-meeting — the man who used to make the very air blue around him with horrid blasphemy, is in the place of prayer and on his knees, and possibly you may hear his voice in supplication; at all events, you see him civil, respectful towards religion — he gives up his atheism; but we may suppose continues still impenitent. Yet he professes to approve the plan of salvation and proclaims it a glorious plan. Now this man, so changed — so humanized, so much better as a citizen than before, may really be ten-fold more the child of hell now than ever before. Do you ask, how can this be? I answer, for the simple reason that his light is indefinitely greater than it was before, and yet he remains a selfish, impenitent man. His resistance to light and consequently his guilt against God are vastly enhanced by this change through which he has passed.

Until we get hold of the true idea of sin and holiness, we can never tell when men are growing better. We shall make the most egregious mistakes, and have no standard by which to correct them.

You might take this man, formerly so vile, and vicious; you might wash and white-wash his exterior ever so much; you might fit him for any lady's saloon, nay so far as the exterior is concerned, you might fit him to grace a mansion among angels, yet if he remains an impenitent sinner, he has only become the more wicked; that outside finish is only the garnishing of a sepulcher, which within is all pollution.

There are probably in this place, nay even under the sound of my voice, persons more guilty than any pirates in the universe — more monstrously wicked than the pirate Gibbs, who boasted that he had murdered so many



men. The selfishness of Gibbs took one particular form; the selfishness of gospel-hardened sinners here, a different form; different, but not a whit less hostile to God, or less odious in His sight, or less really depraved and worthy of eternal condemnation. The blackest malignity as estimated by God belongs to that form of selfishness which has resisted and still resists most light.

There may be some young women here more abominably wicked than you can find in the most polluted harlot's house — even young women against whose virtue and external conduct no charge can lie, and who can scarce hear the word licentiousness without a blush. Now wherein lies the difference between this refined, impenitent young lady, and the most corrupt harlot? Only in this; that each seeks her own self-gratification, but in different ways, and the one persists in this self-seeking despite the influence of more light and stronger dissuasives from heaven, earth, and hell, than are present to the mind of the other. She who has most of Capernaum's light to sin against must have most of Capernaum's woes to suffer, and for the best of reasons. The ultimate end of moral action — the only thing at which God looks, being the same in both cases, each has the same kind of moral character; and the difference in degree of guilt remains to be estimated by the amount of light enjoyed and resisted.

Again, as each sinner, remains impenitent, resists all the light he has, he is just as wicked, as under his circumstances, he can be. He persists in being supremely selfish despite of every reason known to him why he should repent; how then can he be any more wicked, until he has more light to resist? You will all see this point clearly if you once get thoroughly before your mind the two points I have been laboring to elucidate — namely:

- (1.) That guilt is always and only in proportion to light resisted. And,
- (2.) That while impenitence continues, all those modifications of the external conduct which are only choice among different forms of rebellion against God, have absolutely nothing to do in the estimation of a sinner's guilt. Let these points be well understood, and you will readily see that every sinner who resists all the light he has is just as wicked as, under his circumstances, he can be.

Again, just in proportion as light increases, sinners are in danger of committing the unpardonable sin. It is plain from what the Bible says of this sin that only those commit it who have great light and who resist and abuse that light. Those Pharisees who blasphemed the Holy Ghost, *knew* full well that Christ's miracles were wrought by the finger of God, and yet they impiously ascribed them to the devil. They had great light, and they greatly abused it.

Now we may ultimately see that more persons commit the unpardonable sin in Oberlin than anywhere else in all the land, for the reason that great light is enjoyed here, and by some is greatly and impiously resisted.

This is the climax of all sin. To know enough of God to make you an angel and then resist it madly and malignantly enough to make you a devil — what can be a greater sin? What can be greater folly and shame and madness?

Yet we are not wont to estimate guilt according to these plain principles of the Bible and of reason. We see a pirate — we are shocked; we cry out — “He is a pirate! Horrible! He has murdered a hundred men! Oh, such a wretch! Surely he is not fit to live.” Indeed he is a wretch, a horrible and wicked wretch; but *there* perhaps, sits another impenitent sinner who could not see blood spilt without having his own blood creep in his veins, who yet is the guiltier sinner of the two. This sinner, here in Oberlin, has been brought up religiously, has heard preaching enough to have converted a thousand souls, but has heard it only to harden his own heart — this sinner may be a hundred fold more guilty than any pirate, and much more likely to have committed the unpardonable sin. Let the gospel-hardened soul take warning!

Again, in the light of this subject we see how to account for the events which not unfrequently occur in the world's history. The most notorious sinners, it sometimes happens, are soon converted when they come under instruction, while in very religious places, it is almost impossible to promote a revival of religion and secure the conversion of sinner. You may go into the Sodoms of the land — the no-God settlements, as they are or may be called, and there you may find the word of God will fall with power on many hearts. I once went into a place called Sodom — notorious for its daring wickedness, where there was but one professor of religion

and he bore the name of Lot. This man had invited me there to preach. I went — I came to the place of meeting and the people were all there; yet I felt strangely — could not fix my mind on any text to preach from — seemed perfectly shut up — but trusting in God I began the exercises: felt enlarged in prayer, and finally seized upon the text — “Up, get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city.” It was a curious looking congregation. For a while I thought they would very likely pitch at me and drag me out of the house — they seemed ready to devour me in some way — but presently I saw what was moving their minds — the truth of God fell like quick, successive peals of thunder on their hearts; one after another fell from their seats; weeping, wailing, cries, screams, and prayers for mercy filled the whole house. I had to stop preaching, for I could not go on at all; and why? What was the matter? Only this: there was a company of ignorant persons who had indeed been regarded as the most wicked of sinners, but they had not hardened their hearts under the preaching of the gospel, and now when they came to hear a gospel sermon, its truth fell on their hearts like life from the dead.

So when you see a harlot converted, or a profane swearer or a notorious Sabbath-breaker, how do you account for the fact? You can ascribe it to the circumstance that they have not resisted so much light as thousands who have lived their life long under the gospel and consequently have not committed the unpardonable sin.

But look into that deacon’s family, and that minister’s family: there is a son or a daughter there who has lived amid the focal blaze of God’s truth for years; is he converted? No — he is gospel hardened.

Finally, gospel hardened sinners and backsliders are the very worst people this side of hell. No matter how morally or genteelly their outside deportment may be modified, they have resisted all the light God could give them and have fearfully filled up the measure of their guilt, That pious father may have great hopes of his morally behaved son — may think perhaps to train him for the ministry — Oh! does he not see that his hardened son is more fit for a minister of hell than of Christ and of heaven? That son may know enough of the gospel, it may be, to preach it; but if, with all this knowledge, he only hates that gospel: if he has trained himself to resist all this truth and all these motives which he has heard until they

are to him an old story: then indeed is he far more fit to be an apostle of Satan than of Jesus Christ. The very worst character such a man can bear is that of an impenitent sinner. He cannot possibly do a worse thing than to persist in his impenitence under all the light which God pours upon his path from heaven.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF HEARING THE GOSPEL

*“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” — Luke 8:18.*

These words follow almost immediately after the parable of the sower — a parable which was intended to represent the various classes of hearers and the diverse results of their different or opposite courses.

Immediately after recording that parable, Luke subjoins.

“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth *it* under a bed, but setteth *it* on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.”

“For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither *anything* hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.”

The idea of this seems to be that in the ultimate results of this state of probation, God will show who have improved their opportunities and who have not. These things, however secret now, shall be made manifest. All the workings and results of our present hearing or refusing to hear, shall in due season be spread out before the universe.

Hence the solemn injunction — “Take heed, therefore, how ye hear.” How forcible, if it be indeed the case that all its consequences are to be revealed before the universe!

Luke adds also —

“Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.”

From this and the parallel passages we infer that whoever improves the instruction proffered him shall have grace needful to understand it. He shall also have more truth revealed to him. The providence, the word and the

Spirit of God may perhaps all combine to fulfil this promise — *more to him that improves what he has*. So also will God take away from him who does not improve.

My remarks on the text will be confined chiefly to the first clause — “Take heed how ye hear.” I shall, inquire;

**I. WHAT IT IS TO TAKE HEED.**

**II. WHY PERSONS OUGHT TO TAKE HEED HOW THEY HEAR.**

**III. SHOW IN SEVERAL PARTICULARS HOW MEN OUGHT TO HEAR AND MUST HEAR IF THEY WOULD EVER PROFIT BY HEARING.**

**I. WHAT IT IS TO TAKE HEED**

To take heed is to be wakeful, attentive, to be very considerate. It implies that we seriously ponder the word of the Lord and consider attentively its meaning and its application to ourselves.

**II. WHY IS THIS INJUNCTION GIVEN? WHY SHOULD WE TAKE HEED HOW WE HEAR?**

You will observe that it respects especially the *word of God*. It does not require special attention to every thing which we can hear on all possible subjects and from any source whatever; no, it only requires us always to listen *when God speaks*; always to hear with the utmost attention what God may say.

Now the reasons of such a requirement are surely very plain.

**1.** Because it is *God* who speaks. We are to consider that it is really God who speaks to us through His word, and through the faithful and sound preaching of His gospel. He may employ human organs; He may use the language and the types or the living voice of man — yet it is still the voice of God, for it is His chosen mode of revealing Himself to mortal man.

And now how ought all men to listen to the word of God! With what profound and solemn attention!

And do any ask *why* we should thus listen when God speaks? I answer. Because He always has something important to say. Because He never speaks in vain. He is not an incessant talker — is not a trifler — never speaks unless to communicate truths of infinite moment for mortal man to hear and know.

How then ought men to hearken when the Infinite Jehovah speaks!

Suppose you were apprised of the fact that the Great God — the Infinite Maker of the Universe, had appointed the time and the place where He would audibly speak to mortal men — in language intelligible to them and of course on subjects of infinite concern to them. Would not you and would not every man living stand on tiptoe to hear every word that should go forth from the eternal God?

But what would you think if men should pay no attention? If the notice should not draw together even a respectably large congregation? What would you think if there were some who would not hear at all?

But again — *God speaks to you* — to you as if it were *by name*; as if He were to call out your name, and make His communications particularly to you. Suppose now it were known that God was about to address someone in this congregation by name — but no one knows who the individual is. How every heart would quiver with intense interest to know who it should be — each one anxious almost to agony and saying — Is it I? Will that majestic voice pronounce *my* name? And what will He say?

Now such a course would be striking — would be thrilling. It would doubtless startle some into wakefulness who are rarely wakeful under the ordinary mode of divine communication. But yet God as really speaks now to mortal men as if He were to call out with audible voice their very names. And, my hearer, He just as really speaks now to *you*, as if He were to pronounce your very name before this whole assembly.

This is one of those great truths which you need to know and fully realize. When God speaks through His word, through His providence, or through His gospel preached by His servants, He really speaks to *you*.

Again, you should take heed because if you do not you will certainly misunderstand what the Lord says. You cannot understand without giving your attention, and surely you must know that if God speaks to you, He will say something which is vitally important for you to know.

It is well for you to consider the fact that multitudes fail to understand these messages of the Lord, and hence go on to the judgment under a fatal mistake. God spake to them; they gave no such heed as would secure a right understanding of His message, and hence they go to perdition.

Again, you should take heed how you hear because God speaks on subjects of infinite importance to your soul. Life and death hang on every word He utters. He speaks to tell you of salvation — to show you what you must do to secure everlasting life. And should a single young man or young woman in this house be indifferent?

Your salvation does and must depend on the manner of your hearing. If you hear so as not to understand, you can never be saved. The very things of which God speaks are the conditions on which you can be saved. How can you be saved if you fail to understand these conditions? These conditions you are yourself to fulfill; how then can you do them and be saved unless you understand what they are?

Again, not only is your own salvation depending on your hearing the truth of God attentively, but the salvation also of many others. Perhaps thousands of persons may be deeply and personally interested in your hearing as you should. You cannot neglect to hear as you ought without wronging your family, your friends, your posterity, your whole generation. All these will have reason to blame, yea, to reproach, and even to curse you if you do not hear as you ought.

Consider further that God is offering you eternal life. It is on this subject that He speaks to you, offering you life and threatening you with death if you will not attend and obey. When God is about to speak on such a subject, is it not fitting that He should introduce His communication with the solemn admonition — “Take heed how ye hear?”

Consider also that everything may depend upon your present hearing. Perhaps some of you are hearing the word of the Lord now for the last



time. Death may lock up all your senses forever, ere you shall enter the sanctuary or open your Bible again.

Or it may be that though you should hear the word of the Lord a thousand times hereafter, yet God may withdraw His Spirit henceforward, never to bestow it any more upon you. There is the more reason to fear it in your case since you are now solemnly warned of your responsibility and of your danger. Your whole eternity therefore may now be suspended upon the manner of your hearing the word of God this day. Will you slight that solemn word and put in peril the salvation of your soul forever?

### III. I AM TO SHOW IN SOME PARTICULARS HOW YOU OUGHT TO HEAR AND MUST HEAR IF YOU WOULD EVER BE SAVED

It is perfectly plain that you cannot possibly be saved only by means of understanding and obeying the word of God. There is only one possible way of being saved, and that is by *becoming holy*, since “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” Nor can you become holy only as you obey the truth, nor can you obey the truth only as far as you understand it. Hence the immense importance of understanding and obeying the truth of the Lord.

If this is so, then certain other things follow and must be true.

- 1.** You must hear with very deep and fixed attention when the word of God is spoken to you. You must give your mind up most deeply and thoroughly to understand and obey it.
- 2.** You must hear with reverence and awe. Nothing is more displeasing to God than a state of *levity* of mind when He is speaking. You can readily understand this. If you were a father, think how you would feel if your children received your most solemn remarks or appeals to them with insulting levity.
- 3.** You must hear with a most sincere desire to understand what God says. How many persons are there in this house who have never set yourselves with seriousness really to understand the Gospel as if you felt it to be a

matter of infinite concernment to you? How many are there here who have never really pondered the plan of salvation — “I must understand the will of God concerning myself — I must know whether I am still held guilty and still doomed to hell, or whether I am pardoned?” Some of you perhaps have never said this honestly in all your life. Yet you have had the Bible in your hands; and you have heard sermons enough to have enlightened unto salvation a thousand heathen souls. Who of you have come to the house of God today with an intense desire to understand everything said to you? But how can you expect ever to understand these great things of salvation unless you give up your minds to this study in solemn earnestness?

I am often astonished to hear persons saying — “The Bible is a mysterious book; I don’t understand it.”

Have you ever studied it as you do your class books? Do you ever give your whole mind to understand it as you do to understand Euclid or Cicero?

Yet with what intense interest should you desire to understand it! Nothing in all the universe is so important to you as to understand this way of salvation. Your state of mind therefore by no means corresponds to your responsibilities, or to the subject you have to study; and how can you expect the Lord to bless you?

**4.** You must hear with candor, and be willing to know the worst of your case. Your heart must be really open to hear the whole truth.

Few persons have really come to understand how much importance is to be attached to this state of mind. Many seem not to be sensible of being prejudiced. Perhaps they have not even dreamed of being committed against the truth of God; but yet they are, full of committal — and most resolutely fixed in their false opinions. They are by no means candid.

I doubt whether a really candid man ever came to the reading of the Bible or to the hearing of the preached gospel, without being infinitely benefited by such hearing and reading. Now in revivals I have always noticed that however wicked and prejudiced men may have been yet if they could be persuaded to lay aside their prejudice and be candid, they are at once enlightened and are usually converted. They did not know really that they were not candid; yet if they had used the least reflection they must have

seen that they did not give up their whole mind honestly and search for truth. So much at least they must have known.

And how is it here in this matter? Are there not persons here who know they do not give up their minds to understand the truth — who know they have not heard the gospel this morning with any real desire to learn their duty that they may do it? I wish I could go round to every individual here, with this question — Did you come here this morning with an intense desire to open your whole heart to the truth, and to give yourself up to be carried by it just where the truth might carry you? Without so much candor and so much earnestness as this, how can you hope ever to be enlightened by the truth? How can you rationally expect ever to be converted?

**5.** The Bible represents it as important that you should hear with fear and trembling lest you fail to understand. Surely nothing can be more reasonable than this. How would you feel if you were actually to hear the voice of Jehovah proclaiming to you your duty, or your doom? Would you not tremble?

How did Israel hear at Sinai, when the awful voice of the Lord of Hosts shook the solid mountain, and smote every heart with fear and awe! O they felt then that they could not stand before that awful Lord God! How earnestly did they implore that they might not themselves hear that dread voice again, but that Moses might stand between themselves and the Lord and hear from Him and communicate to them?

And is it not most fit that *you* no less than they, should hear the word of God with fear and solemn awe?

**6.** You should hear with an intense desire to learn what the will of God is that you may do it whatever it may be. Now if you do not hear with a determination to obey, your hearing is only tempting God. It is an insult to God of the foulest stamp. Willing and ready to know your duty — but your heart fully set to disregard it however clearly known! What can be more horrid impiety than this!

**7.** You should hear with your heart set upon present obedience. You should not merely intend to do at some future time the duty you may learn

today; but you should fully determine to do present known duty immediately.

Moreover your heart should be thoroughly set to do your duty fully — not partially; and perpetually, — not merely for the present hour.

**8.** You must also hear with penitence for past neglect. How many times have you heard in vain? And is it not fit that for this you should stand before God with a broken heart?

**9.** You must hear with implicit confidence in God. Else of what use can it be to you. The Bible says the Jews were not benefited by their hearing because it was not mixed with faith. So unless you really believe God, of what possible use can it be to you to listen to His word?

This reveals the secret why so many hear without any real profit. If they truly believed God, it would be of use to hear; but having no faith in God, all is to them as an idle tale. May it not be so with many of you?

But let us try to appreciate this subject. Imagine to yourself how you should listen if God should send an angel to speak to you, or should come to speak to you Himself. Suppose that I were now to take my seat, and that God should fill this house with His own voice. You would see no physical form but you would hear a voice, and know it to be the voice of the great God. How would awe and wakeful attention hold your mind in such dread moments! Oh, you would say — this is the great God! This is that Being in whose hand our breath is, and whom by our sins we have offended! O will He forgive us graciously for Christ's sake, or frown upon us in His righteous wrath?

Or again, suppose God speaks by an angel. The angel comes and takes his position before you. Suppose you were to see him come down from heaven in robes of dazzling light and glory; you see he holds in his hand a book and every page of it is luminous with unearthly radiance. He opens it, assuring you that God sends it to you to tell you the plan of salvation and show you what you must do to be saved. Suppose the angel opens that book and expounds to you its contents; would you not listen as for your very life? Would not the scene and its solemn responsibilities make an impression on your mind which you could never forget? Aye, indeed, as if it were embossed on your very soul; there the living remembrance and

impression of the truths he should explain to you would stand as if they were written with the point of a diamond.

But again, let us suppose, that an apostle should come or one of the prophets of yet more ancient time; suppose one of them to be sent from the other world and you were assured of the fact; would you not listen with amazing attention?

Or still again, suppose that God should send to you an inspired man, and you knew him to be inspired; would you not even then listen with wakeful, thrilling interest? Would you not yield your utmost attention to such messages from the living God?

But here you have the living oracles of Jehovah. Here they are in the language of men: and yet you know they come from God. Suppose it to be the fact that God has chosen to reveal Himself to you just in this way, rather than by making His own voice distinctly and awfully audible, or rather than by an angel radiant with glory — or rather than by sending from the other world a prophet or an apostle, or rather than by sending to you an inspired preacher; and the reason of His choice has been that He might put you on a more effective trial and see whether you would believe Him on such evidence as your reason tells you is adequate, and see moreover whether you will under such circumstances search for truth as for hid treasures. Suppose you understand the precise nature of your trial; you know that it turns very much upon the point whether you will hear the voice of God through His word and His preached gospel or not; now, knowing all this, will you give heed to the warning voice of God and listen to His truth? O how you would search this truth if you understood the results of the trial by which the Lord is now trying you to see if you will indeed obey His voice though it comes to you through the silent words of the book and the merely human voice of one who is a frail mortal, like yourselves!

## REMARKS

**1.** Many seem to pay as little attention to the word of God as if no such injunction were found in the bible. They act as if they had never thought of the solemn responsibility of hearing with serious attention to the word of

the Lord. It would seem from their conduct as if they were not aware that God had over and over again reminded them of this solemn responsibility.

Even among us, there are those who pay not half so much attention to a solemn message which God sends by one commissioned to preach His gospel as they would to a young man's commencement speech, or to the monthly declamations; not half so much as they would to a stump speech on politics!

How can this be? Do such persons at all consider the contempt they thus pour upon God? Would they treat their Governor or their President, as they do God? And do they know that this is that God in whose hand their breath is?

**2.** Men ought to know that all their hearing of the gospel, is either "a savor of life unto life, or a savor of death unto death." Do you realize this, dear hearer? Are you aware how much this hearing affects your moral state?

You might watch this point, and mark how your hearing of the gospel affects your moral state. You might doubtless notice how your heart becomes hardened by careless, inattentive hearing, and how declension steals on apace while you get no strength from the preached gospel.

Or on the other hand you might notice how your spiritual strength is renewed when your heart takes hold of the sermons you hear as the hungry man takes hold of suitable food set before him. By a figure at once fit and beautiful, does Paul say — "We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are a savor of death unto death, to the other, a savor of life unto life." So to some of you, no doubt, the gospel preached is "death unto death" — accumulated guilt and damnation; while to others it is "life unto life," increasing knowledge and piety, and augmented glory.

**3.** We may see how it is that many become so exceedingly hardened. Such persons often seem not aware that they are becoming greatly hardened, or perhaps that they have become so already. They seem not sensible of the fact that the hearing of the gospel is altogether vain and worse than vain, and that they really hear so as to resist the truth and acquire the habit of being utterly insensible to its claims.

It may be so with some of you. You may have taken so little heed to what you hear that now it does you absolutely no good at all to hear a sermon or to read your bibles. You might hear or read, but the truth has utterly ceased to make any impression.

If you have reached a state so hardened, you are in as bad a predicament as you need to be this side of hell.

**4.** How exceedingly mad persons are for taking credit to themselves for going to the house of God, when really they have no intention of “taking heed how they hear.” They come with no desire whatever of obeying the word of God; indeed nothing is farther from their thoughts than this. They go to church only that they may have it to say they have been there. They go for the credit of going — because they do not like to incur the disgrace of not going.

Suppose your child should come to you each morning and say — Father, what do you want that I should do today? But having heard, he goes his way, and never thinks for a moment of doing the first thing you desire him to do. So he does day after day — hearing, but never doing, and withal congratulating himself for having done so nobly. O, indeed, who had done like him — *every morning* he came and asked his parent what he should do: — but never in one instance did he obey.

So that young man or woman in this assembly, may have gone a hundred times to hear what God, the Lord will say — but having heard and learned, they never in one instance have done it. So does the devil go to meeting; — the bible says he goes: — but does he hear and obey? Not he — and suppose he too should strut about and glory in his good deeds inasmuch as he goes to meeting! As well might he do this, as any of those careless hearers and proud formalists who glory in it that they do the same thing.

**5.** Every seventh day is a Sabbath. Every seven years of your life makes up one year of Sabbaths. Every Sabbath school child seven years old has therefore seen one year of Sabbaths. Each youth fourteen years old has spent two full years of Sabbaths — time enough to go half through college. Have those youths now fourteen years old, been learning of God and of His truth so that they can pass examination?

Another class have lived twenty one years. These have filled up three years of Sabbaths — time enough to have gone three fourths of the way through college. O think of your examination. Are you ready to meet it and to pass it honorably?

Others have lived twenty eight years — making four years of Sabbaths — time enough to go through college — time enough to get a college education in the principal branches of literature and science.

Now suppose you had studied your Algebra and Latin as you have your bibles, and heard scientific lectures as you have sermons; how much science would you now have?

But let us come up among the fathers — the men of gray hairs; how many years of Sabbaths have you lived? Think of it; how many whole years made up of Sabbaths! O! have you taken heed? Have you studied the great things of the bible with the utmost diligence and intensity? What do you know of God's word? How many of its promises do you really understand?

**6.** How perfectly shocking and astounding is the manner in which many persons treat the word of God! Suppose an angel should visit this place — should really come down among yourselves with a message from the great God! He summons the people together, and the most of them come. But instead of attending with all your souls to what he may bring from God relating to your salvation, many of you are gazing about upon one another, and during the whole time he is speaking to you, you are thinking about anything and everything else except the very thing of which he is speaking, so that it would be hard to say which is the most stupid — the people that sit before him, or the seats they sit on. O, surely there is not another world in the universe where this would not be looked upon as perfect madness! What do they think of it in heaven? Suppose an angel should pass among those shining hosts and tell them how the messages of God are received in this world. And suppose he should speak of it in some such *manner* as this. It is common there for men to pay the least possible attention to the messengers whom God sends among them, and all this is natural enough too. O, you see the Lord is only telling them some things of little consequence about their salvation — that is all — you know all that is really nothing to them.



O tell me; what would they think of such an angel as this? What shuddering amazement would run through all their ranks to hear such words, in such a strain!

But if such a state of mind ought to seem strange and even horrid in heaven, how ought it to seem here among you?

**7.** There are some here as to whom I have little hope of making any impression on their minds. O how astonishing, I have often said to myself — how astonishing that they should be always hearing, and only going still farther and farther away from God and from heaven! O how will they stand before God in the great day of trial!

Others hear with so much skepticism, it can do them no good. How surpassingly strange it is that men should be skeptical respecting the revealed word of God! Surely God has made the evidence in support of His bible clear enough to convince any unprejudiced mind.

**8.** In view of the solemn responsibilities of giving heed to the word of the Lord, I want to ask the listeners here today, how will you yourselves regard it when you come to your death bed? What are your anticipations now of that solemn hour and of its reflections? Do you now expect that then, your conscience will pronounce its approving “*well done?*”

And how will it be with you when you pass beyond that death bed scene to your final account before the great God? Are you ready for that dread account? If you were then to pass an examination as to your attainments in divine science, as some of the professors here examine their pupils in human science and literature, could you pass the examination? Are you quite clear that you have at least been *diligent*, so that you shall have no occasion to reproach yourself for culpable neglect?

**9.** It is infinitely important that you should make up your mind at once to hear God’s truth as you know you should. Everything depends on your coming to this determination now, and saying — “I will at once and henceforth listen to God as for my life.”

You who are professors of religion, how do you hear? Can you go before God now in your closets and say; — “Lord, I have heard Thy word as for

my life — I have given up my whole soul to understand and to obey all Thy truth.” Who of you can say this in the deep sincerity of your souls?

And what sinner in this house can say this? Who of you is prepared to say solemnly, “O Lord God Almighty, the great and heart-searching God, I have heard Thy words now these many days, and I have always listened with serious attention; my mother taught me about Thee my God, and my duty to Thee, and my young heart hailed the first knowledge of God with joyful welcome.”

Who of you can say, “I have always been a prayerful student of the bible — I have always obeyed its heaven-sent truth?” Must you not rather say, “I have been guilty — I am covered with shame — I have treated Thy word with contempt — I have turned away my ear and my heart from hearing Thy words; Thou hast risen morning by morning, and sent me line upon line and precept upon precept, but my heart has always been as an adamant stone; Alas, I am still in my sins, although Thou hast sent me Thy word and Thy Son — although Thou hast done all for me that could be done, yet am I still in my sins, condemned, and ready to sink down to hell.”

Sinner, let me ask you here today, if this shall be your course any longer? Do you say *No*; by the grace of God it shall be so no longer — from this good hour, I give my being up to be influenced by the word of God? So do, dear hearer, and it shall be your life. By all the peril of a guilty soul in its sins, I beseech you, give up your heart now to most solemn and fixed attention to the word of the Lord your God.

# THE RULE BY WHICH THE GUILT OF SIN IS ESTIMATED

*“And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” — Acts, 17:30-31.*

I recently preached a sermon on impenitence in which I dwelt at length on the guilt which attaches to sin committed against great light. I purpose now to discuss this point still farther.

The text declares that God will judge the world in righteousness. I shall not at this time dwell on the *fact* that God will judge the world, nor upon the fact that this judgment will be in righteousness; but shall endeavor to ascertain what is the rule by which our guilt is to be measured; or in other words what is implied in judging the *world in righteousness*. What is the righteous rule by which guilt is measured, and consequently the just punishment of the sinner allotted?

In pursuing this subject, I shall deem it important:

- I. TO STATE BRIEFLY WHAT THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION ARE; AND**
- II. COME DIRECTLY TO THE MAIN POINT, THE RULE BY WHICH GUILT IS MEASURED.**

## I. STATE BRIEFLY WHAT THE CONDITIONS OF MORAL OBLIGATION ARE

**1.** Moral obligation has respect to the ultimate intention of the mind. The end had in view, and not the mere external act must evermore be that to which law pertains and of which guilt is predicated. Surely guilt cannot be predicated on the outward act merely, apart from intention: for if the outward act be not according to the intention as in the case of accidents,

we never think of imputing guilt; and if it be according to the intention, we always, when we act rationally, ascribe the guilt to the intention and not to the mere hand or tongue, which became the mind's organ in its wickedness.

This is a principle, which everybody admits when they understand it. The thing itself lies among the intuitive affirmations of every child's mind. No sooner has a child the first idea of right and wrong, but he will excuse himself from blame by saying that he did not mean to do it, and he knows full well, that if this excuse be true, it is valid and good as an excuse; and moreover he knows that you and everybody else both know this and must admit it. This sentiment thus pervades the minds of all men and none can intelligently deny it.

**2.** Having premised so much, I am prepared to remark that the first condition of moral obligation is the possession of the requisite powers of moral agency. There must be intelligence enough to understand in some measure the value of the end to be chosen or not chosen, else there can be no responsible choice. There must be some degree of sensibility to good sought, or evil shunned; else there never would be any action put forth, or effort made; and there must also be the power of choice between possible courses to be chosen. These are all most manifestly requisites for moral choice, or in other words for responsible moral action and obligation.

**3.** It is essential to moral obligation that the mind should know in some measure, what it ought to intend.

It must have some apprehension of the value of the end to be chosen, else there can be no responsible choice of that end, or responsible neglect to choose it. Everybody must see this, for if the individual when asked, why he did not choose a given end, could answer truly, "I did not know that the end was valuable and worthy of choice," all men would deem this a valid acquittal from moral delinquency.

**4.** Supposing the individual to know what he ought to choose; then his obligation to choose it does not grow out of the fact of God's requiring it, but lies in the value of the end to be chosen. I have said that he must perceive the end to be chosen, and in some measure understand its value. This is plain. And this apprehension of its value is that which binds him to choose it. In other words, the moral law which enjoins love, or good willing

must be subjectively present to his mind. His mind must have a perception of good which he can will to others, in connection with which a sense of obligation to will it springs up, and this constitutes moral obligation.

These are substantially the conditions of moral obligation; the requisite mental powers for moral action; and a knowledge of the intrinsic value of the good of being.

Before leaving this topic, let me remark that very probably, no two creatures in the moral universe may have precisely the same degree of intelligence respecting the value of the end they ought to choose; yet shall moral obligation rest upon all these diverse degrees of knowledge, proportioned evermore in degree to the measure of this knowledge which any mind possesses. God alone has infinite and changeless knowledge on this point.

## II. I COME NOW TO SPEAK *OF THE RULE BY WHICH THE GUILT OF REFUSING TO WILL OR INTEND ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF GOD MUST BE MEASURED*

**1.** Negatively, guilt is not to be measured by the fact that God who commands is an infinite being. The measure of guilt has sometimes been made to turn on this fact, and has been accounted infinite because God whose commands it violates is infinite. But this doctrine is inadmissible. It lies fatally open to this objection, that by it all sin is made to be equally guilty, because all sin is equally committed against an infinite being. But both the Bible and every man's intuitive reason proclaim that all sins are not equally guilty. Hence the measure or rule of their guilt cannot be in the fact of their commission against an infinite being.

**2.** Guilt cannot be measured by the fact that God's authority against which sin is committed is infinite. Authority is the right to command. No one denies that this in God is infinite. But this fact cannot constitute the measure of guilt, for precisely the reason just given — namely, that then all sin becomes equally guilty, being all committed against infinite authority; which conclusion is false, and therefore the premises are also.

- 3.** The degree of guilt cannot be estimated by the fact that all sin is committed against an infinitely holy and good being; for reasons of the same kind as just given.
- 4.** Nor from the value of the law of which sin is a transgression; for though all admit that the law is infinitely good and valuable, yet since it is always equally so, all sin by this rule must be equally guilty — a conclusion which being false, vitiates and sets aside our premises.
- 5.** The rule cannot lie in the value of that which the law requires us to will, intend or choose, considered apart from the mind's perception of the value; for the intrinsic value of this end is always the same, so that this rule too as the preceding would bring us to the conclusion that all sins are equally guilty.
- 6.** Guilt is not to be measured by the tendency of sin. All sin tends to one result — unmingled evil. No created being can tell what sins have the most direct and powerful tendency to produce evil; since all sin tends to produce evil and only evil continually. Every modification of sin may for ought we know tend with equal directness to the same result — evil, and nothing but evil.
- 7.** Guilt cannot be measured by the design or ultimate intention of the sinner. It does indeed lie in his design and in nothing else; yet you cannot determine the amount of it by merely knowing his design; for this design is always substantially the same thing — it is always self-gratification in some form, and nothing else. I endeavored to show this in my last sermon on impenitence, and we need to get this idea thoroughly into our minds. The general design of the sinner being always self-gratification, and it making very little if any difference in his guilt what form of self-gratification he chooses, it follows that the measure of guilt cannot be sought here, and must therefore be sought elsewhere.
- 8.** But it is time I should state, positively, that guilt is always to be estimated by the degree of light under which the sinful intention is formed, or in other words, it is to be measured by the mind's knowledge or perception of the value of that end which the law requires to be chosen. This end is the highest well being of God and of the universe. This is of infinite value; and in some sense every moral agent must know it to be of

infinite value, and yet individuals may differ indefinitely in respect to the degree of clearness with which this great end is apprehended by the mind. Choosing this end — the highest well-being of God and of the universe always implies the rejection of self-interest as an end; and on the other hand, the choice of self-interest or self-gratification as an end always and necessarily implies the rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as an end. The choice of either implies the rejection of its opposite.

Now the sinfulness of a selfish choice consists not merely in its choice of good to self, but in its implying a rejection of the highest well-being of God and of the universe as a supreme and ultimate end. If selfishness did not imply the apprehension and rejection of other and higher interests as an end, it would not imply any guilt at all. The value of the interests rejected is that in which the guilt consists. In other words the guilt consists in rejecting the infinitely valuable well-being of God and of the universe for the sake of selfish gratification.

Now it is plain that the amount of guilt is as the mind's apprehension of the value of the interests rejected. In some sense as I have said, every moral agent has and must of necessity have the idea that the interests of God and of the universe are of infinite value. He has this idea developed so clearly that every sin he commits deserves endless punishment, and yet the degree of his guilt may be greatly enhanced by additional light, so that he may deserve punishment not only endless in duration but indefinitely great in degree. Nor is there any contradiction in this. If the sinner cannot affirm that there is any limit to the value of the interests he refuses to will and to pursue, he cannot of course affirm that there is any limit to his guilt and desert of punishment. This is true and must be true of every sin and of every sinner; and yet as light increases and the mind gains a clearer apprehension of the infinite value of the highest well-being of God and of the universe, just in that proportion does the guilt of sin increase. Hence the measure of knowledge possessed of duty and its motives, is always and unalterably the rule by which guilt is to be measured.

The proof of this is two-fold.

1. The scriptures assume and affirm it.

The text affords a plain instance. The apostle alludes to those past ages when the heathen nations had no written revelation of God, and remarks that “those times of ignorance God winked at.” This does not mean that God connived at their sin because of their darkness, but does mean that He passed over it with comparatively slight notice, regarding it as sin of far less aggravation than those which men would now commit if they turned away when God commanded them all to repent. True sin is never absolutely a light thing; but comparatively, some sins incur small guilt when compared with the great guilt of other sins. This is implied in our text.

I next cite James 4:17.

“To him that knoweth to do good,  
and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

This plainly implies that knowledge is indispensable to moral obligation; and even more than this is implied; namely, that guilt of any sinner is always equal to the amount of his knowledge on the subject. It always corresponds to the mind’s perception of the value of the end which should have been chosen, but is rejected. If a man knows he ought in any given case to do good, and yet does not do it, to him this is sin — the sin plainly lying in the fact of not doing good when he knew he could do it, and being measured as to its guilt by the degree of that knowledge.

John 9:41.

“Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin:  
but now ye say, we see; therefore your sin remaineth.”

Here Christ asserts that men without knowledge would be without sin; and that men who have knowledge, and sin notwithstanding, are held guilty. This plainly affirms that the presence of light or knowledge is requisite to the existence of sin, and obviously implies that the amount of knowledge possessed is the measure of the guilt of sin.

It is remarkable that the Bible everywhere assumes first truths. It does not stop to prove them, or even assert them — it always assumes their truth, and seems to assume that every one knows and will admit them. As I have been recently writing on moral government and studying the Bible as to its



teachings on this class of subjects, I have been often struck with this remarkable fact.

John 15:22, 24.

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sins. He that hateth Me, hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.”

Christ holds the same doctrine here as in the last passage cited, light essential to constitute sin, and the degree of light, constituting the measure of its aggravation. Let it be observed, however, that Christ probably did not mean to affirm in the absolute sense that if He had not come, the Jews would have had *no* sin; for they would have had some light if He had not come. He speaks as I suppose comparatively. Their sin if He had not come would have been so much less as to justify His strong language.

Luke 12: 47-48.

“And that servant which knew his Lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

Here we have the doctrine laid down and the truth assumed that men shall be punished according to knowledge. To whom much light is given, of him shall much obedience be required. This is precisely the principle that God requires of men according to the light they have.

1 Timothy 1:13.

“Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

Paul had done things intrinsically as bad as well they could be; yet his guilt was far less because he did them under the darkness of unbelief; hence he obtained mercy, when otherwise, he might not. The plain assumption is

that his ignorance abated from the malignity of his sin, and favored his obtaining mercy.

In another passage, (Acts 26:9) Paul says of himself —

“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things  
contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

This had everything to do with the degree of his guilt in rejecting the Messiah, and also with his obtaining pardon.

Luke 23:34. “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” This passage presents to us the suffering Jesus, surrounded with Roman soldiers and malicious scribes and priests, yet pouring out His prayer for them, and making the only plea in their behalf which could be made — “*for they know not what they do.*” This does not imply that they had no guilt, for if that were true they would not have needed forgiveness; but it did imply that their guilt was greatly palliated by their ignorance. If they had known Him to be Messiah, their guilt might have been unpardonable.

Matthew 11:20-24.

“Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee.”

Buy why does Christ thus upbraid these cities? Why denounce so fearful a woe on Chorazin and Capernaum? Because most of His mighty works had been wrought there. His oft-repeated miracles which proved Him the Messiah had been wrought before their eyes. Among them He had taught

daily, and in their synagogues every Sabbath day. They had great light — hence their great — their unsurpassed guilt. Not even the men of Sodom had guilt to compare with theirs. The city most exalted, even as it were to heaven, must be brought down to the deepest hell. Guilt and punishment, evermore, according to light enjoyed but resisted.

Luke 11:47-51.

“Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you it shall be required of this generation.”

Now here, I ask, on what principle was it that all the blood of martyred prophets ever since the world began was required of that generation? Because they deserved it; for God does no such thing as injustice. It never was known that He punished any people or any individual beyond their desert.

But why and how did they deserve this fearful and augmented visitation of the wrath of God for past centuries of persecution?

The answer is two-fold: *they sinned against accumulated light: and they virtually endorsed all the persecuting deeds of their fathers*, and concurred most heartily in their guilt. They had all the oracles of God. The whole history of the nation lay in their hands. They knew the blameless and holy character of those prophets who had been martyred; they could read the guilt of their persecutors and murderers. Yet under all this light, themselves go straight on and perpetrate deeds of the same sort, but of far deeper malignity.

Again, in doing this they virtually endorse all that their fathers did. Their conduct towards the Man of Nazareth, put into words would read thus — “The holy men whom God sent to teach and rebuke our fathers, they

maliciously traduced and put to death; *they did right*, and we will do the same thing towards Christ.” Now it was not possible for them to give a more decided sanction to the bloody deeds of their fathers. They underwrote for every crime — assume upon their own consciences all the guilt of their fathers. *In intention*, they do those deeds over again. They say, “if we had lived then we should have done and sanctioned all they did.”

On the same principle the accumulated guilt of all the blood and miseries of Slavery since the world began rests on this nation now. The guilt involved in every pang, every tear, every blood-drop forced out by the knotted scourge — all lies at the door of this generation. Why? Because the history of all the past is before the pro-slavery men of this generation, and they endorse the whole by persisting in the practice of the same system and of the same wrongs. No generation before us ever had the light on the evils and the wrongs of Slavery that we have; hence the guilt exceeds that of any former generation of slave-holders; and, moreover, knowing all the cruel wrongs and miseries of the system from the history of the past, every persisting slave-holder endorses all the crimes and assumes all the guilt involved in the system and evolved out of it since the world began.

Romans 7:13.

“Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, worketh death in me by that which is good, that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

The last clause of this verse brings out clearly the principle that under the light which the commandment, that is, the law, affords, sin becomes exceeding guilty. This is the very principle, which, we have seen, is so clearly taught and implied in numerous passages of Scripture.

The diligent reader of the Bible knows that these are only a part of the texts which teach the same doctrine: we need not adduce any more.

**2.** I remark that this is the rule and the only just rule by which the guilt of sin can be measured. If I had time to turn the subject over and over — time to take up every other conceivable supposition, I could show that none of them can possibly be true. No supposition can abide a close examination

except this, that the rule or measure of guilt is the mind's knowledge pertaining to the value of the end to be chosen.

There can be no other criterion by which guilt can be measured. It is the value of the end chosen which constitutes sin guilty, and the mind's estimate of that value measures its own guilt. This is true according to the Bible as we have seen; and every man needs only consult his own consciousness faithfully and he will see that it is equally affirmed by the mind's own intuition to be right.

A few *inferences* may be drawn from our doctrine.

- 1.** Guilt is not to be measured by the nature of the intention; for sinful intention is always a unit — always one and the same thing — being nothing more nor less than self-gratification.
- 2.** Nor can it be measured by the particular type of self-gratification which the mind may prefer. No matter which of his numerous appetites or propensities the man may choose to indulge — whether for food, for strong drink — for power, pleasure, or gain — it is the same thing in the end — self-gratification, and nothing else. For the sake of this he sacrifices every other conflicting interest, and herein lies his guilt. Yet since he tramples on the greater good of others with equal recklessness, whatever type of self-gratification he prefers, it is plain that we cannot find in this type any true measure of his guilt.
- 3.** Nor again is the guilt to be decided by the amount of evil which the sin may bring into the universe. An agent not enlightened may introduce great evil and yet no guilt attach to this agent. This is true of evil often done by brute animals. It is true of the mischiefs effected by alcohol. In fact it matters not how much or how little evil may result from the misdeeds of a moral agent, you cannot determine the amount of his guilt from this circumstance. God may overrule the greatest sin so that but little evil shall result from it, or He may leave its tendencies uncounteracted so that great evils shall result from the least sin. Who can tell how much or how little overruling agency may interpose between any sin great or small and its legitimate results?

Satan sinned in betraying Judas, and Judas sinned in betraying Christ. Yet God so overruled these sins that most blessed results to the universe

followed from Christ's betrayal and consequent death. Shall the sins of Satan and Judas be estimated by the evils actually resulting from them? If it should appear that the good immensely overbalanced the evil, does their sin thereby become holiness — meritorious holiness? Is their guilt at all the less for God's wisdom and love in overruling it for good?

It is not therefore the amount of resulting good or evil which determines the amount of guilt, but is the degree of light enjoyed, under which the sin is committed.

**4.** Nor again can guilt be measured by the common opinions of men. Men associated in society are wont to form among themselves a sort of public sentiment which becomes a standard for estimating guilt; yet how often is it erroneous? Christ warns us against adopting this standard, and also against ever judging according to the outward appearance. Who does not know that the common opinions of men are exceedingly incorrect? It is indeed wonderful to see how far they diverge in all directions from the Bible standard.

**5.** The amount of guilt can be determined as I have said only by the degree in which those ideas are developed which throw light upon obligation. Just here sin lies, in resisting the light and acting in opposition to it, and therefore the degree of light should naturally measure the amount of guilt incurred.

## REMARKS

**1.** We see from this subject the principle on which many passages of scripture are to be explained. It might seem strange that Christ should charge the blood of all the martyred prophets of past ages on that generation. But the subject before us reveals the principle upon which this is done and ought to be done.

Whatever of apparent mystery may attach to the fact declared in our text — “The times of this ignorance God winked at” — finds in our subject an adequate explanation. Does it seem strange that for ages God should pass over almost without apparent notice the monstrous and reeking abominations of the Heathen world? The reason is found in their ignorance.

Therefore God winks at those odious and cruel idolatries. For all, taken together, are a trifle compared with the guilt of a single generation of enlightened men.

**2.** One sinner may be in such circumstances as to have more light and knowledge than the whole Heathen world. Alas! how little the Heathen know! How little compared with what is known by sinners in this land, even by very young sinners!

Let me call up and question some impenitent sinner of Oberlin. It matters but little who — let it be any Sabbath School child.

What do you know about God?

I know that He is infinitely great and good. But the Heathen thinks some of his gods are both mean and mischievous — wicked as can be and the very patrons of wickedness among men.

What do you know about salvation? I know that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son to die that whosoever would believe on Him might live forever. O, the Heathen never heard of that. They would faint away methinks in amazement if they should hear and really believe the startling, glorious fact. And that Sabbath School child knows that God gives His Spirit to convince of sin. He has perhaps often been sensible of the presence and power of the Spirit. But the Heathen know nothing of this.

You too know that you are immortal — that beyond death there is still a conscious unchanging state of existence, blissful or wretched according to the deeds done here. But the Heathen have no just ideas on this subject. It is to them as if all were a blank.

The amount of it then is that you know everything — the Heathen almost nothing. You know all you need to know to be saved, to be useful — to honor God and serve your generation according to His will. The Heathen sit in deep darkness, wedded to their abominations, groping, yet finding nothing.

As your light therefore, so is your guilt immeasurably greater than theirs. Be it so that their idolatries are monstrous — your guilt in your impenitence under the light you have is vastly more so. See that Heathen

mother dragging her shrieking child and tumbling it into the Ganges? See her rush with another to throw him into the burning arms of Moloch. Mark; see that pile of wood flashing, lifting up its lurid flames toward heaven. Those men are dragging a dead husband — they heave his senseless corpse on to that burning pile. There comes the widow — her hair disheveled and flying — gaily festooned for such a sacrifice; she dances on; she rends the air with her howls and her wailings; she shrinks and yet she does not shrink — she leaps on the pile, and the din of music with the yell of spectators buries her shrieks of agony; she is gone! O, my blood curdles and runs cold in my veins; my hair stands on end; I am horrified with such scenes — but what shall we say of their guilt? Ah yes — what do they know of God — of worship — of the claims of God upon their heart and life? Ah, you may well spare your censure of the Heathen for their fearful orgies of cruelty and lust, and give it where light has been enjoyed and resisted.

**3.** You see then that often a sinner in some of our congregations may know more than all the Heathen world know. If this be true, what follows from it as to the amount of his comparative guilt? This, inevitably, *that such a sinner deserves a direr and deeper damnation than all the Heathen world!* This conclusion may seem startling; but how can we escape from it? We cannot escape. It is as plain as any mathematical demonstration. This is the principle asserted by Christ when He said — “That servant which knew his Lord’s will and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes; shall be beaten with few stripes.” How solemn and how pungent the application of this doctrine would be in this congregation! I could call out many a sinner in this place and show him that beyond question his guilt is greater than that of all the Heathen world. Yet how few ever estimated their own guilt thus.

Not long since an ungodly young man, trained in this country, wrote back from the Sandwich Islands a glowing and perhaps a just description of their horrible abominations, moralizing on their monstrous enormities and thanking God that he had been born and taught in a Christian land. Indeed! He might well have spared this censure of the dark-minded Heathen! His own guilt in remaining an impenitent sinner under all the light of Christian America was greater than the whole aggregate guilt of all those Islands.



So we may all well spare our expressions of abhorrence at the guilty abominations of idolatry. You are often perhaps saying in your heart — Why does God endure these horrid abominations another day? See that rolling car of Juggernaut. Its wheels move axle deep in the gushing blood and crushed bones of its deluded worshipers! And yet God looks on and no red bolt leaps from His right hand to smite such wickedness. They are indeed guilty; but O how small their guilt compared with the guilt of those who know their duty perfectly, yet never do it! God sees their horrible abominations, yet does He wink at them because they are done in so much ignorance.

But see that impenitent sinner. Convicted of his sin under the clear gospel light that shines all around him, he is driven to pray. He knows he ought to repent, and almost thinks he wants to, and will try. Yet still he clings to his sins, and will not give up his heart to God. Still he holds his heart in a state of impenitence. Now mark here; his sin in thus withholding his heart from God under so much light, involves greater guilt than all the abominations of the heathen world. Put together the guilt of all those widows who immolate themselves on the funeral pile — of those who hurl their children into the Ganges, or into the burning arms of Moloch — all does not begin to approach the guilt of that convicted sinner's prayer who comes before God under the pressure of his conscience, and prays a heartless prayer, determined all the while to withhold his heart from God. O, why does this sinner thus tempt God, and thus abuse His love, and thus trample on His known authority? O, that moment of impenitence, while his prayers are forced by conscience from his burning lips, and yet he will not yield the controversy with his Maker — that moment involves direr guilt than rests on all the Heathen world together! He knows more than they all, yet sins despite of all his knowledge. The many stripes belong to him — the few to them.

**4.** This leads me to remark again, that the Christian world may very well spare their revilings and condemnations of the Heathen. Of all the portions of earth's population, Christendom is infinitely the most guilty — Christendom, where the gospel peals from ten thousand pulpits — where its praises are sung by a thousand choirs, but where many thousand hearts that know God and duty, refuse either to reverence the one or perform the other! All the abominations of the Heathen world are a mere trifle

compared with the guilt of Christendom. We may look down upon the filth and meanness and degradation of a Heathen people, and feel a most polite disgust at the spectacle — and far be it from me, to excuse these degrading, filthy or cruel practices; but how small their light and consequently their guilt compared with our own! We therefore ask the Christian world to turn away from the spectacle of Heathen degradation, and look nearer home, upon the spectacle of Christian guilt! Let us look upon ourselves.

**5.** Again, let us fear not to say what you must all see to be true, that the nominal church is the most guilty part of Christendom. It cannot for a moment be questioned, that the church has more light than any other portion; therefore has she more guilt. Of course I speak of the nominal church — not the real church whom He has pardoned and cleansed from her sins. But in the nominal church, think of the sins that live and riot in their corruption. See that backslider. He has tasted the waters of life. He has been greatly enlightened. Perhaps he has really known the Lord by true faith — and then see, he turns away to beg the husks of earthly pleasure! He turns his back on the bleeding Lamb! Now, put together all the guilt of every Heathen soul that has gone to hell — of every soul that has gone from a state of utter moral darkness, and your guilt, backsliding Christian, is greater than all theirs!

Do you, therefore say — may God then, have mercy on my soul? So say we all; but we must add, *if it be possible*; for who can say that such guilt as yours can be forgiven! Can Christ pray for you as he prayed for His murderers — “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?” Can He plead in your behalf, that you know not what you are doing? Awful! Awful!! Where is the sounding line that shall measure the ocean-depth of your guilt!

**6.** Again, if our children remain in sin, we may cease to congratulate ourselves that they were not born in Heathenism or slavery! How often have I done this! How often, as I have looked upon my sons and daughters, have I thanked God that they were not born to be thrown into the burning arms of a Moloch, or to be crushed under the wheels of Juggernaut! But if they will live in sin, we must suspend our self-congratulations for their having Christian light and privileges. If they will

not repent, it were infinitely better for them to have been born in the thickest Pagan darkness — better to have been thrown in their tender years into the Ganges, or into the fires which idolatry kindles — better be anything else, or suffer anything earthly, than have the gospel's light only to shut it out and go to hell despite of its admonitions.

Let us not, then be hasty in congratulating ourselves, as if this great light enjoyed by us and by our children, were of course a certain good to them; but this we may do — we may rejoice that God will honor Himself — His mercy if He can, and His justice if He must. God will be honored, and we may glory in this. But oh, the sinner, the sinner! Who can measure the depth of his guilt, or the terror of his final doom! It will be more tolerable for all the heathen world together than for you.

**7.** It is time that we all understood this subject fully, and appreciated all its bearings. It is no doubt true, that however moral our children may be, they are more guilty than any other sinners under heaven, if they live in sin, and will not yield to the light under which they live. We may be perhaps congratulating ourselves on their fair morality; but if we saw their case in all its real bearings, our souls would groan with agony — our bowels would be all liquid with anguish — our very hearts within us would heave as if volcanic fires were kindled there — so deep a sense should we have of their fearful guilt and of the awful doom they incur in denying the Lord that bought them, and setting at naught a known salvation. O, if we ever pray, we should pour out our prayers for our offspring as if nothing could ever satisfy us or stay our importunity, but the blessings of a full salvation realized in their souls.

Let the mind contemplate the guilt of these children. I could not find a Sabbath school child, perhaps not one in all Christendom who could not tell me more of God's salvation than all the Heathen world know. That dear little boy who comes from his Sabbath school knows all about the gospel. He is almost ready to be converted, but not quite ready; yet that little boy, if he knows his duty, and yet will not do it, is covered with more guilt than all the Heathen world together. Yes, that boy, who goes alone and prays, yet holds back his heart from God, and then his mother comes and prays over him, and pours her tears on his head, and his little heart almost melts, and he seems on the very point of giving up his whole

heart to the Savior; yet if he will not do it, he commits more sin in that refusal than all the sin of all the Heathen world — his guilt is more than the guilt of all the murders, all the drownings of children and burnings of widows, and deeds of cruelty and violence in all the heathen world. All this combination of guilt shall not be equal to the guilt of the lad who knows his duty, but will not yield his heart to its righteous claims.

**8.** “The Heathen,” says an apostle, “sin without law, and shall therefore perish without law.” In their final doom they will be cast away from God; this will be perhaps about all. The bitter reflection, “I had the light of the gospel and would not yield to it — I knew all my duty, yet did it not” — this cannot be a part of their eternal doom. This is reserved for those who gather themselves into our sanctuaries and around our family altars, yet will not serve their own Infinite Father.

**9.** One more remark. Suppose I should call out a sinner by name — one of the sinners of this congregation, a son of pious parents, and should call up the father also. I might say, Is this your son? Yes. What testimony can you bear about this son of yours? I have endeavored to teach him all the ways of the Lord. Son, what can you say? I know my duty. I have heard it a thousand times. I know I ought to repent, but I never would.

O, if we understood this matter in all its bearings, it would fill every bosom with consternation and grief. How would our bowels burn and heave as a volcano. There would be one universal outcry of anguish and terror at the awful guilt and fearful doom of such a sinner!

Young man, are you going away this day in your sins? Then, what angel can compute your guilt? O, how long has Jesus held out His hands, yes, His bleeding hands, and besought you to look and live! A thousand times, and in countless varied ways has He called, but you have refused; stretched out His hands, and you have not regarded. O, why will you not repent? Why not say at once; It is enough that I have sinned so long. I cannot live so any longer! O, sinner, *why will you live so?* Would you go down to hell — ah, to the deepest hell — where, if we would find you, we must work our way down a thousand years through ranks of lost spirits less guilty than you, ere we could reach the fearful depth to which you have sunk! O, sinner, what a hell is that which can adequately punish such guilt as thine!

## GOD MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO MOSES

“And Moses said unto the Lord, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight. Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight, and consider that this nation is Thy people. And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said to Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that Thou goest with us? So shall we be separated; I and Thy people from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory. And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And He said, thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me and live. And the Lord said, behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by; and I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back parts; but My face shall not be seen.” — Exodus 33:12-23

“And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first; and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to Me in the top of the mount. And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all

the mount: neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount. And he hewed two tables of stone, like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.” — Exodus 34:1-8

There are many passages of Bible history which are richly edifying, and which it is important for us to read often and ponder deeply. The passage now before us I have read often, and several times have preached upon it. Every successive reading suggests new thoughts and develops new beauties; like a deep, rich mine of gold, the more it is wrought, the richer the ore it brings up.

God had called Moses to be a leader and instructor of His people in a great and mighty movement. Moses was to superintend and guide them from Egypt to Canaan. In the first verse of our passage Moses distinctly recognizes the fact that God had designated himself for this great work. “See, Thou sayest unto me, bring up this people.”

But Moses very well understood that God had not called him to perform this work in his own strength, but designed to give him aid. It seems probable that Moses had often thought particularly of this point of having a *helper*, had often prayed over it and asked God whom he should have to help him in this great enterprise. He saw that the work before him was great; he had been in that vast, howling, desolate wilderness before, and he could appreciate somewhat before hand the labor and responsibility of leading through it a host of three millions of dependent men, women and children. Such a work he well knew surpassed all human power, and he therefore rejoiced to know that God would send him a helper. Accordingly

in the next verse Moses makes this appeal; “Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight; and consider that this nation is Thy people.”

Observe here that this was after Moses had met with God several times. He had already received the law on Mt. Sinai from Jehovah’s own hand, and had seen the great “*I am*” in the burning bush. Yet though he had known so much of God, he still felt that he needed to know very much more. He knew far too little of God to be fit for this great work of guiding His people through that trackless desert. Now therefore, he makes his call to this work and God’s acceptance of him in this capacity an argument with God for revealing Himself yet more fully. Now, he says, inasmuch as Thou hast called me and I have found grace, now show me Thy way. Let me know more of Thee.

You cannot but be struck with the simple-heartedness of Moses in this conversation with God. He unbosoms his whole soul as a man would with his friend. He is deeply impressed with the importance of knowing more of God, and feels most deeply that without this knowledge he cannot persuade the people to encounter the perils of that great and fearful desert. He felt the pressure of his own responsibilities and turned confidingly to God. Hence his simple-hearted state of mind.

Opening his heart thus before the Lord, he reminds Him that although He had called him, yet He had not told him who should go with him. The Lord seems to admit the full force of this appeal. How wonderful! Here is the great Jehovah, condescending to talk with a mere mortal man like one of us. He speaks; then He listens to the reply. He hears the appeal and feels the full force of the considerations it presents.

Now mark the gracious answer. “My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest.” Moses asks — Who shall go! The Lord replies — I will go with you Myself — My presence shall guide you — you need not fear. How full of kindness, love, and condescension, is this answer! If you want to know who shall go with you, let this suffice you — I will go with you Myself. I feel the force of your plea. I see all your necessities. I pledge you My presence.

How full of consolation to Moses, to be assured of Jehovah's glorious presence! How sweet the promise, "I will give thee rest."

Now listen to the beautiful answer of Moses, in which we have another exhibition of his great simplicity of character. He is so deeply sensible of his own deficiencies, that he knows and feels that he cannot go without God. "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." He thus acknowledges most fully his entire dependence on God, and his perfect despair of success unless God be with him. What can be more striking than these developments of character, both on the part of Moses and of God! On the part of Moses, you see the most perfect simplicity and dependence; on the part of God, the most astonishing goodness and condescension.

But let us examine the course pursued by Moses yet more attentively. When God had given him the promise "My presence shall go with thee," why did he not drop the subject at once? Why go on to argue and urge the case yet further? The answer is to be found in his intensely anxious state of mind. He could not endure to think of going on without God. Without God's presence, he urges, "wherein shall it be known that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight?" Now plainly Moses had looked thoroughly through this subject. He did not say this without reflection. It was no hasty remark; nor was it made without good reason. Indeed, Moses was in an eminently collected and rational state of mind. He saw how infinitely necessary it was, for the good of Israel, and for the honor of Jehovah, that this nation should stand out before all the nations of the earth as a distinct people. Hence he urges before the Lord — how can this be manifest unless Thou be with us? Can any thing else make it manifest? Can my saying so do it? No; God Himself must be with us, sustaining us amid all our trials, guiding us in all our ways, delivering us from all our foes, else we shall not be known as the people of God, and God Himself can get no honor from our bearing His name. How perfectly reasonable are these views of the case, and the state of Moses' mind resulting from these views!

We come now to the answer of God. "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name." The Lord seems to feel the full force



of every word that Moses says. Indeed, no being in the world is so easily influenced by considerations of real importance as God is. I have always found that if I had good reasons to urge in prayer before God, I could certainly prevail with Him, for He is always reasonable. It is wonderful to see how the Lord suffers Himself to be carried by the least reason, presented even by a child. Yes, He seems to say, I know very well that your reasoning is all good, and I will surely act accordingly. So with Moses. God heard, and then did for him all that he could ask.

At this stage of the interview Moses ventured upon yet another great request. He had been drawing nearer and yet nearer to God during this whole conversation. How often in reading this narration have I seemed to be by his side, and to see God taking an attitude all along to encourage Moses to draw yet nearer and nearer. God promises to give him His gracious presence. He meets every request with His smiles and His assent. Moses therefore dares to take a position which probably no mortal had ever taken before. What is it? This — “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” But why should Moses make this request? Mark what had already passed. God had shown Himself gloriously on Sinai until the people trembled and did not dare to hear that awful voice anymore. Moses had come down from that awful mount, his face all blazing with the glory of this interview with God. So much of that awful majesty of the Lord of Hosts had Moses seen; yet now he ventures to draw yet nearer and nearer, and since God kindly permits him to approach, he ventures upon another request. Let me see yet more of Thy glory. Take that vail away and let me see Thy face and all Thy heart.

O what a request this must have been for a mortal man to make! But what reply did the Lord make? Did He say — “Take care, Moses, take heed what you ask?” Let us see. “And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.” O how ready — how infinitely condescending and gracious! I will make thee know My name; that is, my real character — for by God’s name we are to understand His character, since all His names were originally significant, and each expressed some leading attribute of His character.

Thou canst not see My face, said He; thou canst not bear the view of My unvailed glories; no man can see Me in this perfect sense and live. The

Lord grants him all He can give — all that Moses can bear. Moses was in a state of mind so disinterested and confiding that God could deny him nothing which was possible in his mortal state; nothing which could be essential or useful to his success in the great work before him.

Moses needs to have such an impression made on his mind as will carry him through all possible trials and toils. Hence the Lord engages to show him all he could bear. Accordingly He proceeds to say — “Behold there is a place by Me and thou shalt stand upon a rock, and while My glory passeth by, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock.” In a cleft of the rock — where else should He put him? What other place so suitable? Christ is sometimes represented as a rock cleft for us, in which we may hide ourselves and be safe. So God places Moses in a cleft of a rock, and says, “I will cover thee with My hand while I pass by; and I will take away My hand and thou shalt see My back parts; but My face shall not be seen.” The Lord seems to have felt the importance of giving Moses all he had asked. Nay rather, the Lord Himself had put it in Moses’ heart to make these requests and had emboldened him to ask for things so great and precious. So God is wont to do with His children, and the fact should assure us that when our souls hunger and thirst after God, He will most certainly reveal Himself to us and show us the fulness of His glory.

It deserves special notice here that the answer given by God to Moses shows in what His glory really consists. Moses says, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” The Lord answers — yes — “I will make all My *goodness* pass before thee.” The glory of the Lord, then, consists in His goodness. It is not as some seem to suppose some dazzling splendor, some effulgence of light ineffable and overpowering — no such thing as this seems to have been thought of; but Jehovah’s goodness — the intrinsic excellencies that compose His character — these He would cause to pass before Moses, for these are His true glory. And these glories of His character were brought before Moses when, passing along, He proclaimed those glorious and most expressive names — “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious; long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.” Every word in this description is full of most emphatic meaning. O how does it reiterate and amplify the precious thought that God is love.

It should also be noticed particularly that Moses had been previously prepared for just such a revelation of God. He had been a long time on Mt. Sinai amid its thunderings and smoke, and amid all the fearful manifestations of Jehovah's terrible justice. The flaming law of God had been before his mind most vividly and could not have failed to make deep and solemn impressions. He was therefore now prepared to hear of grace and mercy. He could appreciate them. He could hear the joyful promulgation and not abuse it. No man is ever prepared to hear the gospel until he has heard the law. He must in the nature of the case appreciate the strict and righteous demands of law before he can appreciate the real value of gospel grace to sinners.

None of the Hebrew people except Moses seem to have gone through this preparatory process. They had not been thoroughly impressed with the awful majesty, purity and strictness of the holy law of God. Hence they could not appreciate these manifestations of His goodness and not another one of the whole nation was allowed to be present with Moses in this glorious interview with God.

It is important in this connection to notice the precise moral attitude in which Moses stood before the Lord. He was now commanded to prepare himself two new tablets of stone. The circumstances in which the two formerly prepared were broken, you will all remember. Moses had been with the Lord on the burning mount; had tarried long; at last returns and finds that the people had made a calf and were engaged in the grossest idolatry. His indignation was kindled; he dashed the stones to the ground and broke them to pieces. The Lord seems not to have rebuked Moses for this outburst of indignation; it appears to have been under the circumstances entirely proper and acceptable to God, as was also his subsequent conduct in calling on the Levites to take the sword and slay those of their brethren who were leading that horrible iniquity and would not desist. In all this, the Lord seems to have fully accepted Moses.

Let us now pursue the thread of our history. Moses prepares the two tables of stone, and goes up early in the morning as the Lord had commanded him and lo, the Lord descends and meets him there. What an interview was this for a mortal man to hold with the great God! Think of the circumstances; the deep solitudes of that rugged, awful mount Sinai

were the temples of Jehovah's presence; the heavens above were the canopy of that temple; *there was God!*

When Moses went up he had already received the promise that the Lord would meet him there. But the promise was not fulfilled immediately. At least one night intervened. What a night of anticipation — still, deep, solemn, anticipation that must have been!

Probably Moses had borne about as much as he well could for one day, and the Lord kindly deferred the more glorious interview until Moses should rise refreshed on the next morning. So the Lord often does when His people get very near Him. Christian, have not scenes like these occurred in your own experience? You have a precious interview with God as the day closes and the shades of evening gather round you. You retire for the night, and your very dreams seem full of heaven, and you feel assured that those hallowed interviews with God will be renewed in the morning. You lay down yourself to rest with the sweet sustaining conviction that the Lord will reveal Himself speedily again.

So to Moses. Early in the morning you see him brushing the early dew away, climbing that well known mountain, upon whose craggy summits he had seen God more than once before. If you might only have seen him; if your eye could only have followed him as he drew near and entered into audience with the great God! How impressive and solemn must the spectacle have been!

Moses was in a state of mind in which God's saints have been frequently. The utmost conceivable awe pervaded his whole soul, yet he was not afraid of God. He was ready to go into any solitary wild and meet God alone. Many would have been oppressed with a superstitious awe under such circumstances, and would have declined or at least have dreaded such an interview. But Moses had no such superstitious dread.

Probably no mortal man was ever called to meet God under circumstances which were calculated to make a deeper impression than these. Consider what Moses desired and what his heart was now fixed on most earnestly. The renewing of the tables of the law was altogether an incidental thing. The chief thing was for God to show him His glory. He was fully aware

that God was about to show such manifestations of Himself as human nature could scarce endure.

Let me ask you what you would think of such an interview with the great God? How would you like to be drawn into such near and glorious communion with the dread Jehovah? Suppose God should apprise you that you might enjoy such an interview with Himself as you retire from this place to your rooms. He gives you the promise. Would you be ready? Would your very heart leap up within you in the prospect and cry out — O let me know more of God and of His unsearchable glories? O, then, prepare your hearts. Put away everything sinful, everything earthly. Let your soul thirst after God, yea, after the living God. When you feel your need of it and ask it with such simplicity and faith as Moses had, you may rely on receiving it — to the joy and blessedness of your souls.

With Moses the solemn hour has come. The Lord passes by and proclaims His name — “Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.” Observe that the previous interview of Moses with God had been at the giving of the law from Sinai, and it is remarkable that immediately after this, God should begin with proclaiming His name and should explain it by saying, “merciful and gracious,” “long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.” Few except very spiritual persons would know how to understand this. But those who have had the law revealed to them as on Sinai’s top can understand it well. No person ever really sees the law until it is revealed to *him* and he sees its pungent bearing upon his own case. So to Paul; when the commandment came he says, “sin reviled and I died.” But what is this? Had the commandment never *come* to Paul before? He had studied the law under the greatest doctors of his age; he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel; but yet he had not so understood the law as to have it cut him up root and branch and convict him powerfully of his own sins, until the moment when the commandment *came to him*.

Now when a man has had the law really given to *him* it comes in a sense very similar to that in which it came to Moses. If any of you have had the law thus revealed to your hearts and consciences, you can understand why Moses should cry out — “I do exceedingly fear and quake.” You would

see why the people should stand afar off and dare not to approach the awful scene.

Now this revelation of law exceedingly well fitted Moses to receive the next revelation made at this interview. The giving of the law was first in order, as indeed it always must be, or the gospel of grace and mercy cannot be appreciated. This done, the revelation of mercy and grace may follow. This same God before whom all the people and even Moses trembled on Mt. Sinai, now revealed His name — “the Lord God, merciful and gracious.” Mercy is a disposition to pardon. Grace is used in a wider sense — a disposition to bestow favor. The next thing is — “long-suffering,” He can suffer and bear long with abuses and provocations. He is most forbearing towards those who offend Him.

“Abundant also in goodness;” — yes infinite in goodness and loving-kindness. Abundant moreover in truth; — faithful ever to His promises of love and mercy. O how precious are these revelations made to Moses.

To Moses we must presume these were not mere announcements. Moses felt the impression of every one of these things. I might announce these very words in your ears, and though they might fall distinctly on your ears, yet the impression of their meaning might utterly fail to reach your heart.

But not so when Jehovah Himself speaks. His words then reach the very heart. You have sometimes felt the thrilling impression of these truths, when every idea in them seemed to sink into your very soul. Just think how Moses must have felt, after all he had just seen of Jehovah’s awful majesty on Sinai. O how these words must have gone down into his inmost mind! And not the words merely, but the ideas they represented — the very attributes of God must have stood right out and flashed their glorious truth before the very mind’s eye of Moses. O what a scene of solemn impressions!

Perhaps I should say right here that we have no reason to suppose that all these things transpired in a moment, as some might at first thought imagine. Moses was full forty days and nights with God in this interview. A few other things were said during the whole scene, but this revelation of the name of God seems to have been the chief thing which transpired

during this eventful period. It is therefore most rational to conclude that time enough was occupied to allow each thought to be fully expanded before the mind of Moses so as to make its deepest possible impression. Each feature of the divine character was doubtless developed distinctly; His mercy, His grace, His long-suffering, His abundant goodness and truth, and the blending of each of these feature with His glorious justice. Everything was so revealed to the mind of Moses that it pervaded his entire mental being and set his very soul on fire. O how did he ponder, and muse on each point, and study the illustrations presented to his mind! We can imagine the solemn, awful, thrilling impression as he sat in silence for many days together, no human being present to divert his attention for one moment — alone with God forty days — neither taking nor needing food or drink during all this time, but absorbed in beholding face to face the glory of God, and thus being changed into the same image from glory to glory.

At length he comes down from that mount of glorious manifestation. No wonder his face shone with a lustre of which he was unconscious but which was too glorious for mortal eyes to behold. No wonder the vivid impressions that filled and fired his soul should throw their reflection forth in his countenance. It was as if an angel from Jehovah's upper temple had alighted in the camp of Israel. A vail must be drawn over his face, for what mortal eye could bear the sight!

God's abundant truthfulness formed one important feature in these developments. This was especially pertinent to the case and the wants of Moses. The thorough development of this feature formed the secret of his great faith ever after. The whole subsequent history of Moses develops a most remarkable degree of confidence in God. The thousand trying emergencies through which he passed rendered it indispensable that he should have such confidence. Here in this signal interview with God the foundation was laid for it.

“Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;” that is will never justify the impenitent and self-righteous. God did not mean that He would not pardon the guilty sinner on his repentance. He only meant that He was not a corrupt judge who could be bribed to clear the guilty yet in his sins and

impenitence. Moses needed to know this, that while God was most gracious and merciful towards the contrite, He should most assuredly punish the guilty and hardened sinner. No rebel could ever escape in his impenitence and rebellion.

“Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children’s children unto the third and fourth generation.” This clause needs to be explained. It has been sometimes supposed to mean that God sends children to hell for the sins of their parents. This cannot be the meaning. The declarations of God by Ezekiel affirm that only the soul that sinneth shall die, and that father and son shall each die only for his own sins.

The declaration made here to Moses refers to the course of God’s providence towards families and nations only in the present world, and to His course towards them for present discipline — not for eternal retribution.

The relations of parent and child almost inevitably involve these results. A dissolute father entails disease, poverty and degradation on his offspring. God allows, nay ordains it to be so, and this creates a strong inducement to each parent to lead such a life as shall entail blessings and not curses on his children. Yet these children are not rewarded with heaven or doomed to hell merely for their parent’s deeds. The whole of the result is this — they have their own probation on earth, in which their future state of joy or woe must be decided according to their own deeds. But they shall have this probation in prosperity or adversity — amid influences adapted to bless or adapted to curse, according as their parents may have so lived before God as to leave them a legacy of good or of evil.

We often see this principle illustrated in the history of nations. Nations *as such* must of course receive their retribution in the present world — they having no existence *as nations* in any other state. Hence we often see that God holds a nation responsible for the sins of their fathers. It would be an illustration of this principle if God should do as I have thought He would do in retribution for the slavery which has so long existed in this nation. The English nation introduced slavery here; we have perpetuated it, and have done about as much to enhance its calamities as we could do. I have often thought that God will some day remove this evil in a way which will scourge both of these nations with most signal and exemplary judgments.



Suppose the mighty power of England's arms should come down upon us and blood should flow over our southern plains till every spot where the tears and blood of the slave have fallen should be saturated with the blood of his oppressors — till the carnage of masters and drivers should fatten the cotton fields so long worn out by the bitter toil of the oppressed — and other groans should take the place of the long unnoticed and uncared for wailings of broken-hearted mothers and bereaved children.

In this the world might read a lesson about that awful Justice which visits the iniquities of fathers upon the children and upon children's children.

On the same principle we often see children involved in the guilt and consequent sufferings of their parents. A most cogent motive is thus created to induce parents to obey God. You can easily see that it is most wise in God so to unite parents and children that the latter shall receive good or evil in the present world according to the voluntary course taken by their parents.

When God had made these revelations to Moses, naming these attributes distinctly and giving him time to dwell on each one until his whole soul was impressed with the truth, Moses prostrated himself before the Lord in most profound adoration. This was its first result on his mind. "He made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped."

Do you understand this feeling? Have you never found when God had revealed Himself to you that you have felt pressed to bow yourself in deep prostration of soul before the Lord?

Mark his next step. He has a request to make. He said, "If now I have found grace in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among us, for it is a stiff-necked people, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thine inheritance." Moses feels that it is time now to find how the Lord really feels towards the nation. It is a time to intercede in their behalf that God would pardon all their sin and make them forever His own inheritance.

The Lord replies — "Behold I will make a covenant, before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee."

The history then narrates various precepts and closes with the descent of Moses, his face resplendent with the unutterable glory of this wonderful and most instructive scene.

## REMARKS

Whatever is written in the Bible is for our instruction. Much of the historical part is rich with the most practical instruction conceivable. All this may be said most truly of the passage we have been considering. It teaches,

**1.** That a personal acquaintance with God is indispensable to one who is to lead the people in reform. We must know God and have God preeminently with us, or we cannot lead on His people to higher degrees of holiness.

We may learn something of God by study and thought; but all this will fail us without special revelations from God. Some expect by the mere force of learning to prepare themselves for usefulness. They seem to take pains to get more learning rather than to get nearer God. They could not make a worse mistake. The learning is good, but the things God teaches when He draws the soul into deep personal communion with Himself are incomparably better.

Moses was before this a very learned man. He was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and their science was at this period pre-eminently rich. Education and learning there were indeed only that of heathen, yet God saw that this would be valuable to Moses, and therefore arranged it in His providence that Moses should be trained in the royal family with all the facilities for education that Egypt could afford. But he needed infinitely more than all this, and God drew him into His own school to impart it.

**2.** Every part of this history is replete with instruction to us. Mark for instance the peculiar features of character developed in Moses at this time. A careful study of these will reveal to us the conditions on which we may expect divine revelations to our own souls.

When I see a man deeply impressed with a sense of this dependence upon God, feeling that he cannot get along and bear his great responsibilities without God, I know such a man is being prepared for usefulness. God will meet him and reveal to him the great things of His own character. Let him only give himself wholly to the work and to the interests of God's cause, and then have confidence enough to lay hold of the Lord; such a soul never fails of being blessed.

**3.** Another thing peculiar in the case of Moses was his very clear apprehensions of what he needed to fit him for his work. This is immensely important. If a man lacks this just apprehension he will struggle on in the dark; and how long often and how fruitlessly! He does not know what he wants.

But read this history of Moses and you will see that he had a clear idea of his responsibilities and of the qualifications he needed to discharge them well. He knew that he needed a revelation from God to his own mind. He knew that he needed to apprehend all these great truths so that they should stand out before his mind as living realities.

**4.** When these attributes of God are clearly developed to the mind of anyone he will have an entirely new view of the character of God. It will be so different from his former views as to make him doubt whether he really knew anything right of God before. The impressions will be such as he can never lose during all his future life.

**5.** Moses saw that he needed to have God reveal Himself to his mind. This is just what young men fitting for the gospel ministry need. Did you never see the difference in the manner in which two different individuals will speak of the attributes of God? One speaks mere words and they fall as if they were only wind. The words of the other come out of his heart and seem to fall like lead into the hearts of the people who hear him.

Here is a young man studying theology. He may become as wise as a man can become by merely human learning; but unless God reveal Himself all will be mere words. If you ask what such a man has been preaching, the answer will always be — nothing but words, words, mere *words*. This is the great difficulty with much of the preaching of this age — it is nothing but words.

Do you not think that when Moses came down from the mount, the people felt? The influence of Moses on them was not that of mere *words*. Have you never seen how the eyes of the hearer would stand out when one is speaking from the heart? Even so when the people heard Moses, they hung on his lips and stood tiptoe to catch his burning words and the glory of his unearthly countenance. If young men feel as Moses did — “O my God, send me not up without Thy presence” — they will seek that presence, and never rest without it. God calls you to the ministry; how can you go into it without His presence — until you have seen as Moses saw, His glory.

**6.** This whole history is most replete with instruction for us. If those arguments used were good in his mouth as reasons for God’s revealing Himself to him, they are equally good for us. He pleaded God’s call of him and acceptance of him for a great work, and said — Lord, since Thou hast called me, now make me fit for the labor. “I beseech Thee show me Thy glory.” Young man, go and do likewise. If God calls you to lead His church up out of the wilderness, see to it that you insist before you set out that the Lord be with you and show you His glory. Nor is this truth applicable to young men destined for the ministry alone. Every Christian is a priest of God, and should in some sense preach the gospel. Every man needs grace to fill the station to which God calls him. And every Christian should seek this grace even as Moses sought the grace he needed.

**7.** The disinterestedness of Moses is worthy of all commendation. He never once thought of lifting himself up. Do you suppose he was continually saying in his mind — How people in future generations will honor me and reverence my name! No, not this — he is all swallowed up in another and a very different great idea; how shall this nation honor God? How may I do something to magnify His dread, His glorious name?

If we ever expect or hope to be great men, in mercy, don’t let us aim at it. We shall pluck down ruin and disgrace on ourselves if we do; and as far as in us lies, on the cause of God also. I once knew a young man who had considerable trouble in getting license to preach. He was not thought to be very promising. This difficulty seemed to set all his ambition on fire. He declared — “I am determined to get to the head of the heap.” Someone said to him — You never will by aiming at it. But he gave no heed to this

warning, and set off on his career of attempted greatness. I don't know where he is now. Gone I suppose, sunk from public observation into that obscurity which alone forms a fitting place for unholy ambition. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." So it must ever be. This is the law of Christ's house.

How remarkable that Moses seemed never to care for himself or for his family. On one occasion some persons began to prophesy, and some of his friends seem to have been jealous for his honor. But Moses felt no jealousy of this sort. "I would to God," said he, "that all the people were prophets." How noble! God could make Moses a great man without his making himself a great fool. Not so with some men, God cannot make them great without their making themselves fools.

**8.** All these features of the character of Moses should be distinctly studied. They are features of the character of Jesus Christ. Are you not in the habit of studying the character of those great men, such as Moses, Daniel, Job, Paul and John with the distinct design of drinking in their spirit and conforming your own to theirs? This is your true wisdom.

**9.** The urgency of Moses is well worthy of special notice. How strongly he insists upon God's giving him the blessing he asks for. On one occasion the Lord put his serious earnestness to the test most fully. The Lord said — Let me alone — go get thee down, for thy people have corrupted themselves; let Me alone that My wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation." But no, Moses could not let the Lord alone. He seemed to seize right hold of His hand and insist that God should spare and forgive the guilty people. The Egyptians will hear of it and will say, "For mischief did He bring them out and to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth. Then what wilt Thou do for Thy great name? I cannot let Thee go. What will become of Thy glory? Blot out my name, but blot not out the name of Thine Israel." Thus did Moses hold fast upon the hand of the Lord as it was uplifted to smite the nation. And what was the secret of his power with God? His disinterested love, and his zeal for Jehovah's name.

Let this be our example. Surely it is most worthy of all imitation. How noble to be thus swallowed up and filled with zeal for the glory of God.

**10.** The great faith of Moses constitutes another point worthy of distinct consideration. Where everybody else's faith would fail, that of Moses remains firm. Yet he had his sore trials. Once he cried out — "What shall I do, Lord, for this people are almost ready to stone me?" But remark that under this great trial he runs at once to God and hence is safe. So every man should do. If a man only has such faith as to run at once to the Lord, he cannot fail to get strength for all emergencies of trial.

**11.** His implicit obedience also was wonderful. He knew no law but the will of God. This spirit of universal obedience was one condition of those remarkable manifestations. He could not have had them without his obedient spirit.

When first appointed to his work, he felt great reluctance to go. He pled that he was slow of speech. But God overlooked the objection; Moses yielded and seems never afterwards to have shrunk from duty.

**12.** Moses seems always very careful to do all that God required of him, so that he could always have near access to God. It was very common before the Lord made any manifestations to the people, for Him to say — "Sanctify yourselves;" — ye are now unfit to meet Me. But Moses seems to have been always in a state of readiness to meet God and receive any manifestations. It is of infinite importance to maintain this state of sanctification — to abstain thoroughly from all iniquity and never fall into such a state of defilement as to feel your need of penitence, pardon, and cleansing before you can meet God.

I once knew a Christian who had been eminently a man of prayer — who had lived for years so that he could pray daily with acceptance before God, and whose conversations and prayers had created quite an interest in the subject of the prayer of faith. Yet this man sadly declined from this state and the Lord at length recalled him in the following way. I had, said he in his diary, an intimate friend who was impenitent, and who in raising a building was suddenly crushed with a fatal blow. I rushed to him. The dying man begged me to pray for his soul. That is all, said he, that you can do for me; pray for my soul lest I sink at once into hell. But I could not pray if it had been to save my own life. I was away from God and I could not get near Him to pray a word. O my agony of soul was perfectly

inexpressible. But that was the last hour of my quiet in such a state. I could not live so.

Moses could not get away from God. His circumstances demanded ceaseless watchfulness and permanent sanctification. Only once afterwards was he overcome and then by the sin of impatience. For this sin the Lord took him up on Mt. Nebo to let him view the land of promise and then die without ever going over. This was a sore affliction; yet for one sin the Lord sent it upon him; yea for one sin only. But this in Moses was a great sin. His light had been so great and the sin itself had been so public; God could not do less than to put His mark of intense displeasure upon it. So, beloved, must you keep your heart pure and your hands pure, if you would be always ready for communion with God, and if, having enjoyed these seasons of communion you would not fall under the marked displeasure of a jealous and holy God. But if you are content to live so that you must go and repent and cleanse yourself from present sin in order to be prepared to commune with God, of what use can you be to the world?

# FORFEITING BIRTH-RIGHT BLESSINGS

*“Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled: Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.” Hebrews 12:15-17.*

The transaction alluded to in this passage is one of the most affecting on the records of scripture. One of the main points in it was Esau’s despising and selling his birthright.

In order to understand this, we shall need to revert a moment to the custom to which it alludes. The practice originated very early, was well known in the times of Abraham and Isaac, and even prevails still in some eastern countries, whereby the whole estate of the father or a double portion in it, for it assumed these two different forms, fell to the eldest son. With this was also connected a certain authority over the younger members of the family, often regarded as the authority of the father, transferred at his death to the eldest son.

But it is more to our purpose to notice that in pious families, certainly in the family of Abraham, a father’s blessing, solemnly pronounced as he drew near the point of death, was one of the precious elements in the birthright of the favored son. Nor was this all. To Abraham and to his seed a blessed covenant had been given — a covenant which on certain conditions, pledged one class of temporal blessings — namely, the land of Canaan and a numerous posterity; and also another class of spiritual blessings — the Messiah in the line of his descendants, and through him blessings on all the nations of the earth. You may find this covenant expanded in Genesis 12, 14, 17, 22 chapters; and also in respect to its spiritual bearings, in Romans 4, and Galatians 3 and 4.

This covenant formed a precious legacy, descending from Abraham to Isaac and onward in the line of his descendants through distant generation. Yet let it be noticed that this legacy of blessings did not at first diffuse



itself over all branches of these patriarchal families. Abraham had an Ishmael who had no inheritance in the things of this covenant. Isaac was the sole heir next after Abraham. And of his two sons it seemed to be well understood that only one could have the birthright and the blessing.

Now it can not be doubted that Esau understood all the important points involved in this legacy of promised blessings. He knew what his birthright included; he must have known the promises made and renewed so solemnly to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. He also doubtless understood the tenor on which these promises were to descend to him in connection with his birthright. And yet the history shows us how he took a course which forfeited them all. Returning at one time from the hunting field, faint with fatigue and hunger, he said to Jacob — “Feed me I pray thee, with that red pottage.” Jacob said, “Sell me this day thy birthright.” Esau said, “Behold I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright be to me?” And Jacob said, “Swear unto me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.”

Such is the simple record given us of the circumstances of this transaction. They serve to shew how little Esau valued the blessings which came down to him from his godly ancestors. The appropriate reflection to be made on reading the narrative is, not this — See how strong the temptation was, and how much to be pitied was the unfortunate Esau who stood at the point of death and bartered away an intangible and valueless ideality for what which was the very stay of his life; but rather this — “Thus Esau despised his birthright.” There is Esau “that profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”

God set His seal to this act of Esau’s. He took him at his word. Esau said — I sell it to Jacob. God confirmed the deed and it was henceforth Esau’s no more. It passed from his hands forever. The Lord suffered another train of circumstances to transpire in which the solemn affirmation of the father transferred the birthright and the blessing to Jacob. There is no need at this time that I should fully detail all the circumstances — much less, that we should attempt to justify in all points the scheme of deception by which the mother effected this end.

It may however be not amiss to remark that even before the birth of these two sons, the Lord had clearly predicted that the law of primogeniture in

their case should be reversed so that the elder should serve the younger. She might therefore have felt that as the time drew near when a father's blessing was to single out the favored son, it was important that the purpose of God in respect to the younger of the two should stand.

While we can not justify her measures, yet we may remark that God's purpose *did stand*. The aged father pronounced on Jacob the ever memorable blessing —

“Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.” Genesis 27:28, 29.

Scarcely had Jacob withdrawn when Esau came, announced himself, and besought his father to arise and eat and bless him. Now the whole truth flashed upon the mind of Isaac. He had given away the blessing — to Jacob. It could not be revoked. He was conscious that the hand of God was on him in giving it to Jacob and he could not recall it. He reveals the facts to Esau — Jacob came — “I have eaten of his meat before thou camest, and have blessed him; *yea and he shall be blessed*.” Sad news to Esau. Yet one more effort remains. He may perhaps get another blessing equally valuable for himself. He cries therefore “with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father — Bless me, even me also, O my father. Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.” But he found no place of repentance — no possibility of changing his father's mind — though he sought it carefully with tears. The die is cast forever. He himself had sold his birthright, and God had confirmed his rash mad act, and given it to Jacob.

This is indeed one of the most affecting scenes on sacred record. It is peculiarly striking and solemn when we regard it as a kind of faint portraiture of that everlasting anguish and regret which will seize upon every lost sinner's heart when the truth shall ultimately flash upon him — my soul is lost — I have sold it for a mess of pottage, and it is lost forever.

Esau's sin consisted in despising this great blessing which belonged by birth to him. It is plain that he set no just value upon it. Its spiritual part he seems to have held in no estimation whatever. Suppose that he had been at the point to die of hunger; was it nothing to him to retain even then, his hold of Jehovah's gracious covenant? Was that a fit moment to despise his birthright and all its divinely promised blessings?

We may next observe that from this point, the law of primogeniture seems to have been annulled and never restored again in its full form and force as it existed before. When Jacob came to die, he called together all his sons and gave them all his blessing. They all alike seem to have become partakers of the promises. The birthright seemed to diffuse itself over the whole family. Together they became a nation of God's people, heirs in common of most of those blessings which came down to Isaac and to Jacob in the narrow line of the birthright.

It is much to our purpose to notice distinctly the fact that when the Jewish nation were set aside for their unbelief, a still wider diffusion of these promised blessings took place. The apostle Paul both announces and evinces the fact that all who are Christ's are Abraham's seed and heirs with him of this great promise. All are equally with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, sons of the birthright, entitled to that covenant which pledges peculiar blessings to children on the ground of the faith and obedience of their parents. This is a point which we should by no means overlook. There is too much of precious promise in it, it would seem, to allow us to forget or disown it. If we were to do either, might it not be said of us that we have despised our birthright?

Recurring to our text, I observe that the transaction alluded to there, and indeed the whole history of the Bible, recognize the fact that this blessing may be forfeited. Here let me read some passages, showing that God couples children with their parents in both His promises and His threatenings. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul that thou mayest live." Deuteronomy 30:6.

"For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my

blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-sources. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Isaiah 44:3-5.

"As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." Isaiah 59:21.

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:38, 39.

Observe here that this reveals the great law of the gospel dispensation. The gospel reign has now begun and its spirit and its principles are now beginning to be developed. Just here now we find the cheering announcement — "The promise, that is, of the Holy Ghost, is unto you and to your children."

Again, we find in Romans 4, that Paul distinctly argues this great point, to show that all believers inherit the very same spiritual covenant which God gave first to Abraham. It was given to him not of law but of faith; hence all who have this faith inherit it.

The same doctrine is held and argued in Galatians 3 and 4, it being there maintained that "the blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;" and the conclusion arrived at, being that "if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Thus we see that God connects children with their parents in His promises of blessings.

But let us dwell now more distinctly on the fact so plainly involved in our text — that these blessings may be forfeited.

It is plain they may be forfeited by contempt. If either parents or children treat them as of no value, they are in infinite peril of forfeiting them altogether, and God may at once take the forfeiture at their hands. Such treatment on their part must be exceedingly provoking to God, and none need wonder that God should say — If you despise these blessings, you need not have them.

Again, these blessings may be forfeited by a delay to embrace them. There is a limit beyond which God cannot wait on either parents, or children. This very delay implies that the blessings are lightly esteemed. For this reason therefore God might well arise in His displeasure and shut the door of hope and mercy.

Another obvious reason lies in the very nature of the present scenes of probation. Life must have an end, and may end quickly.

Still again, the blessings of this covenant may be forfeited by ignorance or unbelief. If parents do not understand its provisions or do not believe its promises, they may so entirely fail of laying hold by faith of these blessings as to forfeit them utterly and forever.

Again, they may be forfeited and lost through presumption. Children may tempt God as Esau did, presuming that God will give the blessing of course, although they have despised and sold it. Such seems to have been the case of Esau. He must have known that these covenant blessings accompanied the birthright; and yet he acted as if he supposed that his having foolishly sold his birthright to Jacob could not be taken as a forfeit. He presumed either that Isaac did not know of that transaction, or that it would not prevent his bestowing the blessing on himself even if he did. But his presumption was only another sample of his folly.

So it is no doubt often the case that the children of pious parents tempt God and forfeit all these blessings. They may have heard much of this covenant, and they rely on it for their own salvation, while they put off repentance and provoke God till he cuts them down in their sins and shuts the door against their salvation forever. We have on record in the Bible many cases of parents and children who did forfeit these blessings. In many ways has the Lord taught us that children will be greatly affected by the course pursued by their parents. Curses or blessings come on them

according as their parents are faithless in God or reckless of fulfilling the conditions of the covenant on the one hand, or are faithful on the other in labors and in prayers for their salvation.

This principle is amply recognized in several passages, some of which I will now refer to as illustrations. In the second of the ten commandments, we read, “For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.” Thus in this solemn promulgation of Jehovah’s will did He most emphatically recognize this principle that parents and children are most closely connected together, so that for the parent’s sake good or ill shall come on their children. Yet let it be here observed that this does not imply that God punishes the child for its parent’s sin. By no means. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord most distinctly declares that He never does this.

But there is yet scope for visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. A drunken father shall entail poverty, disease, and disgrace upon his offspring; yet shall not his offspring be at all punished for his sins. The punishment of individuals pertains to the next world and never to this. These providential circumstances which place our earthly trail in poverty or plenty — in sickness or in health — in disgrace or in honor — these are by no means our punishment in any proper sense. They may be evils; and in view of their final results they may not be. It may however well be an affliction to parents to be the guilty means of bringing disease, poverty and disgrace upon their children. Yet God has so connected parents and children together that such results naturally follow a parent’s sins.

When the Lord condescended to show Moses His glory,

“He passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.” Exodus 34:6, 7.

In Leviticus 20:5, the Lord expresses one of His solemn threatenings against idol worship thus; “Then will I set my face against that man and against his family.” In the case of Achan you all remember that God visited His fearful judgments on both the father and all his children.

These passages and cases I have alluded to, in order to show that parents often forfeit these covenant blessings for their children.

Both parents and children may so fatally forfeit this blessing that God will not return to renew the forfeited covenant, and reverse His decision. Isaac could not reverse what he had done in giving the blessing to Jacob. He was probably conscious that God had spoken through him in the blessing on Jacob, and now how could he of his own will reverse it? He could do no such thing. He seems to have been greatly astonished and amazed to find the blessing gone to Jacob, but he knew that God’s hand was in it, and he dared not attempt a change. Yea, said he, “and he shall be blessed.”

Parents may shut themselves out from these blessings. Of this we have a striking case in that generation of the Hebrew people which came out of Egypt under Moses. With an high hand and an out-stretched arm, Jehovah had led them forth; with water from the smitten rock, and bread from heaven, had He sustained them, and with His daily presence in the cloud and in the fire had He guided them, and now, brought to the very verge of Canaan, perhaps already presuming that their toils were all over, they lose all through their cruel and wicked unbelief. In the very moment perhaps of their highest anticipations the Lord crushed all their hopes, shut and barred the doors of the promised land upon them and doomed them to wander forty years with their children till the plains of that wide waste were whitened with their bones. None could enter Canaan till the unbelieving fathers were all numbered with the dead. “Ye shall know, said the Lord, My breach of promise.” Ye shall know that though I promised to Moses that I would bring you into Canaan, yet I can not fulfil that promise to you who have forfeited it by your unbelief and your rebellion against Me. For good reasons God had sworn in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest; and no entreaties or measures of theirs could induce Him to reverse that awful oath.

In this transaction of Esau, there are many points of most solemn and affecting interest. It teaches us this fact — that there is such a thing as

*sinning once too much.* So did Esau. He reached a crisis — by one fatal deed he capped the climax of his iniquity — by one additional sin, he shut the door forever upon his own soul and cut off all hope of ever regaining the lost blessing. Mark well his case. In a fit of faintness from hunger and fatigue, he showed the real attitude of his heart in respect to this blessing. He had so little regard for it that he sold it for a mess of pottage. So of the Hebrew nation on the borders of Canaan. There is a last sin — a point in transgression beyond which mercy cannot go — at which justice interposes, and takes the sinner's case into His own hands.

The forfeiture of this on the part of either parents or children depends on the light they have. Their danger is critical and their guilt great in proportion to the knowledge they may have of the nature and value of the covenant and its promised blessings. In the case of Esau, we must suppose that he had light enough to enable him to appreciate the worth of his birthright. He could not but know how God had appeared over and over again to his godly grandfather, and to his father, giving and renewing those great and precious promises; he well enough knew that Abraham valued these promises infinitely more than all his earthly wealth; and yet with all this knowledge before his mind he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Well does a sacred writer call him, “that profane person,” Esau. Forcible and pertinent is the remark of the original historian — “Thus Esau despised his birthright.” No wonder that the Lord abhorred his conduct, and stamped his reckless disregard of these great blessings with the seal of His own indignation. Esau had too much light. His guilt was too great; his sin could not be forgiven. See also the Hebrew nation on the borders of Canaan. What had they seen? The uplifted hand of the Almighty ten times falling on oppressive Egypt, and finally whelming her armies in the depths of the Red Sea; that same Hand guiding themselves in love by fire and by cloud through the trackless desert, spreading for them a daily table there with angel's food; smiting Amalek before them when the hands of prayer were uplifted and upheld; rebukes from on high, chastening and scourging them for their idolatry, their murmurings and unbelief; all these things were fresh before their minds, for all had transpired before their eyes with the lapse of some two or three years; and yet with all this light before them, they dare to rebel against the Lord and will not believe His word nor trust



His power to save. “So He swore in His wrath that they should never enter into His rest.” What could have been more just than this?

Now if it be true that the Lord rejected them the more readily because they had great light, then how important for us to enquire into our own responsibilities and dangers. Is not our light greater far than theirs? How critical then must be our condition? How imminent our peril of provoking the Lord to swear in His wrath that neither we nor our children shall ever enter into His rest.

Whenever either parents or children have forfeited the blessings of this covenant, the fact may be known by its closing up all access to the mercy seat in prayer. If the parents themselves are rejected as the Hebrew nation were on the borders of Canaan, the door of access is shut against themselves. They cannot pray acceptably for themselves. If their children have forfeited their birthright like Esau, then the parents cannot have a spirit of prayer for those children. This is plain, beyond question. It could not be of any avail for the rejected Hebrew nation to pray that God would let them go up into Canaan. They could not possibly have an acceptable spirit of prayer for this object, since God had sworn in His wrath that they should not enter. The Spirit would not help their infirmities, and make intercession in their hearts, to pray against the fearful oath of Jehovah. Neither in the other case could it be of any avail for Isaac to pray for profane Esau’s pardon and the reversal of the sentence against him.

If you have observed with care and extensively, you have doubtless seen many cases illustrating this position. I have had occasion to observe many — so many that I cannot but regard this as a most striking mark of being rejected from God’s covenant. If any of you have actually rejected this covenant, and God has taken you at your word, you will have no longer any spirit of prayer for blessings that are to come through that covenant; you will have no liberty of soul before God — no pleadings of the Spirit of the Lord within you — no strugglings and agonizings of the Holy Ghost within your heart for the souls of your children — no mighty help from the Lord, giving you power to believe and lay hold of the covenant and really close in upon the naked word of the Lord and say, “Lord, Thou hast spoken, now do as Thou hast said.” I recollect the case of one backslider who had long been far away from God, and during this time his children

had been growing up and hardening their hearts in sin. When he came to awake to his condition and see where he had been and what he had done, it was heart-rending to hear him exclaim, “I cannot pray for my children, I have ruined their souls forever, I can get no access to God in praying for them.” Now this is no uncommon case. Parents break their covenant with God, and then He withdraws it and holds Himself no longer bound by its promises.

Again, where the children of pious parents treat their birthright with indifference, or disregard, as many do, and seem not to appreciate the blessing of being born of pious parents, they may expect the God of Abraham will give them up. In every age of the world God has recognized this principle, and has taken care to leave cases of fearful warning on record both in sacred and in all church history showing that His patience cannot be forever abused with impunity, and that He sometimes takes the reckless forfeiture of His covenant at the hands of the guilty, abandoned rebel.

On the other hand the Lord has always conferred blessings on faithful parents and faithful children. How often is it implied in the Bible that God felt Himself bound to confer great blessings on the Jews because of their connection with Abraham. The Psalmist touched this point when he said,

“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children’s children; To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them.” Psalm 103:17, 18.

In the same manner and by the same immutable laws of Jehovah’s moral government will great curses come upon children and upon children’s children for the backsliding and unfaithfulness of their parents.

Again, I remark that after parents have long violated this covenant by grievous backslidings, God *sometimes* renews it. He has promised yet to do this to the Jewish nation when they shall again return to Him. Thus He holds Himself ready to renew covenant with parents even after most bitter backslidings, and after their children are on the very verge of destruction. So wonderful is His long-suffering — so rich beyond expression is His mercy — so does He love to bring the families of His people into His

covenant where He can bless them and show forth His faithfulness and His great lovingkindness.

When the Lord does this, it is always on the condition of repentance; it can never happen on any other condition. His people must return with brokenness of heart, and bitter tears, confessing and forsaking all their sins against Him. Then God for Christ's sake can forgive and can restore. They will have the evidence of this in a returning spirit of faith and prayer.

Now mark; perhaps I have spoken the experience of some parents here. You have some of you felt that you could not lay hold of this covenant — you could not grasp these promises by faith: the Lord did not write this covenant in your heart; but on your repentance the Lord meets you with gracious pardon — writes anew His covenant on your very hearts, and gives you thus the inward witness of your acceptance in the bonds of that covenant. Then you felt that verily you had occasion to bless and magnify the name of the Lord.

## REMARKS

**1.** The birthright of God's children is of infinite value. The Lord promised to Abraham and to his posterity, not Canaan only or chiefly; but spiritual blessings, to children for their parents sake; and then brought all the Christian church up on to the same broad platform of promise, making them heirs by faith of the same covenant and of all its spiritual blessings. And what a covenant is this! How infinitely precious to the pious parent's heart! How glorious to God as well as blissful to man! Who can fully estimate its value? What if you might inherit the throne and crown of Britain, and then pass it down as a legacy to your children. Your eye would sparkle — your heart flutter at the tidings. What if you might inherit an estate worth a million. But how much more may you inherit in the promised mercies of this glorious covenant! Thrones and gold are only chaff in the comparison; here are substantial, everlasting realities.

**2.** Great multitudes in every age have broken this covenant and forfeited its blessings. Even in the family of Isaac there was one who forfeited these blessings and thus brought on himself not the blessings promised to Abraham, but the heaviest curses. Oh, how many wayward sons have sold

their birthright as Esau did, and the Lord has shut them off from the blessings of His covenant. And how many professedly pious parents too — strange that they should not more rationally appreciate the priceless value of this covenant!

Suppose you inherit a throne — a crown; would you recklessly forfeit it? Would you not say — This belongs now to my children; let me keep it for them? Indeed you would be most earnest and watchful — you would prize it, and nothing could induce you to be remiss in preserving so rich a good and handing it down unsullied to your children.

**3.** It is amazing to see how little many children realize the value of these blessings. What! do you not understand, dear children, that great blessings are promised you for your pious parent's sake? Do you not know the value of this birthright? Hear David urge this plea — “Have mercy upon me, O God, and save the son of Thy handmaid.”

**4.** Many parents have occasion for most bitter reflection upon their own folly and guilt in forfeiting this covenant. Said a father to me — “I have no confidence to pray for my children; they have gone from under my influence; I cannot even reach them with my prayers.” If any of you my hearers, are in this state, the only thing you can do is to repent and plead with God to return in mercy and renew His covenant with you. Go humble yourself before Him; entreat Him not to take your forfeiture of the covenant at your hands and make it final and fatal.

And brethren, how pertinent are the words of Paul to this case; “Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” A promise being left us, beloved, O let us not come short!

It is possible, nay perhaps probable that there may be parents here who have already fallen short, and lost hold of this glorious covenant. Come ye who are professedly Christian parents — let me talk with you about this. How long since you entered into this covenant with God for your children? How old were you then? How many children have you thus dedicated to God? Where are they now? Where have they been? Through much prayer and faith and most diligent keeping of the covenant, have they received its promised blessings; or does their hard heart and wicked

life bear testimony against you? O have you forsaken this covenant, and has the Lord forsaken you and your children? Like Eli of old, have you neglected to restrain them, and have they in consequence plunged into fearful hardness, or possibly, crime? If you have broken covenant, will you not seek the Lord now, if possibly He may renew it and give you a fresh hold upon its promised blessings? It may be that you have let the promise slip, and now can find no place for repentance though you seek it carefully with tears. Perhaps God seems to say to you — “They shall know My breach of promise!” — awful words!

One word to children. God has committed to you a great and sacred trust. Have you despised your birthright? Have you made light of these blessings and vilely cast them off? If so, the day will come when you will see your folly in bitter anguish. Like Esau you may wail out with a great and bitter cry — “O is there no forgiveness for me — ah is there none?”

I once had a friend whose death under the attendant circumstances was deeply and awfully affecting. He had a pious and praying mother — a careful mother, who had watched over his early years with Christian assiduity, and many tears. His father was a good man, and while for some months I boarded in the family, I could not but say, “This is a well-ordered and godly household.” Rarely if ever have I seen a better regulated Christian family, or more care taken in training children.

Some years afterwards I saw this son to whom I referred, in the great revival at Rochester. He had been from home some time and of course away from the influence of his parents. In this revival he acted through out like a fool. Vain, proud, giddy, at first he took the ground that he would not be so singular as to become a Christian alone, while none else were coming out for the Lord; but when hundreds began to gather round the Savior’s feet, he changed his tone and would not repent then, because he said he would not disgrace himself by going with the rabble. Just so full of nonsense and mad folly were all his positions. He lived through the revival a hardened sinner.

Next came the fearful cholera and smote him among its first victims. It swept over his robust frame with terrible desolation, and almost in an hour he was on the bed of death. His godly father and praying mother rush to his bedside; there is no time for many words; the agonized son cries out,

O, my father — can't you pray for your dying son? The father is speechless. Mother, can't you pray for me before I die? The mother can't pray. No, not even that mother. It seemed to them as if there was no audience before mercy's throne. They could not pray for that son. You may conceive of their deep, unutterable agony; O could you have witnessed the awful scene! A dying son of pious parents — who could not pray himself, and for whom even a pious father and mother can get no access to God in prayer! O could you only hear his last words of shrieking anguish — “what, father, mother, can't you pray for your dying son!”

The oath of the Almighty had passed, and the Lord saw fit to make him an awful monument to the whole city of His stern, His righteous, but inexorable Justice! O how all who heard it stood aghast, and how did it make the ears of all the people tingle! It was Jehovah's awful voice of warning!

Among these young men before me is there not an Esau? Have you not despised and sold your birthright — *you*, young man, whose pious father and mother have poured out their scalding tears for you like water, and their agonizing prayers as if they could not be denied; but you have presumed on mercy and kept on in sin; you have resisted the Spirit and insulted your Maker; O could you have seen that young man die, and could you have heard his last imploring wail — “O can't you pray for your dying son;” and could you have realized how the iron of despair entered his soul as he sunk in the chill arms of death and all the bitterness of unutterable anguish filled the hearts of those who had prayed for him in his childhood, but might pray for him no more; O could you see, or only realize one scene of this sort, you might learn one of the lessons of fearful warning by which your Maker would admonish you not to trifle with the salvation of your soul. O! the folly of sinners — the folly of those children of pious parents who sell their birthright for less than a morsel of meat, sometimes even for poison. O! why will they forsake God, and slight His covenant? Why will they forfeit His mercies and provoke His everlasting frown?

Ye who are parents, have any of you broken your covenant with God for your children? Then come and bring along those children of the covenant, and let us all humble ourselves before the Lord, deeply repent of all our

sins, and entreat His mercy, if peradventure He may be gracious to us and renew His covenant with us, and once more write it on our hearts.

# THE BLESSEDNESS OF ENDURING TEMPTATION

*“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.” — James 1:12.*

This passage presents the subject of *enduring temptation*. In discussing it, I will enquire,

- I. INTO THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION.**
- II. INTO ITS DESIGN.**
- III. INQUIRE WHAT IT IS TO ENDURE TEMPTATION IN THE SENSE OF THE TEXT.**
- IV. SHOW THAT THUS TO ENDURE TEMPTATION IS ONE CONDITION OF BEING SAVED.**

I. The words tempt and temptation are synonymous with *trial*. To tempt is to try; to subject one to trial. Now sin consists in self-seeking, self-indulgence. Whatever, therefore, tends to selfishness, and draws the mind to self-seeking, is temptation, and is more or less strong according as this tendency is more or less strong towards self-indulgence.

The Bible mentions three great sources of temptation — the world, the flesh and Satan. The outward world is so correlated to our susceptibilities as to excite them and thus beget a temptation to self-indulgence. The flesh with its appetites and passions clamor for gratification; and hence the flesh and the outward world become temptations. Satan also presents his temptations in every form which subtle malignity can devise.

But I need not enlarge on this point; you are familiar with it in all its details.



## II. A FEW WORDS SHOULD BE SAID NEXT OF THE *DESIGN OF THESE TEMPTATIONS*

These temptations which environ us on every side in our present state are by no means designed by God to do us harm, but altogether to do us good. In creating the external universe and in giving us outward senses that we may behold and enjoy it, He had but one great end in view, and that is our *good*. From the fact that we are susceptible to pleasure from these sources, we are not to infer that God's end in view was to harm us by these temptations. They are undoubtedly to be considered as parts of a great system of moral probation, in which they perform the functions of means to a great, wise and good end. Real evils may be incidental to their operation, yet important good is their ultimate result.

The very term *trial*, shows that these things are intended as a test of character. God everywhere represents Himself as trying His people that He may test and develop the real state of their hearts.

Another end in view is that He may greatly search their hearts. We are prone to be exceedingly ignorant of ourselves. Were it not for trials, we should live and die in this ignorance. To prevent so deplorable a result, God permits temptations to assail us on every side and bring out all the deep things of our hearts. Just so a chemist would take any particular substance into his laboratory and test it in his crucible. He would try it by placing it in contact with other substances that act powerfully upon it and by this he ascertains its affinities and its real character. So God takes us into His great laboratory and applies the tests of spiritual chemistry to our hearts. Often we are not at all aware that we have any such affinities for earthly objects, until we are brought into close contact by temptation; then perhaps we find that we have strange susceptibilities about us which we had not known before.

Temptations are designed to empty us of our *self-complacency*. Peter was very self-complacent until he came into circumstances of great trial. It proved a great blessing to him to be thus tried. He thought much less of himself afterwards than before.

So it often happens. I know how often, perhaps in some hundred or thousand instances, I have seen men brought into circumstances which greatly abated their opinion of themselves. They had been very self-complacent — they had come to imagine that they had something very good in themselves. They cherished this notion with self-satisfaction; God saw their danger and permitted His fierce and strong temptations to try them until He had developed to their own view the unknown tendencies of their hearts and made them loathe themselves in their own sight as much as they had delighted in themselves before.

The real children of God may always expect such self-disclosures. As sure as God loves them and sets His heart on their salvation, so surely may they expect some form of trial that will cure them of self-complacency.

Again, trials serve to *empty the heart of self-righteousness*. By self-righteousness I mean that which originates in ourselves and not in Christ working in us to will and to do. That is always self-righteousness where one supposes that his obedience to God originates in himself, and he does not realize that there is no good inherent in himself whatever.

Lest I be misunderstood on this point, let me say that I do not mean to imply at all that we are *passive* in our obedience to the divine law. If I had supposed the mind passive in this obedience I could not have spoken of God's working in us "*to will*." An influence which leads us to will must of course terminate in our highest activity. It never can be exerted effectually and yet we remain passive. Nothing can be more active than an act of the will.

Further, my meaning is not that whatever good we do, does not really belong to *us*, and is not really our own doing, pertaining to our own actions and states of mind. This cannot be denied.

These explanations being made, let me say again, that if any Christian loses sight of this fact that he never does any good except as God works in him, he must soon learn it by the endurance of such trials as will compel him to see it.

Again, another design is to teach us *our dependence of God*; to hedge us in and shut us up to Christ and make us abide in Him. When temptations teach us our own weakness and certainty of falling unless we abide in

Christ, we wax really strong in the Lord. Temptations are designed to develop, establish, and strengthen every form of virtue. This is made abundantly plain in the Bible.

### III. WHAT IS IT TO ENDURE TEMPTATIONS?

The original word is used for the trying of metals by fire and by such tests as are adapted to develop their real character, or to remove their impurities. That which abides the test and remains after the trial, might be said to have endured the temptation.

So of the moral trials of the Christian. To endure temptation is to stand the trial — to abide constant in the faith — to hold out and come forth only the more pure, as the precious metals when the searching fire has passed over them. It is to persevere, despite of all temptations to be inconstant in our allegiance to Christ.

### IV. THIS ENDURANCE OF TEMPTATION IS A CONDITION OF BEING SAVED

Temptation is always implied in a state of probation. There could be no such thing as a state of trial if it included no temptation. A person could not be tried or proved except in a state fitted for such a process and for such results.

Again, temptations are naturally incidental to our present state. They spring up from our very constitution, and from the relations we sustain to the world we live in. Indeed we might say, they spring out of our moral being, and that no moral being can exist in circumstances where he can find sources of happiness without being exposed to have those very sources of happiness become temptations to selfishness. We have reason to believe that there is no world where moral being may not be thus tempted.

Certainly in this world, temptations are incidental to our very existence. Look at Adam and Eve. As long as they had bodily appetites they were in circumstances of temptation. Sometimes these temptations urged the will with great vehemence; at other times with less power, or not at all.

Now inasmuch as we all have these appetites and susceptibilities, temptation is naturally and necessarily incidental to our present state of existence. When the susceptibilities become strongly excited in any given direction, then temptation becomes in that degree powerful. The temptation urges us to forsake the guidance of God and of reason and give ourselves up to self-indulgence.

At this point, let us contemplate another great fact; viz. that *holiness is naturally and necessarily a condition of our salvation*. It is of all things most absurd to suppose that anyone can be saved without holiness. Of all human dreams and fantasies this is the most absurd. Strange that men who can *think* should entertain so flagrant a delusion.

I have often been struck with the absurdity of those who say that the doctrine of regeneration is a mystery and a humbug. So far is this from being true that it is naturally and forever impossible that one should ever be happy and be saved unless he comes into the state described in the Bible as the regenerate state, and made according to the Bible, a condition of salvation. When God declares — “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” He makes no arbitrary appointment. This is no capricious decree of the Almighty. It is one of the laws of our being that a selfish man must be born again, and be thereby changed from selfish to benevolent, or he never can be happy in God, or really happy anywhere or anyhow in the universe. He must be sanctified, that is saved from being a sinner, or he cannot be saved from the misery inherent in sinning, or from the punishment consequent upon it.

Again, regeneration and sanctification are not physical changes, capable of being wrought upon us by an exertion of God’s physical omnipotence. It is sometimes said — We know men must become holy, but God can work this thing in us. God can create in us the very state of mind which His law demands.

Now such persons need to consider that holiness is not some substance created in us, but is a voluntary conformity of heart and life to the law of God and to the laws of our own nature. It implies that we willingly and cheerfully consecrate ourselves to the very ends demanded in the law of God. This and nothing else but this, is true holiness.

The more I have thought of it the more I have been astonished that any class of men who ever think at all on moral subjects can ever tend towards infidelity. What! reject the religion of the Bible and then talk of salvation? The man knows not what he is talking about. He knows no more about the subject and no more understands what he says than the veriest maniac! For, what is salvation? What is eternal life? Only let the individual press the question — what is this thing about which I am talking? And he will see that he must become just what the Bible represents men as becoming before they can be saved. He will see that it is in the nature of the case impossible that any man should be saved from misery to happiness unless he be changed from selfishness to benevolence.

It is therefore no arbitrary or governmental ordination of God which sends the sinning rebel to hell; he only goes to his own place — the only fitting place for one of his character which the universe affords. He has passed through his state of trial and has come out not pure but vile; hence no place but one fitted for the vile and filled with the vile can at all befit him. Surrounding circumstances and divinely employed means and influences must actually secure our purity of heart here, or we cannot be saved hereafter. So both reason and scripture conspire to affirm.

## REMARKS

- 1.** With this subject before us, we can see the real difference between those who are true saints and those who are not. The former are distinguished by enduring temptation; the latter by being overcome by it. All, both saints and sinners, are tried for the very purpose of developing character; in all cases it produces this very result; some endure the trial and some do not. The former of course are the real saints; the latter are deceived if they suppose themselves to be Christians. Temptation does not overcome the Christian; he overcomes it.
- 2.** We see what constitutes the Christian warfare. It is made up of resisting temptation — of resisting and overcoming all those inducements to turn away from God and to seek one's own ends and gratification. This is the strife and the struggle in which the Christian is engaged.

**3.** All men whether saints or sinners are tried, and all either endure temptation, or are carried away by them. The sinner is continually carried away. He is conscious of no conflict and no warfare, because he makes no resistance. He knows no other law than self-gratification. If he resists the temptation to self-gratification in one form it is only that he may secure it in some other form. Whenever he desires self-gratification, he seeks it; and just for this reason he is a sinner.

The Christian is tried in the same manner, but he resists the temptation. He knows that it will not do to give himself up to seek after sensual or selfish indulgences.

**4.** Another remark is due here which may explain to impenitent men a thing they often wonder at as unaccountably strange. I can well recollect much of my own experience on this point before my conversion. I saw that Christians had trials of mind and many troubles and difficulties which I could not account for. I thought they of all persons ought to be happy, (for I was sure the wicked had no ground for being so.) I could not account for the fact which I often noticed that Christians seemed quite unhappy. I was quite observing of all the movements I saw among Christians, for I used to attend their prayer meetings and ponder all the developments of character I saw among them. For a long time I was at a loss to account for the fact that they seemed to have so much trouble and so little enjoyment. I rarely fell in with one of the rejoicing ones whose face would shine; this class were few in number then, and I rarely met with them. I can well remember one deacon who used to visit our office. Often however he seemed to be in an agony of soul; I could often hear him sigh, — could see his struggles of mind; — the tear would start in his eye, and the words falter on his tongue. I used to be searching after the causes of this. Why is it I would say that one who has so much reason to be joyful in God should seem so sad?

Perhaps some impenitent man who hears me has a pious wife, and sometimes surprises her in tears. Repelled perhaps by seeing tears, the cause of which he knows not, he may perchance peevishly exclaim — “I don’t want such a wife — so often weeping and unhappy.” You ought, my friend, to use a little philosophy about this and try to understand it. Perhaps your own conduct may have caused those tears. The indifference

you manifest to the welfare of your own soul may be agonizing your wife. She may love you too well and her Savior too well to see you at enmity against Him without feeling bitterly afflicted. Do not scorn those tears which your own folly and danger may have wrung out.

After my conversion I could see that I had often given Dea. H this trouble and anxiety which I had so frequently seen in his countenance. I saw that my folly and sin had caused him this deep grief. The fact is that if persons would consider they would often see the reason of this fact. The Christian has sore trials, and then instead of yielding as others to, he resists. Hence the struggle. Feeling a deep solicitude for the salvation of souls, when he sees their peril, his soul is troubled within him.

Instead therefore of wondering at these trials and seeing in them the evidence that they are wicked, we should rather deem it no strange thing and should see in them the evidence that such are righteous. The fact is that the Christian, standing in the midst of trials, is on battle ground. He is in a great strait, and if he might not take refuge in Christ, he would indeed be without hope.

Hence when you see Christians in the greatest agony and despondency, think not that they are not Christians, but rather be assured the more that they are. Those struggles are nothing else but a state of the sensibility and are not in themselves sin. They may rise to any degree of strength and yet not involve sin at all.

**5.** Sinners and false professors never learn the secret of standing by faith in Christ. Deceived professors sometimes seem to try; they talk as if they had some thought of making efforts, but alas, they seem to make no progress. In them are fulfilled the words of the apostle — “Ever learning, yet never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Some kinds of truth they may learn, but never this great truth, that through faith in Christ, they may gain the victory over all sin. They do not learn how to take refuge in Christ under circumstances of temptation. They do not apprehend the great and blessed truth — “Thou standest by faith.” How great the secret and how vitally important! Nothing can be more so. If a Christian does not understand this, his resolutions are all air, mere wind — good for nothing at all. All false professors and sinners of every sort utterly fail to learn this great secret of so standing by faith in Christ that they can endure

temptation. They have none of this element in their religion and of course their religion can avail them nothing.

**6.** Temptations are among the most powerful means of grace. They are often the most effective instrumentalities which the Lord employs to bring sinners to Christ. Often we see them the most powerful means used to break men off from self-dependence. They serve to show men their utter weakness in themselves for any moral good; and this lesson once thoroughly learned, the individual is prepared to take hold of real help and strength in Christ.

**7.** There is no escaping temptation in the present life. We may get grace for victories, but we need not look to grace for exemption from all conflict. The form of the conflict usually varies as saints make progress in the divine life. As they ascend higher in holiness, or rather as they go deeper into their own hearts, they must expect the form of the attack will change; but the same law of the Christian life will still prevail — war against sin — struggle against temptation.

**8.** Saints cannot but grow under temptations. It is just as natural as it is for the winds of heaven to strengthen the trees of the forest. You see a tree growing in the dense forest — it is tall and slender; it lifts its lofty head towards heaven and reels under the blasts of the storm; but there are so many other trees to help bear the pressure that no severe trial of strength comes upon any one. But let this tree take its growth in the open field and all alone; then see how it thrusts out its broad, bracing roots; see how rugged the form it assumes; see how the mighty thunder gusts break upon it and it only braces itself the more firmly to withstand; — so does the Christian under temptation. He grows up strong, fixed, steadfast. He is compelled to live in Christ all the time, and hence he cannot but learn to walk by faith and to stand in the evil day.

But place the Christian where he has little or no temptation, and he will come up slender, pale and faint-hearted. Not being in circumstances to develop his energies, they are not developed as under trials they might and would be.

The true doctrine on this point plainly is that trials afford us the means of gaining strength in the life of God. If then we trust by faith in Jesus for



sustaining grace, we grow; if we fail to trust, we fall before the temptation and bring disaster of the worst sort on our own souls and on the cause of Jesus.

**9.** Christians are sometimes so troubled as not to be aware of their growth and hence they get greatly discouraged. How often have I seen this! There is a Christian; — how he is dashed along on the mountain surges — hurled from one crested wave to another — how hard it is to keep his head above water; he does not know as he is making any progress at all towards the shore and haven of rest; but he is, and as you stand upon land you can see it though he does not see it at all.

So often in the case of saints. Those who look on rejoice to see them making great progress. We bless the Lord that we can see how these temptations are molding and fashioning them in the most lovely manner and imbuing their tempers with all the humility, the meekness and the sweetness of Christ.

See that Christian who has fallen into sore trials. His very countenance shows that he knows what sore temptations are and also what it is to have great consolations. The moral agencies that renovate character operate in his case with intense energy.

Some seem to think that a state of sanctification is beyond trial, and quite exempt from its struggles. This is one of the greatest mistakes. The saint never in this life gets so high that the Lord would not develop his graces yet a little more. The Christian is never too far advanced to be blessed by being carried along yet farther. You are never so far along that God may not have yet other blessings in store for you, to come through being tried yet more perhaps in the furnace of affliction.

Commonly when Christians have endured a scene of stern and fiery trial, they find it succeeded by one of great peace and rest. It is with them as with our Lord; — when Satan had gone, “lo, angels came and ministered unto Him.”

Now some suppose that this peace in God is a state of sanctification. But perhaps it may not be. It may be only a temporary reward — a visit of some angel of mercy to refresh the weary soldier after a hard fought battle for the Lord, to prepare him for another scene of struggle.

Persons are sometimes thrown into trials when nothing is to be seen but the naked promise. All external circumstances may seem in the highest degree forbidding; and nothing remains but to trust the naked work of the Lord.

And sometimes we seem not even to have any explicit promise, but are thrown upon the general character of God. We are shut up to Him and can only say — “I know Him, and though He slay me, yet I will trust in Him.” Job seems to have been in this condition; every earthly helper had failed him; perhaps he knew of no specific promise of the Lord on which he could rest; but he knew something of God’s general character, and knew therefore that he could trust Him everywhere and always.

This case of Job is indeed in many respects exceedingly interesting. If you could have seen him in the midst of his trials: property and children torn away; his wife become his tempter; Satan let loose upon him; his flesh full of fire and his bones of anguish; if you could have seen all this, you would have said, surely Job is the last man in the world to be benefited by affliction. This was indeed a fierce and terrible furnace through which to pass. Sometimes he frets, and sometimes almost slips; but still the Lord holds him up from falling; and probably there was no period in his whole life in which he grew so fast in the thorough knowledge of himself and of God — none in which he struck his roots down so deep and made them fast so firmly in the deep foundations of faith and trust, as then. If any suppose that Job was overcome in this trial they greatly mistake. Expressions did indeed escape him which showed that he was tried and almost beyond endurance, but his by no means proves that he was overcome. His constancy in God abides the trial, and by faith on the whole endures to the end.

You may have had an experience similar in some respects to this. You have been attacked by some vile, subtle, fierce temptation; your soul has been thrown into deep commotion; if any impenitent sinner had seen your struggles he would have been stumbled perhaps exceedingly and confounded; but through grace you conquered and you came out as gold seven times purified, prepared to testify with one of old — “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

While all things work together for the good of the true saint, the very opposite of this is true of every sinner. All things work ill to him. He falls before every temptation, and of course every scene of trial only serves to develop more and more his ungodly lusts, or his unbelief and his settled alienation from God. Often you see such persons thrown into a fever of irritation against God. Secretly, perhaps sometimes openly, they repine and complain of the Almighty and fret against the course of His Providence. Every thing goes to develop their true character and strengthen all its bad points. This is all evil.

Let it also be remembered that it is only those that have a good hope that will endure temptation. Those whose hopes are false will not abide in the day of trial.

Hence those who fail and yield in the hour of temptation may see that they have no reason to hope. The features of their character are marks of the self-deceived and not of the true believer.

But you say perhaps — “I can’t tell — I don’t know where I am.” A young man came to me a few days since with this complaint — I don’t know where I am; — I don’t know what to think of myself. In fact I am so afraid of sinning against God that I hardly dare to eat or drink or sleep” Indeed, thought I, and where can you be? What is your state of mind, dear young man? So afraid of sinning that you scarcely dare to eat! So full of fear lest you displease God! Surely this shows for itself where you are. A heart so tenderly alive to the fear of displeasing God may be easily known.

Yet one cannot look at such a case as that of this young man without crying out — how cruel the devil is! And how mean, that he should love to torment a conscientious mind and throw him into a state in which he will scarcely dare to eat, drink, or sleep. What a devil he is!

When you see real Christians thrown into great temptations you will find that ultimately it will do them great good. Their graces will shine beautifully during the rest of their life, and God has said that when they die they shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away.

When, therefore you hear saints groaning, agonizing, trembling, be not afraid for them. The roots are striking deeper, and they will surely gain a firmer footing and will glorify God in the midst of the fires. You may see

him enter his closet, looking sad, perhaps haggard, almost distracted; but anon he will come out, meekly saying — The Lord knoweth my way. The Lord knows the tears I shed. He has delivered me in six troubles and in seven and still I know that He will deliver me, and I will yet own and bless His name. O beloved, it is good to be afflicted, if only we have faith in God and so hold on upon His arms as to endure to the end. Then there remains for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

# COMING TO THE WATERS OF LIFE

*“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.” — John 7:37*

The feast spoken of here is the feast of tabernacles, of which we have a full account in Leviticus. It was one of the three great feasts observed annually by the Jewish people. Those who are learned in Jewish antiquities give us many interesting and important particulars respecting the mode of celebrating this great festival.

A tabernacle is simply a tent, and the institution might be called the *feast of tents*. Its object was to commemorate the forty years sojourning of the Hebrews in the wilderness when tents were their only dwellings. In observing it, the people gathered the boughs of trees and built themselves booths or tents in the streets or on the house-tops in which they sojourned during the eight days of the celebration.

The last day of the eight was deemed the *great* day, and on this day was observed one ceremony of special interests. Our text evidently alludes to it. The whole people moved in procession to the pool of Siloam and took thence a quantity of water in a golden vessel, carried it thus to the temple, and there poured it out before the Lord. The design of this was to represent the outpouring of the Spirit as taught abundantly by their prophets. It is a most remarkable fact that this great prophecy of the effusion of the Spirit in the times of the Messiah should have been universally understood by the Jews, and that the knowledge of the coming fact should have been kept fresh in their minds, by this ceremony engrafted upon the great festival of tabernacles. Jewish writers concur in stating that the ceremony of bearing and pouring out the water meant just this and was always so understood by the nation.

It was on this occasion that, as stated in our text, Jesus stood and cried, saying “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” It would seem that He was in the temple as the procession returned from the pool of Siloam, and that He seized upon that solemn, eventful moment to lift up

His voice before all the people and call attention to Himself as the great Giver of that very blessing which they were foreshadowing so beautifully in the out-pouring of the waters of Siloam. Then and there did the Man of Sorrows stand out in the presence of the assembled nation and proclaim “If any man thirst, let him — not go to Siloam, but — come unto Me and drink.” “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The historian here adds his explanation of these words; “But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.” Christ very well understood what was represented by the pouring out of the water and He knew that the Jews also understood it; hence His solemn annunciation at this time, calling attention to Himself as the giver of the Holy Spirit according to their well known prophecies. In discussing this subject, I shall show,

**I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE TEXT BY THIRST;**

**II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN COMING TO CHRIST TO DRINK;**

**III. WHAT IS THE INVITATION — COME UNTO ME AND DRINK.**

**1.** It is manifest that Christ has no reference to physical thirst for water, but to a state of mind — a state of intense desire, well illustrated by that natural desire for water which is called thirst. No doubt Christ alludes to that intense desire for communion with God which saints often have, and which is aptly expressed by the term, *thirst*.

Thus the Psalmist says — “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” Indeed he often represents himself as thirsting and panting after God — even as the hart pants after the water brooks.

Now whatever the philosophy of the fact may be, every Christian knows it to be a fact that there is such a thing as an intense desire of mind, terminating upon God. The soul feels most intensely that nothing but the smiles and the manifested presence of God can meet and fill its desires.

You know that we are so correlated to the outward world that certain objects awaken intense desires for their attainment. There is that in our physical constitution which creates a demand for its appropriate

gratification. A foundation is laid in our constitution for the desire which we call thirst, and the demand is for water.

Now it is very remarkable that there is a state of mind which corresponds to this state of the physical system. There is a thirst of the soul for God. The soul pants and longs after God with a singleness of desire and a burning intensity which nothing can appease but the attainment of its object. As the thirsty man cries out for water and can be relieved by nothing else, so those who are spiritually thirsty cry out after God, and nothing else can by any means suffice to stay their irrepressible longings. When a man is famished with hunger he wants food, and nothing but food will satisfy him; you might spread his table with gold — his soul still cries out for bread; you might clothe his brow with pearls — but you cannot even thus quench his insatiate longings for sustenance: so when the soul thirsts after God, this demand of the inner being can be met only by the actual revelations of God to this mind. God has so correlated our inward being to Himself that the mind struggles and cries out after God and cannot possibly be satisfied with anything else. The words of God are beautiful and lovely in their place — the smiles of His common providence are precious; but the spiritual mind can never be content to take these in place of those inward smiles of Jehovah's presence and those testimonies of His love which He gives to His favored children.

Every Christian knows that the Bible abounds with expression of this intense thirsting after God. And all who have had any experience in the deep things of the divine life in the soul understand well what is meant by this language. It may sound like an unknown tongue to those who have no spiritual discernment. What, they will say — the mind pant after God! What does this mean? Is there really any such thing as this? Yes, I answer, there surely is just such a thing as this — just such a longing of soul for God as the man dying with thirst feels for water. When the inward life is thoroughly developed and the soul renewed into the divine image, it thirsts after God, and longs most intensely for the light of His face.

Now it cannot be doubted that Christ had this very state of mind in His eye, and meant to invite to Himself all those who had this longing after the knowledge and the favor of God. Most perfectly did He understand that it is not naturally possible for us to attain the highest state of blessedness on

earth unless we draw and drink the living waters of life which He has promised, and which He alone can give.

I have said that this spiritual thirst is a certain state of mind. It may be defined thus — an intense desire for the fulness of a present salvation — a desire to realize in our own case what it is to be filled with all the fulness of God. In this state the mind pants after the fulness of a present enjoyment of God. This is the state which Christ had under His eye; a state in which the soul longs and pants after the fulness of a present communion with God.

The state ultimately desired by the individual who thus longs after God may be expressed thus; a universal and entire cleansing of the mind from all that pollutes — in which all wanderings of thought in prayer are suppressed and controlled: — the appetites are brought into subjection and kept there; and soul lives and moves and has its being as it were in an atmosphere of God and of purity.

This state of mind is well illustrated in the experience of a lady, a letter from whom I saw some years since in R — — . A friend of mine there showed me a letter written many years since by his grandmother. In this she gives in detail the course of her experience, showing how her mind had been greatly stirred up on respect to her falling so often and so sadly into bondage to sin — in respect to wanderings of thought in prayer and those various things over which Christians so often mourn. She felt the bitterness of these things, and came to feel at length that she could not live in such a state of bondage any longer.

In reading the scriptures, moreover, she had noticed that the Apostles got above this state of mind and evidently lived in liberty and not in bondage. Pursuing this train of inquiry she lighted upon many of those promises in the Bible which may well be called “exceeding great and precious,” and she believed them. She knew they were the word of the Lord, and she had long since settled it in her mind that God must be believed in all He said. Of course her next step was to take hold of these promises and cry to God in mighty prayer that He would fulfill them in her case. She did so. Her feelings became so intense that the strongest language of scripture expressive of thirsting, longing, panting after God, was none too strong to express her actual state of mind. So earnestly did her soul agonize for this



blessing that she literally cried aloud after God, saying, “I cannot let Thee go unless Thou bless me” — I must absolute die in this room if Thou give me not this blessing which I so greatly need. O, she cried, I cannot live without it.

Now she came to realize that very state of mind of which the sacred writers spake. She knew what it is to have the soul thirst and long after God, yea, the living God. She thirsted for that water of life which Jesus had promised, and she rushed to His feet to lay hold there of a present salvation from sin. I need not say that such seeking is never in vain. Jesus Christ has said, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and *drink*.” “He that believeth on Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Such was the experience of this lady.

This hungering implies a right state of the will. The hungering itself is a state of the sensibility inasmuch as it is simply desire and feeling; but it results from the heart’s being in a right state, and could not exist if the heart were in a wrong state. The thirst for spiritual blessings does not, as some seem to suppose, imply that the individual is in a sinful state, but that he is in a holy state comparatively; — yet is he striving to get higher and still nearer to God.

Again, this thirsting implies a self-loathing and disgust towards everything that stands in the way of the most intimate communion with God. Men find that the outward life is not so crucified but that it seems to come between the soul and God. There is something that prevents the soul from entering into that great, deep, calm communion with God, and the mind is in agony because it finds itself thus withheld from God. There is a waywardness of the physical propensities — an agitation and fluttering which I hardly know how to describe, but which most Christians understand but too well in their own experience; and when this develops itself, it comes directly in the way of entering into real and deep peace with God. It creates a sort of effervescing and agitation, not itself sinful perhaps, but excessively annoying and dangerous inasmuch as it often operates powerfully as temptation to sin. Many of you doubtless know what this is, and you also know perhaps how the soul is thrown into deep agony by means of this conflict with the flesh, and gives itself up to mighty energizings of prayer and faith that it may be delivered from this

foe within and brought into a state of pure and perfect peace. This is one of the forms of thirsting for the waters of life.

Again, this thirst implies a great drawing of the Spirit of God. The soul is drawn out after God with a deep and powerful drawing, so that it truly yearns after God, and feels that nothing can begin to satisfy this craving desire of the soul with its Maker. It deserves special notice here that this often seems to the individual himself to be the very calling of the Spirit of God, as if he heard that voice and was conscious of being drawn upward towards the blessed God by some influence not self-originated. The spiritual christian recognizes this call at once as the voice of his Beloved.

Again, this thirsting for the water of life implies being heartily sick of sin and heartily sick of tampering with anything that can become an occasion of sin and that embarrasses the soul and hinders its living in the closest communion with God. It implies a supreme desire to live wholly for God and an utter loathing of any form of life which falls short of this. How often in looking at this point have I thought of Paul's experience. "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." The Apostle here develops a state of mind which I fear but few enter into and thoroughly understand. I live, he says, yet not I; not I, the same Paul or Saul who once followed the flesh and lived afar from God — it is not the same I, that now lives, but it is Christ within me that now becomes my life. He knew what it was to have a new and spiritual life energizing through all his inmost soul.

Beloved, how many of you know what this means? Who of you have tasted in your own experience and know the blessedness of this divine life?

## II. WE ARE TO ENQUIRE WHAT IS IMPLIED IN COMING TO CHRIST TO DRINK

**1.** A belief in His real divinity; a belief that Christ is truly God. This cannot fail to be obvious to you upon a due examination of the text in its connection. For, what is the thing about which the Savior is here speaking? Nothing else surely but the gift of the Holy Ghost; and since the Holy

Ghost is also divine — nothing else but the gift of our Savior’s language; “this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.”

Coming to Christ then, according to this invitation is coming to one who can give God to the soul. Of course therefore none can come in faith unless he has confidence in the true divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Take another view of this. The object of this thirst of the soul is nothing other than God Himself. The soul as I have already said, when thirsting in the sense of the text, thirsts after God — after His presence — His love and His communion. Now then, while thirsting after God, can we come to Jesus to receive the blessing unless we believe Him to be truly divine? Can any being who is less than divine give us communion and peace with God? Can one who is not God Himself give God to our souls?

Again, mark the language of the text — “Come unto *Me* and drink.” If any man thirst truly after God, let him come unto *Me* — I can quench his thirst, and supply all his wants. How can we believe this unless we truly believe that Christ is God?

There is no escape from this course of argument. Some may seek to escape by maintaining that the thirst spoken of is not really a thirst after God. But surely every spiritual Christian knows that this is nothing else than a longing after God. What else is it? Does the soul thirst after a mortal man, or after an angel? Is it the favor of man or angel which awakens such intense desires and irrepressible thirstings? Nay verily; the Christian does not thus learn Christ. God and God alone is the supreme object of his thirst, and he comes to Jesus to be filled with God. How can he intelligently do this, unless he believes in His real divinity?

Again, this coming to Christ implies *self-renunciation*. None will ever come so long as they can find enough of good in themselves and without Christ to satisfy the demands of their own mind. This is most obvious. Their own vessel must be empty before they can rationally come to Christ to have it filled. None will ever come to Christ for these waters of life so long as he supposes he can get them by any efforts of his own. One’s own righteousness must be utterly renounced and all one’s own ways of being

saved; else there will be no real coming to trust in Christ. Self must be utterly renounced.

Again, coming to Christ implies a reception of Him by faith as the promised Messiah, as our own Savior, Redeemer, and Mediator before God. There must be a personal appropriation of Christ by faith to one's self as ours in all those respects in which the divine gospel plan makes Him the Savior of lost men.

All this implies that the Spirit takes the things of Christ and shows them to us. We have no reason to suppose that any soul ever receives Christ as his own Savior except as the Spirit sets before that mind just views of its own need and of the perfect adaptation of Christ to supply that need.

Again, this coming to Christ implies some degree of expectation of receiving the blessing to be sought. It is naturally impossible to come to Christ without faith in His promises; and this faith you will readily see must imply some degree of expectation that if we come as we are invited to do, we shall receive.

### III. WHAT DOES THIS INVITATION IMPLY?

As I have already said, it implies His divinity. On this I need not now enlarge.

Of course the invitation implies His entire ability to give the blessings needed. If He be really divine, none need to doubt His ability. If He promises to give, we ought not to doubt that He can.

Again, the invitation implies also His willingness to bestow upon us the spiritual good promised. The very promise itself most perfectly implies this.

The promise implies also that if we do come to Him to drink, we shall receive. When He invites, it is not to tantalize; it is not to raise expectation only to disappoint it again; it is not that He may send us away empty and confounded; no, but it is to induce us to come and enjoy the bliss of being blessed; and this of course implies the strongest, richest pledge that if we

do come in honesty of heart and in humble faith we shall receive the promised blessings.

Again, we must get this blessing of Christ and of no one else. He doubtless intended to teach this most emphatically, that if anyone thirsted for the waters of life, that soul must come unto Him and to none other but to Him for those waters.

Mark how beautifully and impressively He taught this. See Him in front of that lofty temple and in the presence of that vast triumphant procession as they move slowly along. He waits till the priest has brought forward the golden vessel of water from Siloam's pool and poured it forth at the foot of the altar, He stands by in silence till the ceremony is completed, and then He lifts up His voice before the assembled nation and cries aloud, Ho, ho, all ye people of Israel, ho, all ye children of the promises and covenants of the Lord, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." With Me are the waters of real life. "He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

What an announcement is this! And with what mingled emotions was it received by those dense masses of human beings on whose ears it fell! Some of the Pharisees were man enough to murder Him on the very pavements of the temple; they would not have scrupled to shed His blood, so enraged were they at Him — but He meekly goes on in His Master's work, and perhaps through fear of the people they did not dare just now to lay their hands upon Him. "Many of the people," it is beautifully added, "when they heard this saying, said, of a truth this is a Prophet." Some said one thing and some another, so there was a division among them. What a scene of prodigious excitement did this startling announcement make! Such a sort of excitement the gospel in these later days often produces where it is announced with demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God.

## REMARKS

1. Many persons have none of this thirst, for several reasons.

(1.) They have never suffered themselves to be thoroughly convinced of sin. I say, never suffered themselves, for mark me, they could not fail of being thus convinced if they would not resist the Holy Ghost. His Spirit would reprove them of their sin if they would not resist His reproof. But they do resist, and hence they never know the depth of their own guilt and vileness so as to be led to cry out after deliverance and to thirst after God.

(2.) Many know not this thirst and supply, because though they have had a conviction of sin, yet they have never believed and tasted so as to know the blessedness of receiving these waters of life. In fact men need to know God by having some degree of communion with Him before they will have their desires kindled intensely for more and deeper communion. The heart must first be submitted to God, and some experience be had of the rich blessedness of gospel peace and gospel love; than the soul will naturally thirst after God. But multitudes never have this thirst because they have not tasted of these waters.

(3.) I am often struck with the fact that many seem to know nothing of the meaning of such language as the Bible employs to express the longings of the soul after spiritual blessings. They confess that when they read such passages as the text, and many passages to which I have alluded in the Psalms of David, they really know nothing of this thirsting: these terms would express a far stronger desire than they have ever felt. It is astonishing to see how many there are who never know God — never have the soul cry out after a full and perfect salvation — never feel a longing, a quenchless, burning desire, just like a natural thirst, which nothing else can supply but the very thing desired. They do not understand how the mind gravitates towards God. They do not know what it is to have God become the natural food and drink of the soul, so that nothing but God Himself can satisfy its demands. There is such a state in which nothing but God can satisfy the demands of the soul. If all the angels of heaven were given us it would not satisfy; if everything else besides God in the whole universe were laid at our feet, it would not suffice; it would not be *the thing* which the soul craves. This object of supreme desire is nothing else but God. O how the soul cries out after God, the infinite God, the perfect, the glorious, the ever-blessed God! There is a most beautiful and wonderful correlation established between God and the human soul which lays a foundation for this want, this demand of the soul for God as its only satisfying portion.

Consequently when the soul comes into an upright state, and the inner voice of its spiritual nature is heard, that voice cries out after God and feels that the soul must live in God and that to depart from God is hell itself. The living in and with God and being sunk in Him, is the natural, the necessary and the eternal good of the soul.

In view of this great and glorious good, where and what is all that pertains to this outward life? It effervesces for a day — it bustles for a moment; — it is, and then it is no more; men may be fascinated by it for an hour: but when the soul comes to understand God, then nothing but God can suffice. Nothing else can meet its demands.

It is remarkable that this is the sum of all the blessings promised to the saints of God in the Bible. To Abraham God said — “Fear not — I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.” Mark this language. God does not say — I will give thee an exceeding great reward — but I am — I Myself am thy glorious reward. I give you Myself as thy portion.

So God often represents Himself as being the infinite good of the soul. The spiritual Christian can easily understand this.

On the other hand, some think of heaven as being some place which is itself blessed. They fancy its streets to be of gold — its rivers and flowers and fruits combine every thing that can regale the senses and charm the taste, and the place itself becomes in their view the heaven, and would be if there were no God there.

But all such views are false and delusive. Really it is the presence of God and nothing else that makes heaven blessed. There the mind is swallowed up and forever enfolded in God. There the glorious God becomes truly the portion and the everlasting blessedness of every holy soul.

**(4.)** Many confound conviction of sin with this thirst for the waters of life. A state of conviction will truly precede it; but this thirst is entirely a different thing, and arises from the fact that the mind really knows and has entered into the enjoyment of God. You recollect how our Lord most beautifully represents His people as eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Now this must certainly denote a cordial reception of Christ by a living faith. And the previous hunger and thirst which are always implied

in eating and drinking must in their spiritual acts imply much more than simply conviction of sin.

**(5.)** Many have not this thirst because they allow themselves to thirst for other things. The two are absolutely incompatible with each other. There is even among professors of religion a vast deal of thirsting after the outward life and its enjoyments. When this is indulged the inward thirst after God must cease.

**2.** It is a great blessing to have this inward thirst developed.

It is in itself a very great blessing to have the soul thus drawn out after God. The very desire is a heavenly state of mind, for you are conscious that your exercises are perfectly reasonable and that your affections are now taking hold of objects which are most perfectly worthy of an immortal mind.

And if the state of desire is blessed, how much more so is the fulfillment of it? O, to be filled even on earth with all the fullness of God! This is of all things below, most blissful!

**3.** When this has ceased in the mind, one can have no reason to hope that he is going to heaven. If the mind has become so apostate from God, there is no hope left. Why should God take that soul to heaven which has no longings for His presence?

**4.** Many persons stop short with this thirst because they have not faith to come to Christ. Do you see them come to Christ and plead — “Lord, didst not Thou say — if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink, and now, Lord, I have come, expecting Thou wilt give me those blessed waters.” Do you see this state of mind? No. They do not come to Christ believing absolutely that He will give them the blessings they need.

I can well recollect a scene in my own experience which is in point here. My soul was drawn out exceedingly for this blessing and I did not see why I did not attain it. My heart seemed full of prayer, echoing and echoing with pleadings and promises, till all at once the thought came across my mind — you do not believe you shall receive. I instantly thought of a dear friend of mind who would always anticipate my wants, who seemed to have the faculty always of foreseeing the things I needed, and who would



be sure to supply them as if this was the chief pleasure of his existence. Then I asked myself — Do you as much expect Christ to supply your wants as you expect it of this earthly friend? I saw then that I did not. I saw the shameful unbelief of my state of mind, and I felt so rebuked and so perfectly ashamed that I could not help crying out — “O my blessed Jesus, I have not had so much faith and confidence in Thee as I have often had in a man!”

So, many are withered and blighted because you do not believe that God is drawing, but you are resisting. O, you do not believe. Jesus Himself comes near — yea very near; — He puts the cup into your very hand and says “drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved;” but alas, how many still will not believe.

O this fountain of life — what is it but the fountain of God bubbling up in your inward, spiritual being. Verily the blessing offered you is nothing less than the glorious God Himself; and now will you not believe? If any man will come believing, the voice divine says, I will give him of the waters of life freely.

# AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

*“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” — (2 Corinthians 4:17).*

Few things are more interesting than to contemplate the contrast everywhere drawn in the Bible between the righteous and the wicked. No one can thoroughly study this contrast without being greatly affected by it. Throughout the Bible we find the contrast between them drawn in the strongest colors respecting their character, their afflictions, their joys, their entire earthly course, and their final destiny.

Our text from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the righteous. He affirms that their afflictions are light, transient, and produce augmented glory. In another passage of similar significance, he asserts that “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). However, the Bible, from beginning to end, teaches the opposite of this with respect to the wicked.

## THE CASE OF THE RIGHTEOUS

That the righteous have afflictions is asserted and implied throughout the Bible, and the whole course of God’s providence in every age teaches the same thing. The best saints are chastened. Affliction is not excluded from their cup because of their piety.

Their afflictions may be in themselves as painful — may be as frequent and as long protracted as those which befall the wicked.

The Book of Job shows that in former times this fact was greatly misunderstood. In those times of comparative darkness, when the light of written revelation had scarcely begun to fall upon the nations, some

people, even some good people, seemed not to have understood the meaning of the divine dispensation towards the righteous.

But I have several specific points of remark to make respecting the afflictions of the righteous.

First, they are light. Paul calls it, "Our light afflictions." He uses a term of comparison. Therefore, we must inquire about what our afflictions should be compared with in order for them to be reasonably considered light.

Obviously the afflictions of the righteous *are* light compared with what they know and feel they deserve. This is one of the considerations which make their afflictions seem, in their own view, to be light.

Their afflictions are not said to be light compared with those of the wicked; but they are light, and every real saint feels them to be so, compared with what he deserves.

They are light compared with what Christ suffered in working out our salvation. Whenever we think of Christ's circumstances, apprehending in some measure His trials from being rejected by His people, from the unbelief and fickleness of His professed friends, from the wickedness and coming ruin of His nation (which He could neither remedy nor avert), from the malice of His murderers, and from His position as our sacrifice when, I say, we duly apprehend such points as these, we always see that all our own utmost afflictions are light compared with His. I have never yet seen a Christian who did not feel this when reminded of the sufferings endured by Christ in His earthly afflictions.

These afflictions are light when compared with those that await the wicked. Compared with those, we can judge them as too small to be anything at all. They are less than the fine dust of the balance.

In the same view, these afflictions of the righteous are light compared with what they themselves must have suffered if Christ had not suffered in their place, and if they should not, by the discipline of suffering here, be so purified that God can take them to heaven at death. All Christians should consider both these points, namely, how the sufferings of Christ have saved them from the terrible necessity of everlasting anguish, and also how the moral discipline of suffering here may perform a most important and

indispensable agency in preparing the soul for exemption from all further suffering in a world of peace and joy.

Then you will see how light your afflictions are compared with what they might have been, and indeed must have been, if God had refused to adopt the great remedial system.

Second, the afflictions of the righteous are short. They are short compared with eternity. They are short compared with what we deserve, and short compared with the measureless duration of the sufferings of the wicked. Compare their duration with any of these points, and you cannot fail to see that they are indeed but for a moment.

Third, all these afflictions of the righteous, in respect to them, are means of grace. In the Apostle's view, they "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They do this only as they serve to prepare the soul for glory — by no means because they merit a reward of glory. But in their disciplinary character and results, they work for the Christian a weight of glory which infinitely exceeds all the weight of the afflictions themselves.

Fourth, the perceived design and tendency of these afflictions rob them of their sting. When the people of God see this design and this tendency, they feel more like embracing and kissing the rod than repelling it. Indeed it usually happens that they can testify after the scene of trial is past, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." And often, while passing through the very furnace, the conviction that the hand of their own Father is in it, that it is designed for their good, and if they will fall in with this kind design, it cannot fail to do them infinite good — these thoughts serve to sustain them so that not so much as the smell of fire is on them. Or to change the metaphor, these thoughts, dropped as an anodyne into the cup of their sorrows, transforms what would have been gall and wormwood into the sweetness of honey.

Fifth, A consciousness of their own ill-desert serves to inspire patience and submission. Let the Christian only realize this, and he will cry out, "All these afflictions are nothing compared to what I have deserved at the

hand of God. I cannot murmur. All this is no suffering at all when seen in the light of my deservings.”

Sixth, the fact that they are so short makes them appear so light. With almost universal application, it may be said of the afflictions of the righteous, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” A night of unbroken sorrow may appear long, but soon the morning comes in its joy. Their night of anguish is forgotten. What Christian does not know this? Where is the Christian who has not had this written out in his own experience? Hence, under the heaviest pressure of affliction, he can still reason against his own despondencies,

“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” (Psalm 42:11).

Seventh, before my conversion I well remember that I was deeply struck with this, Christians are the only persons in the world who have any reason to be joyful. I could easily see that they had consolations which others did not have. I saw that nothing could possibly befall them which could ultimately be an evil. All things must work good, and nothing but good, for them.

Reading such passages as our text showed me plainly that all was well for them, and that they alone, of all people on the earth, had a legitimate right to be joyful.

The opposite, I saw, must be true in every instance in the case of the wicked. All these thoughts passed often through my mind while in my law office. Even then I could not help thinking intensely on these points, nor could I help seeing the force and the bearing of earthly afflictions to curse the wicked and to bless and not harm the righteous. In this state of mind, I did not perhaps quite envy Christians their lot, but I felt that only Christians had any reason to be cheerful. The sinner, I plainly saw, had no business to be cheerful. Nothing could benefit his condition and prospects but to howl and mourn in most hopeless anguish. Nothing but ill was on him. Nothing but affliction yet more awful was before him.

Nor, in my case, did those views result from a state of melancholy or depression. I never had any tendencies of that sort. These convictions

were the result of sober and intense thought. I studied the great questions of the Christian religion intensely, and I could not fail to be deeply impressed with the mighty contrast between the state of the righteous even in this world and that of the wicked.

My situation with regard to early religious instruction was rather peculiar. I heard no preaching but the strongest form of Old School Calvinism. I had to grope my way along through all its absurdities and think out all my religious opinions in the very face of all the preaching I heard in my earliest years. This led me to think deeply and thoroughly upon the great points of the Christian faith and life. Hence, when I saw a sinner in his sins, I could see nothing cheerful in his case. All was full of gloom. But a Christian — what if he does suffer now? All will soon be well. His sufferings are soon over. Who can help seeing this? It seems to me now, as it did then, quite impossible for any thinking person to avoid thinking on this subject, and if he thinks at all, how can he fail of being struck with the immense contrast between the cases of the righteous and the wicked?

The joys of the saints are only the beginning of heaven. The Bible does not represent their joys as being short like their sorrows, but represents their joys as long and their grief as short. Their joys are enduring, deep, full, fadeless, not light and fleeting as those of the sinner.

## THE CASE OF THE WICKED

Precisely the opposite of what I have said applies to the sinner in every respect. Read the seventy-third Psalm. I select this, not because it is more striking or more decisive than many other passages in the Bible on the same subject, but because it brings out more distinctly the very truths I wish you to see.

Before the Bible was completed and people had learned to interpret the providence of God in the light of revelation, some were greatly perplexed with the course of divine providence toward the righteous and the wicked. Such seems to have been for a time the case with the writer of the seventy-third Psalm. “Truly,”- he says, “truly God is good to Israel.” “Truly,”- as if the conviction had just now become fixed in his mind and he had just learned this fact so long obscured in darkness, “God is good to such as are

of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped.” What was the matter? He proceeds at once to tell us. “For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” He evidently speaks not of all wicked men, for some of them have trouble as other men have; but he speaks of the prosperous classes — of those who seem, during much of their life, to have all that heart can wish. “Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return thither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, ‘How doth God know, and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.’” “It is all in vain,” he says, “for me to have washed my hands from sin, and to have denied myself its pleasures, for I have been sorely plagued notwithstanding” — more sorely even than most of these wicked men — “for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” But at this point he checks himself. It strikes him that to talk in this strain will be a stumbling-block to God’s people. It will throw them into the same state of perplexity and repining, and he sees instantly that this will not solve the problem. “What then shall I do” — says he, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; I was yet more painfully perplexed; I dared not speak out my feelings, lest I should offend the generation of God’s children. And yet my heart was hot within me, and how could I refrain from speaking out the deep, burning perplexities of my soul? It was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God. I knew not how to solve this mystery, that I should have so many troubles and the wicked so few — until I went to the sanctuary, then I understood their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places; Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was

I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before Thee. I was stupid as a beast; why did I not understand before this that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and that their richest joys terminate almost in a twinkling, in everlasting desolation and anguish? Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee; Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. ‘Thou shalt guide me’ — what a blessing to have the infinitely wise God for a guide!

“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from Thee shall perish, Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from Thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Thy works.”

If sinners are joyful, the Bible represents their joy as only for a moment. I might quote passages almost without number to prove this. But there is no need for me to.

On the other hand, the Bible shows that when Christians are afflicted it is only for a moment, and that their afflictions are light also. Oh, how light compared with the full lot of the wicked!

But what of the wicked man; is he joyful? Yes; he has a feverish excitement and he calls it joy, but it cannot last. His joy vanishes before he has done quaffing off the mere foam of his pleasure-cup. Light too are all his joys — light as air. In their very nature they never can be solid and substantial. His joys are as the chaff which the wind drives away. If you are a sinner, you know there is nothing in them worthy of the name of joy. You know they are vain, false, fickle, unsatisfactory. The first breath of adversity scatters them all; disappointment has hidden her sting beneath their fairest flowers. You have known all this in your own sad experience, and yet you are loath to admit it and more loath still to act as if it were true.

The sinner’s joys are only the means of aggravating his future sorrows. Instead of being, as in the case of the righteous, appetizers of heaven, they are a prelude to hell. Every joy of the sinner in this world is a fruit of God’s mercy, and every such mercy abused will be prolific in wrath and



torments in the world of retribution. God will visit for all those abused mercies.

Then, moreover, those joys of earth will be food for thought in that world of tormenting self-reflections. Conscious guilt for mercies abused will distress the mind of the lost sinner with unutterable pangs.

Furthermore, every sinner knows that his good things are the very opposite of what he deserves. He never has, or can have, the sweet consciousness of integrity and of deserving well at the hand of God. He knows that all he deserves is affliction — utter and unmingled sorrows.

Once more. In the hour of trial, how great the contrast between the afflictions of the wicked and those of the righteous! The wicked man under his afflictions can only say, if his eyes are open: “These are only the beginnings of my sorrow. I have only just begun to drink the bitter cup, the dregs of which are to be my portion forever and ever.” Yes; the wicked must bear their sufferings in this life, comfortless and unsustained. No Christian’s hope gladdens and cheers their heart. No solace can they have in the bitter hour. With them, faith in Christ is entirely out of the question; they can think of Christ only as the being whose blood they have trampled under foot — whose mediation for sinners they have set as nothing; and now they can hear Him say only this, “Because I have called, and ye refused, therefore when ye call, I will not answer.” It avails nothing to speak to them of Jesus. The name soothes not their aching bosoms; it only torments their souls with more bitter self-reproaches and keener despair. No hope have they — certainly no good hope through grace — for they have set all grace as worthless.

Thus, the very opposite things are true of their afflictions which are true in the case of the righteous. While the afflictions of the righteous are light, because of their buoyant, trusting, submissive, peaceful state of mind, the afflictions of the wicked are heavy because of their wicked state of mind. They have no power to resist and bear up under them.

Suppose an ungodly man is bereaved. His property is torn away. Alas, it is his all! What has he more? This was his god, and now it is gone, perhaps forever. It leaves him no good to enjoy. The Christian too may lose all his property in a twinkling; but then his Father in heaven is infinitely rich and

he need not fear lest he come to want. His great treasure remains untouched by the fires or the floods of earth. He can have a thousand angels to minister to his needs, if he needs their aid and his Father sees it best to send them.

Suppose the sinner is bereaved of some dear friend — a parent, a bosom companion, or a child of his strong and tender love. The blow comes down upon him with unmitigated weight. He has no Saviour, no hope, no consolation — no being in the universe able to save, to whom he can flee.

These sorrows are heavy because they are enduring. They pause at intervals only for a brief space; and then another avalanche rolls over him again, crushing all his fondest hopes and spreading desolation all around him. And then the thought must flash across his mind: “These are only the beginning of sorrows. I am bereaved here — oh, how much more bereaved when every friend shall be torn away! Bereavement makes me wretched now: what shall I be hereafter?”

The wicked man’s afflictions, instead of working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, will only work in his case a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation; for all these afflictions are only appliances on the part of God to reclaim the sinner from sinning and bring him to Jesus for salvation. If he resists them all, they cannot fail to aggravate his final doom. Hence, the more thorough and searching his trials, the greater his guilt and the more heavy his final punishment. We see that the more he suffers here — supposing him to resist the design of God to reclaim him by these trials — the more must he suffer hereafter as a punishment for his deeper guilt.

We know that the opposite is true of Christians; the more they suffer here, the more they enjoy hereafter.

Consider how striking it is that while all things, joyful or sad, work together for the good of the Christian, all things, whether prosperous or adverse, joyous or afflictive, work together for evil to the unrepentant sinner. The more he enjoys here, the more miserable he must be hereafter, and the more he suffers here, the more he must suffer hereafter. If there is in this an apparent paradox, it is still true, and you will instantly see its truth when you come to see the relation of the whole course of God’s

providence here towards the sinner, to this sinner's final doom. All God's providences are means of trial to the sinner, and if he abuses them all and resists their influence, they cannot fail to work for him a deeper damnation.

Alas, the guilty course and the fearful end of the sinner!

Instead of being able to say, with the Christian, "Welcome, afflictions. Welcome, pains and trials and bereavements; welcome, even the cross itself" — he can only say, woe is me! "These heavy afflictions that make me weary of life now, are working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation! Nothing for me here but bitterness, and a vain pursuit of hollow pleasures — all working for me a more dire damnation for my everlasting portion!"

## SEE THINGS AS THE BIBLE SEES THEM

If we would understand the Bible, we must attain a position from which we shall see things as the inspired writers saw them. They estimated all things in the light of eternity. When they speak of earthly things, they compare them with eternity and deem them long or short — valuable or valueless — as they are estimated in this scale of comparison. And why should they not? If we are to exist forever, there is surely no other rational way of estimating the value of whatever shall affect our entire well-being.

Our happiness or misery in the next world is a part of the whole sum of our good or ill in existence, as much as the portion which falls to us in this world. Hence, if earthly scenes and interests are brief and but for a moment, compared with eternity, let them be called and deemed light and of small account. So the sacred writers seemed to regard them.

Many have fallen into serious errors in consequence of not understanding this. When the apostles speak of its being only a step to the day of judgment, some have supposed their real meaning to be that Christ's second advent was really just about to occur. But it is by no means certain that this was their real meaning. Minds so deeply impressed as theirs were with the solemn realities of eternity are wont to view eternal scenes as

very near at hand. The intervention of earthly scenes and events between — events in which their mind takes no interest — is scarcely thought of.

Now we need to be in such a state of mind as theirs in order to understand their language. Then we shall estimate all earthly things in the near view of the solemn realities of the eternal world.

Afflictions are light or otherwise very much according to the state of mind in which they are experienced. In one state, a mere trifle will appear heavy; in another state, the same trial will seem scarce worth regarding. The mind sustained of God can sustain almost anything God shall lay upon it; but when a man has all his own burdens to carry alone, and can scarcely bear the burden of his own wounded spirit and rebellious, repining heart, how can he bear the superadded weight of affliction?

It is often exceedingly interesting to contemplate the afflictions of the righteous. When we see the afflicted soul sustained triumphantly by grace and consider also how these light afflictions must educe a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, we see it a most blessed thing to be afflicted. Oh it is a joyful scene! Their state of mind is such that they scarcely feel the pain of their afflictions. They know themselves to be blessed, and their souls sometimes exult in scenes of deep affliction with exceeding joy. They have so much of God in their souls — God takes occasion by means of the affliction to make such peculiar manifestations of His glory and His goodness to their soul — that they may well exult in the precious good of being afflicted.

You may have heard it said of one of the daughters of President Jonathan Edwards, that, while a husband whom she tenderly loved lay a corpse in the house, her joy was so great that she sought some secret place to give it vent lest it should be misconstrued by those who could not appreciate the abounding consolations of the great joy with which God was pleased to fill her soul. Now what was this? How shall we account for it? But one rational account can be given: the Lord was pleased to make this affliction in her case a sort of conductor along which the electric fires of His own love and presence reached and filled her soul. She became so filled with the joys of the Spirit that she could not be sensible to the bitterness of grief.

Now another woman in a different state of mind would have hung over that lifeless body — would have bathed it with her bitter tears — would have given way to inconsolable grief. Why? Because in her state of mind the consolations and joys of God are lacking.

Edward Payson said, near the close of his life, “Since I have given up my will, I have never in a single instance been disappointed.” You need only be in a state in which you have no will but God’s — then all will be well with you. Form no purpose except on this condition, “If the Lord will, I shall do this or that.” Let a man get into this permanent state of mind, and where is he? Where he never can be disappointed. However his plans may emerge, all seems well to him, because he wishes nothing otherwise than God would have it. And God’s ways can never be frustrated — as a man once said of the weather, when asked what he thought the weather would be, “Just such as pleases me.” But how could he know this? What does this mean? The answer is easy. Said he, “It will be such weather as pleases God, I know; and whatever pleases God will perfectly please me.” Thus, beloved, if you are only weaned thoroughly from your own wills, and molded into sweet submission to the will of God, everything will go just right. However much the course of divine Providence may seem to frustrate your plans, and threaten mischief to your interests, you can say, “This pleases my Heavenly Father; therefore, I know it is best and it shall please me.”

I very distinctly remember attending a funeral in a case where a man had lost a most beloved wife by a sudden death. But, oh, there was such a smile on his countenance, a smile so calm, so resigned, so sweet, so like heaven — I never can forget it. Such a countenance as his — it seemed’ to betoken anything else but affliction. Why? His heart was with God.

But while this is all joyful and interesting; on the contrary, all is agonizing when you come to see the wicked under affliction. Alas! they have no consolation. I once witnessed a funeral scene in New York. A most ungodly man died; leaving two ungodly daughters fatherless. Their mother had died before, and they felt themselves thrown upon a blank world, orphans. They wept and wailed enough to move a heart of stone. Their tears and cries were agonizing. I felt unutterable anguish as I saw their forlorn, despairing grief. But I could do little else than stand and weep. I

talked to them of Jesus, but they had no Jesus. This name, so dear to the Christian heart, had no charms to them.

They did not know Him. They had never learned to trust Him — they had never made Him their friend. Alas, they had no friend in the universe! Their father had gone to hell, and they were following on the same path. Oh, it was enough to tear a man's heart all to pieces to witness such a scene! I could not help crying out, Oh, were they only Christians! Oh, if they only had Jesus for their friend!

But these are only the beginning of sorrows. These are only the first tasting of that bitter cup which to all eternity they must drink to its dregs. These are only the first drops of that awful, rising, gathering hailstorm about to overwhelm them in its wide, wasting ruin. If you have ever seen the awful tornado, rolling up in its mountain masses of cloud and hail from the west, roaring, crashing, sweeping along — now its first drops fall — it is coming, coming — even these first drops thrill through the quick pulse and the beating heart of the houseless, naked *wanderer* — *ah*, how can he bear that rushing avalanche of storm!

To the sinner in this world, the few drops of affliction cut him down. If he cannot stand before these few small drops, how can he stand when God shall make bare his awful arm, and clothe it with majesty, to visit wrath upon the guilty according to their deeds. O sinner, how can your heart endure, or your hands be strong in the day when God shall deal with you? The first drops crush you down. You cannot bear even the first small drop, but sink and wail out under even *these* — *what* next? Next comes the solid hail — hear it roar. Oh, that crash — as if it would tear the world in pieces! The first drops scattered in this world scald and scathe him — ah, surely he never can endure in that dread day when the storms of Jehovah's wrath shall begin to beat forever on his guilty spirit!

When I have seen sinners under conviction, gnawing their very tongues literally as I have seen it — drawing blood, I have cried out in the inward anguish of my soul, If this is conviction, what is hell? O my soul, WHAT IS HELL? No hope — no hope, no end, no escape — oh, if there were only some way of escape — or some end, though after myriads of ages had rolled away in the agonies of the second *death* — *then* it would not be all utter, hopeless despair. These thoughts of final relief might come as the

elixir of life to bring at least a few drops of comfort; but no! hell has no hopes for its doomed ones. It has no balm for the wounded spirits of its guilty, self-ruined victims. Every thought in every sinner's mind there is only the fire and the gall of hell upon the dark, malign spirits of that prison-house of despair!

Finally, let me say, it is exceedingly useful to us to contemplate this contrast between the earthly state of the righteous and the wicked. Let Christians do this often and thoroughly. I have found it exceedingly useful to me to do it. It quickens the deep sympathies of my heart for my dying fellowmen, and calls forth gushing gratitude for the mercies of gospel salvation. It is sometimes an evil to dwell too long and too exclusively upon the Christian's hope and the Christian's heaven, and neglect to dwell upon the bitter doom of the wicked. Oh, we must not forget their awful state! Our business here is to pull them out of those fires. Then let our hearts feel their awful peril. Let us often follow out this striking heart-affecting contrast between the righteous and the wicked. If ministers would often do this, carrying out this contrast in all its great and striking points, oh, how would both they and their churches travail in birth for souls and be filled with unutterable emotions of benevolent solicitude for the souls of the perishing!

Brethren, do you satisfy yourselves with the dainties of the Christian life, and live to eat, rather than to labor and toil? Do you go to the sanctuary to regale yourselves with spiritual manna, and give no crumbs to those who must starve in the agonies of the second death? Do you lose sight of the sorrows of the wicked, and quite forget their case? Do you? Can you forget their awful afflictions here and hereafter — so heavy, so enduring, so fearful? Oh! can you let these things pass from your minds and live on as if all were well? Beloved, you must one day give account for souls — for souls saved or lost.

# ON BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH GOD

*“Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.” — Job 22:21.*

The speaker here addresses Job and exhorts him to become acquainted with God. The text therefore naturally leads us to enquire,

- I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN BEING ACQUAINTED WITH GOD.**
- II. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE MAY BECOME THUS ACQUAINTED.**
- III. WHAT ARE ITS CONSEQUENCES.**

**I.** The term acquaintance means something more than the common degree of knowledge of an individual’s character. You often hear it remarked, “I cannot say that I am *acquainted* with him; I barely know him.” Acquaintance, therefore, implies a more extensive and thorough knowledge.

The degree of our acquaintance with any individual will depend much upon our means of knowledge. Our means of knowing him may be only hearsay. This can never give us a real acquaintance with him. We might have a certain knowledge of some persons from reading their history. One might know much of Washington by reading all the published histories of him; but this would not be the kind of knowledge usually called acquaintance. It is plain that there is a much higher and more perfect kind of knowledge than this. A man who should only read a history of the battle of Waterloo would not get such a knowledge of it as one might by being in the scene itself. The latter might be in circumstances to know all about it.

We may also have some knowledge of others by their works. We may examine what they have done or have written. Thus we may know much of God from His works. His works of creation reveal Him; the course of His providence also; and the pages of His word. All these conspire to reveal to us God. But after all, none of these amount to as much as the text seems to imply in being acquainted with God.



We may also have knowledge of another's character arising from familiar, protracted, personal intercourse. If this comprise also a deep sympathy with his plans and purposes, it gives us the best possible opportunities for becoming thoroughly acquainted. And this is what is usually meant by acquaintance. When you ask me if I am acquainted with a particular individual, you want to know if I understand his character thoroughly. This is always understood to be the meaning of the language.

Thus it is often said — “I am too well acquainted with such a man to believe that he has done a mean action, or that he can do one.” We can, any of us doubtless, say of some persons, “I am so well acquainted with him that I cannot easily believe anything bad of him;” and of others we could say — “I cannot believe anything good of them — certainly except on very strong evidence.” Such is the result of real acquaintance.

So in the case alluded to in our text. The speaker assumes that Job knows something about God; but urges him to know more — very much more. He does not I think assume that Job is now a good man. He probably regarded him as self-deceived, and hence urges him to acquaint himself really with God.

## II. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS OF BEING THUS ACQUAINTED WITH GOD?

The two first conditions that I shall name are always presupposed, and need no comment. They are

1. The requisite powers of intelligent, moral agency.
2. Light; that is the means of knowledge or instruction. But,
3. It is also an essential condition that *we lay aside prejudice*. Prejudice is pre-judgment, and such a pre-judgment as shuts out conflicting evidence. Now we shall never know God till we lay this aside. Indeed we never can depend on having a correct knowledge of any subject, or of any person's character unless we lay aside all prejudice respecting that person or character, and hold our minds entirely open to all the truth which it may be

possible for us to attain. Nothing can be more certain, nothing need be more obvious than this.

Many persons seem to overlook the fact that men are ever prejudiced against God. They could not possibly make a grater mistake than this. In fact, there is more prejudice against God than against all other beings in the universe. Men are so prejudiced against God that they will not form any right views of His character. I do not mean by this that their feelings are violently hostile against God, so that they are conscious of active hatred at all times; this is not necessary to the existence of prejudice, nor is this as some suppose implied in prejudice. It is rather a fruit of strong prejudice than a part of it, or a cause of it.

Prejudice, as already shown, is a shutting of the mind against evidence. It supposes the mind to be made up, or at least to be strongly inclined to a chosen opinion — that it does not lie open to conflicting light and evidence.

Now it is remarkable to see how strong this prejudice against God often becomes. Of course it demands a great knowledge of human nature and much sound philosophy to know how to subvert and remove this prejudice against God. I do not mean to imply that it can ever be removed without the Spirit of God; but since human means must be employed, it is essential that they be wisely chosen and applied.

The grand secret of ministerial usefulness lies in understanding these prejudices and in knowing how to subvert them. No man can hope to be useful in converting sinners without this skill. He can do nothing to purpose unless he assumes that this prejudice exists and sets himself to resist and subdue it.

All sinners have this prejudice against God; else they would at once learn His character and love it. There is no intrinsic difficulty in knowing God. He has manifested himself abundantly, and now it only remains that we open our eyes candidly, and throw open our hearts to embrace all that is good, and every sinner might become acquainted with God at once — to the everlasting peace and blessedness of his soul.

**4.** Another indispensable condition is that *we give up all self-will on every subject*. Until one is prepared to give up all self-will on every subject, he

certainly cannot become acquainted with God. How can he know God unless his heart comes into sympathy with God, and enters thoroughly and heartily into His character and plans? Now this sympathy of the soul with God can never exist till we give up our self-will on all points. For self-will is always hostile to God's will. God says to every one of His creatures — "Give me your heart," or which is the same thing, "Yield up your will to Mine." Self-will resists and rebels, and hence can have no sympathy with God; and consequently cannot really become acquainted with Him. Nothing can be real acquaintance with God which falls short of entering into His experience, and of tasting the deep joys of His benevolent heart. Plainly, for this purpose, self-will must be brought under.

**5.** *We must be willing to know God as he is.* Men generally overlook that fact that they are unwilling to know God as He is — a fact, too important surely to be overlooked! They are ready enough to form some conceptions of God; but in this they seek to form such as will please themselves — not such as are just and according to truth.

Just look at the idol gods which men have framed for themselves; some in the state of eternal inaction; some are monsters and patrons of vice; some are mean and all are wicked. Now are these the legitimate conceptions of God, framed by the enlightened human mind? Infinitely far from it. No man can read the records of idolatry without seeing that men have made themselves believe in just such gods as please themselves.

Or as another example of this truth, look at the god of the Universalists; have they come to the Bible to learn God as He is there revealed? So far is this from being true that they find many things in the Bible which they must construe and wrest from their obvious meaning to suit themselves, or they will say — "God is worse than the devil?" They come to the Bible, not to *find* its meaning, but to *make* it.

**6.** Another condition of becoming acquainted with God is a really honest desire to become acquainted with Him thoroughly.

Did you never see persons reluctant to become acquainted with each other? I opened a book a few days since and I was struck with the first remark I saw. I thought it remarkably just — "Never introduce persons to

each other till you see that it will be agreeable to both parties to be introduced.”

I have sometimes been introduced to persons who were any thing but pleased to be introduced to me. In various situations — perhaps when traveling, I have been introduced to wicked men who looked and seemed as if an electric stream was coursing up and down their bodies — they were so evidently troubled and uneasy in their condition.

Somewhat so of wicked men in relation to God. They do not like to be introduced to Him. They know too well that they have reason to be afraid of Him. If you knew you had injured a man, you would not wish to know any more about him than you could well help. You would not choose to come any nearer to him. Thus sinners know they do not wish to meet God and have near personal interviews with Him. They do not want to become personally acquainted with God.

Right over against this, we sometimes feel exceedingly anxious to become acquainted with particular individuals. I have heard of persons whom I would go to Europe to see, and should not shrink from the cost and toil of a voyage across the Atlantic for this purpose. I recollect especially that soon after my conversion there was one man whom I exceedingly desired to see and know. I wanted to lay open my whole heart to him and seek his counsel and aid in my religious course. My heart burned with desire to make his acquaintance.

Thus we must have an ardent, burning thirst for the knowledge of God, as a condition of attaining it. We must not be satisfied with an outward, distant knowledge of God; but must long to know Him as thoroughly as is possible for mortals in the flesh. When we come into this state we shall begin to know God indeed, and not before.

Another condition is the giving up of all selfishness and of the self-seeking spirit. This is most essential to success. All selfish ends must be abandoned. If we are bent on sustaining our own interests, we certainly cannot know God.

I have recently been very much struck with hearing an individual relate his own Christian experience. His case showed how truth seemed crowding its way into his mind, and how time after time its entrance was resisted and

prevented by his selfishness. It seemed for a long time impossible for him to know God, and the reason was nothing else than this — selfishness was deeply rooted in his heart, and while there, the truth concerning God could get no admission. Sometimes, he came almost up to the very gate which, once opened, would introduce him to God; then his bounding heart would say, “Now I shall know God, and I shall be a great man — a distinguished Christian” — and lo, down he goes again — farther from God than ever. So time after time he was thrown all aback by such developments of selfishness and self-seeking.

Now it is a matter of the greatest importance especially for ministers, to philosophize justly on this subject, and to trace all events of this sort to their legitimate causes. The subject is deep and requires profound and searching investigation.

Selfishness takes on so many forms and is so subtle that many persons entirely fail to detect its workings. Hence, impeded by this fatal hindrance — they are never able to come to the knowledge of God.

Again, self-knowledge is indispensable. There is such a thing as self-penetration. This thing must exist in some good degree, or no man can know God thoroughly. Without possessing self-knowledge, one may set about to find God, but with all his searching he will fail because he does not know himself. He will be likely to suppose that his own heart is in a state acceptable to God and adapted to search out God, and yet in this be utterly mistaken. Hence he can get, at the utmost, only little fragments of divine knowledge.

I said that the mind must have a disposition to know God. This must be an *intense* disposition — else it will not overcome the obstacles. The Bible requires men to *agonize* for spiritual blessings — to *search*, as for hid treasures. The mind must set itself to seek God with a most intense and agonizing earnestness.

It would be easy to show that this is not an arbitrary fact, but is thoroughly philosophical.

It is also fully scriptural. God has said — “Then shall ye seek and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.” This is a state of mind well expressed by Paul when he said, “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.”

Now everyone who would become acquainted with God must do thus. He must press on most earnestly after a full and perfect knowledge of God. The text enjoins upon us to get this knowledge of God. for nothing less than this intimate and special knowledge of God is meant by *acquaintance*. It is such a knowledge as will give peace of mind and that blessedness which is the birthright of God’s children.

Another thing implied is *confidence in God*. Many suppose that if they have this confidence, they have already that acquaintance with God of which the text speaks. But this does not follow of course. Persons may have some degree of confidence in God for a long time without arriving at a thorough personal acquaintance with God. Confidence is an indispensable condition of this acquaintance, for many reasons. Unless men have confidence, they will not try God so as to become acquainted with Him. Having such confidence they get hold of some promise and try Him. Did you never do this? When oppressed with some want have you remembered that God has said — “Bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse and *prove* Me now herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing.” Now this is the way to know God.

Another condition of becoming thoroughly acquainted with God is attaining that experience which results from thorough confidence in God. The Lord had given us certain promises and the condition of their fulfilment is that we really believe them. If we do this, we shall experience their fulfilment. Let a man in circumstances of extreme trial throw himself upon the promise of God; he will find God faithful. Then he will learn something new and precious about God.

Very much of our trials and temptations here are designed to work out for us this experience of God’s power, presence and willingness to bless. Thus we come to learn many things in God’s character. For example, God has promised that on certain conditions He will reveal Himself to our souls. If we fulfill the conditions He will fulfill the promise, and we shall learn by

our experience that God hears prayer. Such knowledge is of immense value in bringing us to become acquainted with God.

Another condition is that we have confidence to pass through trials. Without this we shall surely fail under trial; we shall let go our confidence in God and learn nothing by our trials but our own weakness. Trials often work out the speedy ruin of men because they learn by them only to distrust God; they stagger through unbelief and fall sadly from their steadfastness; they shrink from meeting the conditions and then throw the blame on God for not fulfilling them. Perhaps they say — “I did trust in God, and I am overcome after all.” But that is a *lie*. There can be no greater lie than that. The Bible shows that there never was and never can be such a case as a man’s really trusting God and yet failing because God does not fulfill His word. With real faith, you might walk through the fiery furnace and not be singed in its fires. Those three holy men believed. “Our God,” say they, “whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace; and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” So if Daniel had lost his faith, the lions would have eaten him up before he had fallen to the bottom of their den. Daniel knew where he was, and in whom he had believed. He knew his danger well, and his refuge too. Hence when thrown into this den, he was calm as if he had been safely sitting in the royal palace.

But could his accusers stand where he stood and pass unscathed through such trials as his? No! They had no faith — no God for their refuge.

Another condition is that God should make special manifestations of Himself to the soul. God has promised thus to manifest Himself on certain conditions. By performing these conditions, we may obtain those manifestations; God will reveal Himself personally, and will show us great and wondrous thing of Himself. This is a most precious, blessed truth, and in view of it, we may well be exhorted to acquaint ourselves with God. Even Job in that dark dispensation without a letter of written revelation might be exhorted thus to acquaint himself with his Maker.

Still another condition is intimacy of communion with God. I may live for a long time in the same neighborhood or house with a man and yet never become acquainted with him. I may know his name and many things about him, and yet never become thoroughly acquainted with him. For real

acquaintance, it is essential that we have intimate communion. Some men may repel us from such communion however much we desire it; so that we cannot become really acquainted with them.

But God is always ready to hold communion with us. No fault, or reserve on His part can ever prevent our gaining acquaintance with Him. Men may shut us out of their company, or at least from their sympathies; but God has no such repulsiveness about Him. He is so meek and lowly that He is not above communing with a child even in the humblest condition possible on earth. Though He be the High and Lofty One that inhabits eternity, He yet condescends with infinite grace to dwell with the humble and contrite spirit. He knows nothing about the mere earthly distinction of the noble and the low; all are alike infinitely below Him. The only distinction recognized before Him is that between the proud and the humble. To the latter, He is ever open and most easy of access.

The thing now which we all need in order to become acquainted with God is an intimate personal communion. In order to know any person thoroughly we need to *get into his heart*. So you often express yourself. You say of a man, now I have got into his heart — now I really know him and feel myself acquainted with him. I see him through.

So with God. You need such an intimate communion with Him that you really enter into His deepest sympathies and know His real heart. Most blessed knowledge!

Having shown what is meant and what is implied in being acquainted with God, I come now to speak,

### III. OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR ACQUAINTING OURSELVES WITH GOD

Under this head I can only give an outline of the principal points. I can do no more than to mention several blessings that will certainly accrue to those who acquaint themselves with God.

**1.** Peace of mind. Job was at this time in great trouble of mind. His three friends were anxious that God should pass before him in such a manner



that he could not fail of apprehending God's true character. They justly supposed that peace of mind would be the natural result of his becoming truly acquainted with God.

Peace of mind always does and always must result from the harmonious and right action of all the powers of the mind. When we feel as God feels — live as He lives; and when our whole souls harmonize with His soul in the spirit and developments of benevolence, then we cannot possibly fail of having perfect peace of mind.

Peace of mind stands opposed to all anxiety, and must result from the mind's finding in God all that itself needs. Let all the demands of its being be entirely met, and it can ask no more. Let it be distinctly seen and realized that these demands of our being are met in God, and peace of mind must follow.

Now it is a most blessed truth that when the restless mind of man comes to be acquainted with God, it finds in Him everything it can need. Every want is fully and infinitely well supplied. When the mind realizes this, as it will when it comes to know God, it settles down into a state of calm repose in God which no restless anxieties can ever disturb.

One of the demands of our being is that others shall have the demands of their being met; in other words, that we shall have not our own wants only supplied, but shall know that the whole universe also have their wants supplied in God. In order to our perfect peace, we need to see that all other beings have in God all they can ask or wish; that no want can possibly exist which does not find its adequate supply in the great Father of all. Now as the soul comes to know God more and more, it sees with increasing clearness and certainty that God's goodness, wisdom, justice and power are just what they should be to secure the highest possible degree of happiness and blessedness to the whole sentient universe, so that if misery exists it must always be the creature's own fault.

When we come to understand this thoroughly and to see that God's providence is perfect and reaches to all events — marks the falling of the sparrow and counts the hairs on our head; when we see that God cannot fail of being infinitely faithful, kind and wise — that He cannot possibly mistake in anything whatever; when these truths become fully settled in

our mind and we rest on them as upon changeless, eternal realities, then all is peace. It cannot be otherwise.

But this state of mind toward God never can exist until we get more knowledge of Him than mere hearsay. We must have personal experience and personal acquaintance in respect to God.

Paul's words were full of meaning when he said — "I know in whom I have believed." Did you ever consider how much he meant in these words? Surely much more than many others would mean by the same language. It should be considered that Paul had been caught up to the third heavens — had heard unutterable things — had seen the Lord Jesus Christ Himself — had passed through many scenes of sore and various trials — and in all had enjoyed varied and manifold experience of God and of Christ.

Hence this language from him must have been full of meaning. "I know Him" — says he — "I know Him;" I have seen Him — I have had a long and precious experience of His lovingkindness and faithfulness; I know Him; and if all the devils in hell should tell me that Christ would not keep me, *I know He would*.

So we often see Christians who seem to know Christ so well that temptations seem to have lost their power upon their hearts. Let the temptation be ever so subtle, or so fierce, they do not slide or quake. They mildly say, I know Him whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.

Another good accruing to those who acquaint themselves with God is that their *faith becomes confirmed*. As they become acquainted with God they find He bears acquaintance. The more they see of Him, the more their confidence in His character rises.

Now in order to be at peace and to stand evermore in the evil day, Christians need to have their faith confirmed. They need to be assured that Jehovah is their friend, and to have such an acquaintance with Him as shall make this truth a substantial reality.

So we sometimes come to have confidence in each other, when we become intimately acquainted, and this acquaintance reveals only substantial excellencies of character. When really worthy individuals are introduced to

us, the more we become acquainted with them, the more we trust them. Of such we say — they bear acquaintance well. Of others we say the opposite — they do not bear acquaintance well. The more we know of them, the less we trust them. The former class are fast friends. We can confide in them under all possible circumstances.

Now God is a being who bears acquaintance perfectly. The more we shall know of Him, the more clearly we shall see that in Him there is no frailty — no infirmity — no defect.

Now I am well aware that in all Christian communities this is admitted in theory, but I also know that it is not held in fact. It is one thing to admit it in theory, and quite another thing for the heart to rest in it as a living, abiding reality. It is quite another thing for the mind to become so acquainted with God so as to triumph in Him under all possible circumstances.

Another result is *confirmed love*. The Bible speaks of our “being root and grounded in love.” There is a great deal of meaning in this expression. It develops most clearly the great truth that love is the basis of the Christian’s character. In love it rests as its foundation, or to change the figure — in love it takes root and grows.

But of how few can this be said! The more I become acquainted with Christians, the more I am struck with their weakness in love. Their religion is not rooted and grounded in love. Many professed Christians are, to say the least, much of their time away from the spirit of love. There is a want of that universal love to God and man which gives to religion an unction, and makes it grateful both to God and man. If they had this unction of love at their first conversion, they seem to lose it and become legal. Then some of the forms of religious duty remain and some of the forms of humanity and human sympathy; but the spirit of genuine love is lacking. It is infinitely important to be rooted and grounded in love. The more you become acquainted with God, the more you will see that love is the only principle worthy of being regarded as the rule of life. This only is living like God, and this only is the spirit and life of real excellence.

Another result of becoming acquainted with God is *a disposition to obey God in all our life*; a disposition to conform the whole life to God’s will. It

is a great thing to obey God under all circumstances, and a great thing to have one's mind thoroughly settled in this supreme law of action.

This will result from becoming really acquainted with God. It will become more and more easy and natural as the mind becomes more and more acquainted with God; for the mind becomes thus more and more confiding, and if it cannot see, it will still assume that God is and must be wise.

Another result of becoming acquainted with God is *fruitfulness*. The Bible represents that our Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. But multitudes of professed Christians are remarkable for nothing so much as for their barrenness in the fruits of piety. With them, it seems to be a perpetual drought. They seem like Mount Gilboa on which no dew or rain descend. Of course, no fruits are borne to the praise of God. Of earthly seasons some are fruitful and some are barren; but with these professed Christians, all seasons and months are alike barren. This must be ascribed to their want of personal acquaintance with God. It would not be possible for them to be acquainted with God, and yet be so barren.

Another result would be *moral courage*. Unbelief is always the secret of moral cowardice. Persons who have not much faith are forever stumbling on the point of obeying God. They dare not trust God to take care of them in the path of straight forward obedience. They dare not face public sentiment — as if they feared it would ruin them, despite of the promises of God in their behalf. They are afraid of the censures of the church or of the world, their faith in God being so weak, and their apprehensions of God being so dim that they practically fear man more than God. Hence they cringe, shuffle, dodge, evade, shrink away from self-denying duty, afraid to take a simple-minded honest course, and trust God to bear them safely, nay triumphantly through.

Faith always cures this state of mind. It strikes at once at its very root.

See what a remarkable illustration of this we have in the case of the apostles. Before the Spirit of God was shed down upon them, they were timid. Peter was afraid of a servant girl, and they all forsook their Master and fled before a small band of armed men. They had nothing more at best than the courage of children. They needed a mighty change, and God provided means to produce it.

Christ had told them it was necessary that He should go away and that He should send the Comforter to teach them the (divine) things of Christ. He did so. He went up Himself to heaven, and thence sent down the Comforter upon them. Then, O how changed! How full of moral courage! At once they become moral heroes. No dangers can daunt them. The same men who quailed before power and authority but a few days before are now fearless. The awful Sanhedrim no longer inspires terror. "We ought," say they, "to obey God rather than men." "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye."

Now this is always the result of becoming acquainted with God. Where you see a professor of religion who is a moral coward, you see one who does not know much about God.

I have been struck with this in seeing the moral cowardice of many ministers. I think I have seen not a few ministers more afraid of the Presbytery than a Roman Catholic would be of the Pope. Such men I have seen whose first and last question pending a case of duty, is — what will my Presbytery think of me? O, how disgraceful — how dishonoring to the Christian name — that a minister of the gospel should think so! O, were they only once filled with the Spirit of God, it would put another soul within them. Before the apostles were filled with the Spirit they might have quailed before the Sanhedrim; but afterwards, the Sanhedrim — not they — were confounded. The Sanhedrim were confounded with the boldness of those unlearned men — fishermen and publicans of Galilee. O to be afraid of men — they are the last things in the universe to be afraid of! As if God were not infinitely greater and mightier than men! Surely those who quail before men rather than before God must be very far from any just acquaintance with Him.

Another result of knowing God will be *great searching of heart*.

I have often been struck to see how it happens that many persons under the influence of a false philosophy, have taken a false view of this subject. This is a point which it seems to me of great importance that we should understand correctly.

Take the case of Isaiah as given in chap. 6, when God made fresh and most vivid manifestations of His glory before him. He then came to know God

more fully by far than ever before; and it searched him through and through. Suddenly he cries out, “Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.” Job also, when the Almighty came down to talk with him, cried out — “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Now all this class of passages have an important meaning. It is very important that we understand what they do teach and that we avoid ascribing to them a sense which does not belong to them.

In the case of Isaiah, we are not to suppose that he was sinning at the moment when God thus revealed Himself. He did not cry out — “Woe is me — I am a man of unclean lips” — because he was then in rebellion against God. It is by no means either natural or necessary to suppose this. The same may be said of the case of Job, and of all other cases of the same sort. This subject might be understood if persons would take pains to do so. Experience would teach us much, very much about it. How common a thing it is for Christians to stand perfectly confounded when some new views of God’s law and character flash upon the soul. They then cry out — “I have seen an end of all perfection, for Thy commandment is exceeding broad.”

What in such cases is the nature and what the results of this new revelation? Is it this, “I am now sinning; I see as I never did before that my present state is utterly wrong before God?” No; but the mind sees a vastness — a breadth in the law and in God’s claims which it had not seen before and sees that more is implied than had been before supposed, in being obedient. And so it will be to all eternity. More and still more will be seen of the breadth and glory of the divine law and character.

Now in order to understand such a case as is that of Isaiah or of Job, we need to consider that we are always inclined to judge our past state and conduct by our present light. I have often in my own experience found that when drawn very near to God, I had such new and enlarged views of scripture passages that I felt sure I had never understood them before, It has really seemed sometimes as if I had never known God before. It was then perfectly natural if I judged all the past by my present views of God

and of His law that I should cry out — all is rottenness. In such situations I have felt almost irresistibly impelled to do so.

In reference to this state of mind I often think of Mrs. Pres. Edwards. She represents herself as sometimes feeling such an attraction towards the divine character that it really seemed as if she should go right up, body and soul together. On such occasions she was wont to cry out — “All my past life is rottenness.” Yet this was not because she then saw that her present state of mind was entirely sinful, but she saw a higher standard than she had ever seen before, and comparing her past life with this new and enlarged standard she saw its utter deficiency. If in these states of holy attraction towards God she deemed herself to be actually sinning, the explanation of her mistake is doubtless this, that she estimated her past obligation by her present light.

On this point it should be well considered that our former life is not to be judged by our present light. To do so would be to subvert one of the great principles of God’s moral government: viz: that guilt is always to be estimated by *existing* light — not by light attained afterwards but not possessed then; not by light enjoyed by other beings yet not by ourselves. Suppose we should go back to the times when all men and all ministers with the rest drank alcohol; and should judge the men of those times by our present light, we should inevitably condemn the whole church and all the good men of that day. On the same principle future generations may look back upon us and condemn us and all other good men who have lived since the times of the apostles; for their standard we hope and presume will be in some respects more elevated than ours, and their light greater on some moral questions. Consequently, if they may judge other men of other ages by their own light they will pass a most sweeping sentence of condemnation upon all past ages of the race. A principle which leads to such results must be radically false.

The nearer a man gets to God, the more clearly he sees that his past life is objectively wrong, although it may have been subjectively right. It seems important to make this distinction which I have now stated. An act may be said to be objectively wrong when it is wrong in itself considered, or in its relations to law; but the same act may be subjectively right, in reference to the state of mind of the subject or agent who puts forth the act — because

with his light he did the best he could do, and his motives are acceptable in the sight of God. Acting according to the best light he has, his acts are subjectively right, and yet in view of the real spirit of the law, they are objectively wrong. Let this distinction be carefully made.

Now when a man becomes more enlightened by revelations from God than he has been, he will look back upon his past life and cry out — “What an infinite wretch I have been — how far my whole life falls short of meeting the spirit of God’s pure and perfect law” — while perhaps with even all this increased light he does not see that his former intentions were wrong. Subjectively considered, therefore, his heart was right before, but objectively considered, his conduct seems egregiously wrong.

Another result of knowing God will be *great humiliation*. As men become thoroughly acquainted with God, they will see more and more of His excellence, and of course will realize more and more deeply the infinite wrong of sin against such a God. Hence they will feel an irrepressible inclination to humble themselves before Him, and pour out their souls with great and bitter weeping at His feet. You are aware that such is the result among earthly friends. If you have wronged a good friend of yours, and if your growing acquaintance with him reveals more and more of his excellent qualities, you will see more and more of the cruel wrong of your conduct and will seek opportunities to humble yourself before him and pour out your full confessions as if you never could confess enough.

So with the soul before God. As you remember more and more your past sins, and see yet more of God’s goodness, you will love to humble yourself more and more deeply at His feet.

In reading the life of Pres. Edwards, I have been struck with the recurrence of these scenes in his experience. Whenever he was drawn very near to God, his very soul seemed to burst forth in loud weeping and convulsive sobbing, pouring out his soul before God in the deepest humiliation. This was only the natural result of becoming more acquainted with God. In my own experience, I have found that when I have had new views of God I have felt that I must get down infinitely low before Him. Nothing less could satisfy the demands of my own mind.



This must be the natural result of seeing Christ in heaven. Did you never think how, when you get to heaven you will want to spend months in confessing, pouring out your soul in the deepest humiliation — as if you never could get low enough, or say enough to magnify His infinite grace, and strip yourself of all glory to give it all to Him? How can our eyes look on the pure and lovely Jesus without being filled with these self-abasing thoughts of ourselves and thoughts of honor and glory to Him?

Another result will be *great wrestling with God*. As we become acquainted with God, we shall become emboldened to ask of Him great things. We shall then understand what it is to “come with boldness” to a mercy seat. We shall learn that God has a great heart, and is not displeased if we come and wrestle with Him with great and overpowering importunity.

When we have become thoroughly acquainted with God, the mind will fasten upon some great things for His kingdom — not for ourselves — and we shall feel that we are authorized, and invited to come with boldness and with wrestling importunity and say with Jacob — “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.” We know it is Christ with whom we plead, and we feel that we may venture on the most urgent importunity. It is to us as if we were pleading before some long tried and proved earthly friend.

Again, there will result a great use of the promises of God.

To one who has no faith, the promises lie in the Bible as unused as if they were never made for use. They are in fact of no more avail to such a person than if they were made for angels and not at all applicable to sinning mortals. But as you become acquainted with God, you see that these promises are given to be used, and you *feel* that they are indeed your own.

Father Carpenter used often to cry out — “Lord, what are the promises good for, unless they are to be kept?” It was with him a living reality that God had given us these exceeding great and precious promises for our use, and that we should keep them bright as it were by constant use, and never let them get rusty. They were given us to *live* upon and to *work* upon, and if we mean to live or to work we must use them.

Another result will be *great and constant sympathy with God in all His purposes and doings*. As we know God more, we shall be charmed more and more with His plans and ways and shall feel ourselves more and more

identified with all His interests. This will operate powerfully to transform us into His glorious image.

As another result, we may name, *great transparency of character*. There will be an openness of soul before God — a continual holding of the heart out for constant inspection, a longing to have God’s own eye search us continually. “Let Thine eye search me” — we shall say — “show me all in me that is displeasing to Thee.”

Finally, there will result a *full assurance of faith and hope*. This cannot but result from becoming thoroughly and personally acquainted with God. Faith will become assurance; for as we come to know more of God, we shall see that He is infinitely worthy of being trusted and believed most perfectly. The assurance therefore is a natural result of our acquaintance with God.

So with hope. The expectation of promised good, like faith, must become strong and assured just in proportion as we thoroughly acquaint ourselves with God. There is no other valid foundation for assured faith and hope.

Whatever men may call these states of mind, and whatever relations they may suppose them to bear to sanctification or to consecration, it is quite certain that they can result only from becoming deeply and personally acquainted with God and from devoting the whole powers of the soul to Him. They naturally result from knowing God in the full and deep sense of personal acquaintance and they can have no other foundation.

## REMARKS

**1.** There is and can be no real comfort without acquaintance with God. The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest. They know not what it is to be free from cares and troubles, and how should they? Why should they not be restless, and tossed forever without solid peace for they have not found anything which can satisfy them, and what is to them more distressing still, they never can with all their searching unless they will seek it in God. Traverse the world up and down as they will, they never can find, away from God, the happiness and peace they need.

**2.** With this subject before you, you may see why the Holy Spirit is called “The Comforter.” The name is pertinent because it is His office to reveal God to the mind, and thus comfort the hearts of His people. Who has not been struck to see how, when Jesus had ascended to heaven, the Spirit came and revealed a divine Jesus, taking of the things of Christ and showing to them His higher glories. Then they knew Christ as they had never known Him before.

So with all Christians who live in the Spirit. The Comforter brings real comfort to their souls — just what their souls need. Beloved, you know this by an experience which the world cannot give.

**3.** All other knowledge of God except this which the Holy Ghost reveals, only agonizes the mind. It serves only to fill the mind with fear and dread; but never leads the soul to trust God as its own precious Father. It is most obvious that nothing but that which promotes faith and trust in God can ever afford real comfort.

**4.** The mass of Christians seem to know only just enough of God to keep them always worried and always in trouble. They know enough of God to understand His holiness and hatred of sin; enough to add pungency and power to the rebukes of their own consciences; but not enough to find through grace victory over their sins and abiding peace with God through Jesus Christ their Lord. Hence they seem in many respects to be even worse off than careless sinners who have almost no knowledge of God at all. For the latter, if they find no peace with God, do not find much disturbance of their dreams from that quarter, at least for a season.

**5.** A selfish mind cannot be properly acquainted with God. Experience seems to show that where selfishness takes on certain peculiar forms, it effectually precludes all right knowledge of God. Ambition and avarice seem to be its worst and most fatal forms. Ambition — O what a curse to the soul! If the ambitious man sets about seeking his own salvation, his aim is to make himself great or to enhance his reputation. Seeking it with such a motive, God will of course repel his proud heart away from His own mercy-seat. If the ambitious man seeks more piety — supposing him to be a Christian — still he is prone to let his ambition work in even here, and his object will be to gain distinction. Oh, how such a soul will be blighted by its own selfishness!

No better is the case of the avaricious man. His selfishness is wont to assume such power as utterly to exclude all right knowledge of God. See the case of Judas. He could attend the personal preaching of Christ for three years, and yet never have so much as the crust of his selfishness broken through. Alas, Judas was a thief and carried the bag. His heart was wholly in that bag, and the thought of making something for himself was ever present, and no matter how sacred his employment, nothing could be so sacred as to save it from being perverted by his sordid heart. If he had been building a meeting house, he would contrive if he could to make some speculation out of it. Ask such a man now to do something for the Institution here and he would try to make it turn in some way to his own personal advantage. Self, you may be sure, will somehow be cared for — else what good will his life do him? His reigning disposition is — “I might as well not live as live and get no good to myself.”

Now where these and similar forms of selfishness exist, it seems utterly impossible that men should become acquainted with God. The mighty currents of their heart drift them forever away from God and they cannot serve God and Mammon if they try ever so earnestly. If they would give up their selfishness — forsake their idol Mammon, they might then seek God and find Him when they should seek Him with all their heart.

**6.** Sinners are often ashamed to become acquainted with God. Men who would deem it their highest honor to be introduced to a President, are actually ashamed to be introduced to God. They would be ashamed to have it understood that they are His friends and value His acquaintance and friendship. O how they would fain cast contempt on the Infinite God! They know that no mortal man would bear such insults as they heap on Him. Is it strange that Christ should disown them in the awful day when He comes in all the glory of His Father and with His holy angels?

**7.** It really seems as if the great mass of professed Christians had no expectation of becoming acquainted with God. They seem not to consider that even in this world they may form as absolute an acquaintance with God as they can in heaven. They seem not to appreciate the value of those exceeding great and precious promises which assure us that the Spirit will reveal to us both Christ and the Father. All these rich provisions of the

gospel for revealing the knowledge of God to man are to them as if they were not. Alas that they should know so little of their own mercies!

**8.** This is an infinitely dangerous state, and no professed Christian ought to rest in it one moment. Even if you are a real Christian your course is full of peril if you do not acquaint yourself with God. You will not trust Him; you cannot have the security which His presence and His friendship afford.

**9.** A sensual state of mind is infinitely perilous. It is so especially because it is utterly repugnant to your becoming acquainted with God. You cannot grow in anything good or great if you indulge in a sensual state of mind.

**10.** All who are really acquainted with God will have an earnest longing to see others made acquainted with Him. They know how blessed the knowledge is, and hence they cannot fail to desire that others too should know and enjoy this blessedness.

Beloved, have you this proof that you know God? Does your soul long to see all others enlightened into all the riches of this divine knowledge?

**11.** Finally the text exhorts us to become acquainted with God *now*. How reasonable and cogent is this exhortation! It does seem to me that persons must be infatuated who can pursue other knowledge eagerly, and yet be remiss in seeking the knowledge of God. I cannot but wonder that the persons now before me who are conscious of being strangers to God, or at least destitute of an intimate acquaintance with God, do not at once resolve — “I will know God. I must search for this knowledge more than for hid treasures. I am ready to forego all other knowledge rather than fail of this. All other acquisitions of any sort whatever shall be held as of no account compared with this. O let my soul know God!”

Christian, have you this burning thirst for divine knowledge? Does your very soul cry out within you as if indeed nothing else could by any means satisfy you? Then you need not fear. God will reveal Himself to you in His richest glories.

# SUBSTITUTION

*“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*

The present occasion in which a large number of youth are about to unite with our church, together with the circumstance that many are still inquiring the way of salvation, seems to render the subject presented by this passage peculiarly appropriate for this day. In treating the subject here presented, I shall,

- I. SHOW WHAT IS INTENDED BY CHRIST’S BEING “MADE SIN FOR US.”**
- II. SHOW FOR WHOM HE IS MADE SIN.**
- III. WHY HE WAS MADE SIN FOR US.**
- IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY “BEING MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.”**

You will see at once that the subject relates to Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith, and of course that it presents Him in His most interesting attitudes and relations to mankind.

## I. WE ARE FIRST TO INQUIRE WHAT IS MEANT BY CHRIST’S BEING MADE SIN FOR US?

It is plain that the language cannot be understood literally. It cannot mean that God made Jesus Christ actually a sinner, or made Him real sin — for the latter is physically, and the former morally impossible. But the meaning is that Christ was made to stand as the representative of sin and of sinners. The apostle uses very extraordinary language, and it would seem from it that he conceived of Christ as standing before God in a sense as the embodiment or impersonation of sin. God looked upon Him in the scenes of His atoning death, as if all the sins of our race were in Him, and He were Himself the sum total of them all. Against this sin, thus

embodied, or better, represented, in Christ, God revealed His high and awful displeasure, so as to show the universe how He regards sin.

The language of the apostle here is very striking. God hath made Him sin, not “*to be sin*,” as in our translation, but better according to the original, “made Him *sin* for us, who knew no sin.” The obvious meaning is that Christ was treated as a sinner. This was for governmental purposes, and as a governmental transaction. He stood in the place of sinners, and God dealt with Him accordingly. He consented freely to take this position, and of course was treated as if He were Himself the embodiment of all the sins of our world.

## II. WE NEXT INQUIRE — FOR WHOM WAS CHRIST MADE SIN?

The Bible gives us the only and the true answer. “He tasted death for every man.” “And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world*.” It is clear therefore that Christ stood governmentally as the representative before God of the whole race. No further governmental provision would have been needed in order to save the whole race.

Again, it should be considered that Christ was made sin in the sense explained, for man alone, and for no other beings but man. The Bible teaches that the work of Christ as a system of salvation, is restricted to our race in its application. “There is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” Between *God and men*, you observe; not between God and angels. So in Hebrews 2, Paul says —

“For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels — or better as in the margin — He did not take hold of angels — etc., to save them, but He did take hold of the seed of Abraham.”

Christ made no attempt to save lost angels, but lost men He did seize hold of, to save. You observe that the apostle says — “He took hold of the seed of Abraham. From this passage itself we might naturally infer that Christ saves only the lineal descendants of Abraham, but other passages make it certain that this restricted sense cannot be the true one. The phrase

must here be used of all real Christians; for “if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

### III. OUR NEXT INQUIRY IS — WHY WAS CHRIST MADE SIN FOR US?

Why was there need of any atonement? Is God so inexorable and implacable that somebody must die to appease His wrath? Would you represent God as being infinitely cruel?

Now these questions would be asked with great force, if the atonement, rightly understood, did represent God as being implacable in the sense assumed. If it were true that God’s indignation against sin must be quenched in some victim’s blood before He can be pacified, and this for His own sake too, because of His vengeful nature, then would the objections I have mentioned indeed lie with great force against both the atonement and God Himself. But it should be well considered that an atonement for sin by suffering was not necessary on God’s account, but on account of His moral government. It was demanded of God out of regard to the intelligent minds of His universe. He must not set aside the penalty of the law against sin without an atonement, lest a false inference should be drawn, lest it should be supposed that God is reckless of sin, and can permit its commission in His kingdom with impunity. Hence divine wisdom and divine love also must provide against so ruinous an inference. Hence this awful demonstration of God’s abhorrence of sin, and of His holy purpose to punish it, which was exhibited when He caused His own beloved Son to be made sin for us, and to bear our sins in His body on the tree. We see therefore that Christ’s being made sin for us was a naturally necessary condition of our acceptance with God. And this results not from any want of mercy in God Himself, but wholly from His relations to the intelligent beings who are under His moral government. God well knew that He should certainly be misunderstood if He should pardon sin without an atonement. It is in the nature of the case impossible that He should not have been. If therefore, He would forgive sin — if He would arrest the onward march of law and justice towards their dreadful execution; — if He longed to throw wide open His great heart of mercy,



He must first make some terrible demonstration of His utter hostility to sin — must show that He abhorred and would surely punish it. And this was done to perfection in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ.

Now who can not see this necessity for an atonement? Suppose some one of these United States should rebel. Would it not be a vastly dangerous thing to offer universal amnesty with no atonement? Who does not see that it would be the imperative duty of the President and the General Government to make some terrible demonstration of justice that should make every man throughout the Union quail in dread of the penalty of rebellion? Surely everyone can see that that clemency would be by no means wise which should show a general and indiscriminate mercy towards the guilty. Before any mercy could be wisely shown, such a demonstration must be made, as would make all the people of the nation feel that rebellion cannot be tolerated. And if this be true in the government of the United States, and every child can see that it is; then how much more must it be true in the great universe of God? Who can count the worlds of intelligent minds under His sway? Who can tell how far away in the realms of space they lie scattered, or how immense are the hosts that people them? But God's moral government extends over them all, and every eye of all their hosts is on Him. What infinite folly then, for God to set aside the execution of the penalty of His law in such a manner as would virtually annihilate it altogether! To do this would be to doom the intelligent universe to ruin. Who then could trust, or love, or revere their God? Alas, they have lost the evidence that He cares for the good of His creatures. They cannot trust Him to maintain His own law; *there is no longer any God in the universe to be trusted, loved, and obeyed!!* How frightful a result is this!

But we need not fear it. God is too wise and too good to let it occur. When He would prevent it, and yet would pardon sinful men, He made (as was indispensable,) a strong and solemn demonstration of His heart towards sin.

And who must be selected as an atoning victim for this purpose? Shall it be some mighty angel? Oh no; for what could an angel do? How could he endure the wrath of God, standing in the place of all the sin of our race? And still more, I ask, how could any angel's sufferings make such an

impression upon the universe, as would sustain God's throne in proclaiming an amnesty on such grounds? No angel, then, however great or exalted could avail, and God must pass them all by, and select His own Co-equal Son! No being less glorious and less exalted than God's Eternal Son can stand forth as the representative of sin, to receive in His own person such inflictions of divine displeasure as would avail to show the universe most impressively how God regards sin. Now it shall be known throughout all worlds, as far as God Himself is known, that it is in His heart to pardon when He can, and punish when He must.

And mark, how perfectly fitted for His work, in character and relations is our great atoning sacrifice. He is a "lamb without blemish and without spot." He "knew no sin." Hence it could not be said or thought that He suffered on His own account. It would be known at once that a just God did not hide His own face from His beloved Son, for any wrong He had done. All the more impressive therefore must this scene have been for this reason. The great inquiry must run through all the ranks and orders of created intelligences — Wherefore does the spotless Lamb of God suffer? Why does He descend so low, and assume a nature into union with His own, which ranked so infinitely beneath His? What mean these strange things? O, what impressions must have been made throughout all heaven when it was made known that the Son of God came down from the throne of the universe to a mean manger in Bethlehem, to toil and weep in the land of His chosen people, and to die an accursed death on Calvary, that He might stand before divine justice as the embodiment of all earth's sin, and pave the way thus for all earth's sinners to be forgiven! The second person of the Trinity — Himself God, assumes in union with His own, the entire nature of the sinning race, that He may thus save them and raise them to a higher rank than that from which they had fallen. What a work is this!

#### IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY OUR "BEING MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM."

This also cannot be taken in its most strictly literal sense. It cannot be conceived that we should be converted into the intrinsic, essential righteousness of God. The idea of representation obtains in both clauses of

our text. As Christ stood before God to represent the sins of our race, so His pardoned children stand forth to represent the righteousness of God. He stood disowned and forsaken of God, as if He were Himself *our sin*; we stand forgiven and accepted through Him, as if we were God's righteousness. He is treated as a sinner; we for His sake are treated as righteous. Just think of this. What an exchange! Christ was infinitely righteous, but laid aside the relations of a righteous one, and appeared for us as a sinner and was treated accordingly. We were altogether lost in sin, yet we are transferred governmentally from that position before God, and for Christ's sake are treated as if we were righteous. What a wonderful transaction is this! It were easy to show that this were the perfection of philosophy in government to make such a substitution as will save an indefinite amount of suffering, and yet secure most perfectly, regard for the law, obedience to its precepts, and confidence in the great Lawgiver.

## REMARKS

1. We see that Christ was not literally punished instead of the sinner, while yet it is true that He suffered in the sinner's stead. It is one thing to suffer for another, and quite a different thing to be punished for him. Punishment under a righteous government implies guilt, and it is precisely the execution of the penalty of law. Of course it assumes the fact of actual and criminal transgression. It is often objected to the gospel system that it is unjust, because it punishes the innocent for the sake of screening the guilty. This is a mistaken view of the subject. What Christ suffered was not in any proper sense the punishment of sin.
2. Christ suffered for us and was made sin for us *by His own consent*. What! It is sometimes said — does God arbitrarily inflict suffering on the innocent and let the guilty go free? No, not arbitrarily. Jesus Christ was not forced — He consented — most cheerfully consented to bear what need be borne for the sinner's ransom. The principle is the same as when a missionary sacrifices his home, his friends, and his life to do good to the lost heathen. In both cases the sacrifice is voluntary — in both it is made for others' good. Perhaps some of these dear children who are today to unite with the church may yet go to foreign lands, and sacrifice all that man holds most dear to carry the gospel to the heathen. And then shall one rise

up and complain that an innocent one suffers for the guilty — that God compels His innocent people to suffer, that the guilty may be spared and blessed? The truth is, God compels no one to do this. But He does approve the spirit of self-sacrifice for others' good, and has given us a most glorious example of it in giving up His own beloved Son. Jesus has given us a divine example in giving up Himself for suffering and death for our lost race. God knows how to reward such self-sacrifice. We shall ultimately see that whoever shall for Christ's sake lose his own life shall save it eternally.

**3.** Christ's sufferings were not in kind altogether like those of sinners. Not being Himself a sinner, He could not suffer what may be called the natural penalty of sin. He could not experience that state of mind which accompanies sin, the remorse, the shame, the self-condemnation, and the indescribable anguish of self-torture. These natural penalties He could not experience, nor was it at all necessary that He should. The atonement was purely a governmental expedient, demanded only for governmental purposes, and of course should be adapted only to meet those purposes. Viewed in this light it is easy to see that the specific thing needed was to reveal the heart of the great Moral Governor of the universe towards sin, and that this must be done by inflicting in some degree the governmental penalty, that is the penalty which the government had threatened and must inflict for sin.

Now it is plain from the Bible that some of the chief elements of inflicted penalty upon lost sinners are — being driven from God's presence — a consciousness that God hides His face, and expresses His withering disapprobation — a deep conviction that God has withdrawn from them and has left them to the horrors of being abandoned of God. And precisely such, so far as we can ascertain, seems to have been the character of the most awful sufferings of Jesus Christ. When on the cross, He did not cry, O, the agony of such a death — but — “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” And in the dreadful agony of the garden it is plain that physical sufferings bore no part. His chief sufferings therefore throughout were mental, and so far as we can infer from His language and His circumstances, they must have resulted from the withdrawal of His Father's face, from the awful horror of that conviction, My God has forsaken Me, and from the impression of God's dread and withering

frown. For Christ now stood before God as sin, and from sin God must avert His smile, and against it He must reveal His awful frown. *How* the Son of God, spotless in innocence, conscious of perfect rectitude, could have this awful sense of being forsaken, perhaps we may never know, unless perchance we may in the lapse of eternal ages learn it from His own lips. The *fact* we have no ground to call in question. Christ Himself we may suppose, understood the reason and design of His being thus forsaken of the Father, and if so, we must interpret His expression — “My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” not as an inquiry for the reason, but as an outburst of intense agony, as if His soul could scarcely endure the anguish of that strange, and dreadful frown of the Infinite God.

It seems probable that the Father intended to treat the Son when He stood governmentally as the embodiment of sin, in such a way that sinners might infer from it what their own doom must be — without mercy. There is nothing impossible or even improbable in the idea that the sufferings of Christ were substantially of the same nature as the governmental penalty due the sinner. If we suppose a being to be perfectly holy, and hence, of course, abstract the idea of his suffering the natural penalty of sin, such as remorse, shame, self-condemnation; what we have called the governmental penalty only will remain, namely; those inflictions which fall upon the sinner directly from the Lawgiver as expressions of His intense displeasure. Precisely this seems to have been the state of the suffering Son of God, when He said — “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

**4.** We are not to suppose that in degree and amount Christ suffered the same as all the saved would else have suffered in hell. This has sometimes been asserted, but always without proof. Such a substitution of equal sufferings is by no means necessary to the value and efficacy of the atonement; there is no good reason for assuming it, and the assumption certainly detracts from the honor conferred by the atonement upon the wisdom and the love of God.

**5.** It is a strong objection to the idea of equal substitution of sufferings that in such a case, the atonement is no gain at all to the universe. The sinners of our race might just as well have borne the sufferings themselves, as to have Jesus Christ bear them, of the amount is in either case the same; not

to urge also that it is in itself considered a relief to the mind to have the guilty suffer what they deserve, instead of having the innocent suffer it for them, provided nothing is gained on the score of amount.

But while we hold that the sufferings of Christ are not to be considered equal in amount to the suffering saved thereby from being endured, yet let it not be supposed that the sufferings of Jesus Christ were of small amount. Doubtless we are apt to estimate their amount too low. We shall estimate it higher and in all respects more correctly when we come to hear the description from Christ Himself. Who has not often thought that in heaven we shall want to hear the story from the very lips of Him who was slain? O, what a scene, to gather round the Lamb of Calvary, and hear Him describe the agonies of Gethsemane — the awful horrors — the darkness, and the being forsaken of God, which extorted those agonizing cries on Calvary!

No doubt those sufferings were exceedingly great — great beyond the comprehension of any finite mind. We shall readily see the reason why they should be, if we consider that it was the design of God in this transaction to make a deep and solemn public impression that should pervade the universe of minds and endure forever! Sin must be rebuked — terribly rebuked — rebuked in a manner worthy of God, and so rebuked, that its awful impression should continue unabated, down, along through all the cycles of eternal ages. This must be done, or God's government will be dishonored. Hence the necessity for so terrible a demonstration of God's justice.

**6.** We see in what sense the saints are saved by the righteousness of Christ. Much as always been said by Old School divines about imputation. I do not mean now just what they do by this term, but there is a sense in which the righteousness of Christ may be said to be imputed to us. I have already explained what this sense is. Jesus Christ was treated as if He were a sinner, that we for His sake might be treated as if we were righteous. He deserved no sufferings — we deserved them all. They were not endured for His sake, but for ours. He stood before God to be treated as sinful; we as a result, stand before God and are treated as righteous. As He represented the sins of a lost race, so we represent the righteousness of a spotless Savior.

**7.** Our own personal obedience has no part in the matter of our justification, not even any obedience rendered after conversion. After conversion we are pious and to some extent holy; but this is not taken into account as a ground of our justification.

**(1.)** Because when once condemned, no subsequent obedience can procure our acceptance on legal grounds. It is perfectly obvious that no obedience performed after sin and condemnation, can in any way atone for the previous sin.

**(2.)** Our obedience is not our own in such a sense that we can be justified by it *according to law*. It should be considered that our obedience after conversion is not *under law* — that is, not a system of mere law, but is under grace — it being all performed in consequence of Christ’s gracious work within, and not wrought out under purely legal influences. We are therefore not to suppose that we do not need Christ after once being converted and pardoned. No idea can be more false and ruinous than this. For the holiness of Christians after conversion is the result of Christ’s Spirit working in them and is in this sense a gracious righteousness, and hence can never come into the account as if it were a legal righteousness, so as to justify men on merely legal grounds. We owe to the grace of Christ our entire salvation, and are to be rewarded, not for our own righteousness, but on the ground that we represent the righteousness of God.

**8.** We see how much we are indebted to Christ for our salvation. He has been set forth as a propitiation for sin, and in Him an atonement was made. He stood in our stead where we must else have stood as condemned and quailing rebels; He suffered in His own person that awful manifestation of divine displeasure which would else have been made in our destruction in order to render it possible for God to be just to His government and good to all His subjects and yet pardon sinners. Christ has done all this for us, and now does it well become us to say — in the inmost soul —

*“Had I ten thousand hearts to give,  
Lord, they should all be Thine.”*

**9.** We can see how great the future glory of the saints must be. We have been looking at the great agony and grief endured by Jesus Christ. Look now in the other direction at the great glory resulting from our being made

the righteousness of God in Him. In the days of His flesh God made Him sin for us, laying on Him the iniquity of us all, and in those scenes of anguish making known His own utter abhorrence of sin. It now remains for God to make known to all the universe His own high sense of the value of Christ's righteousness. It remains for Him to show how perfectly pleased He is with the atonement — how delighted He is with the perfect holiness of Jesus Christ, and how fully He appreciates Christ's benevolence in sacrificing Himself for others' good. And all this is to be shown by His treatment of the saints. You will observe that the proximate end of Christ's being made sin for us, as taught in our text, is that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. In us, therefore, that is, in the redeemed from our race, must be revealed before the eyes of the universe the glorious righteousness of God as manifested in and through His Son. O what miracles of glory will be revealed there! Mark, that the saints are not merely to be brought into heaven and suffered to live there, but they are to be used there for displaying the righteousness of God and His infinite glory in the sufferings of His Son. When God saw it necessary to show forth His abhorrence of sin, then Jesus Christ stood out before the universe as if in the place of all the sin of our race, and in this position the Infinite Father withdrew the light of His face, and gave expression to His fearful wrath against sin. Then the suffering One groaned and agonized — the earth quaked — the sun forbore to shine, and nature herself by her throes of agony seemed to sympathize with the unwonted anguish of her Lord.

Thus closed the first chapter of this wondrous development. The scene of the next is laid in heaven. *There* must be revealed the righteousness of God. *There* must be unfolded His infinite goodness and love as embodied in this scheme of substitution and atonement. It now remains to show what results of unutterable glory to God in the highest accrue from this plan of redemption. And these can not be revealed in the myriad worlds of Jehovah's universe except by means of exalting redeemed sinners most gloriously before their eyes. We need not wonder therefore that it should be said — “It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” “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.” Most truly said, for it can only be in a low and groveling sense that we can be said to conceive of



those glorious things prepared by God for His people. O, if some of our departed friends should appear to us in all their present glory, we might perhaps mistake them for God Himself, and be ready to fall down and worship them. You are aware that this very mistake has sometimes been made, nor is it very strange that it should be. The Bible represents the saints as then “shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” It need not surprise us that they should appear in the palaces of heaven adorned with robes of glory such as no eye of man hath seen or heart conceived. For they are gloriously exalted not to represent their own righteousness, but the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus their Lord. The glory of God and the blessedness of the universe demand that Jesus should be honored and exalted for what He has done and suffered; but the relations of His people to Himself in this work are such that He can not be exalted and honored except in connection with their exaltation. If Christ is an heir of God, they are “joint heirs with Him.” If He is to be rewarded with a glorious triumph, they must join in the triumphal procession — the rescued ones — the trophies of His victory — the purchase of His blood. Behold He says, “Here am I and the children whom God hath given Me.” O, “He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*.” Hence the exalted honor to which they must be raised.

**10.** This inheritance is received by *simple faith*. Whoever simply believes and with the heart embraces, shall receive and enjoy it for ever.

**11.** It is proffered to all, and proffered *now*. Whoever will believe in Christ, let him come — come now, and receive the earnest of this inheritance in the present gift of the Spirit. The Spirit is given to believers now as the earnest and pledge of that glorious inheritance.

But you say — How can it be that simple faith is the only requisite to secure this inheritance? I am but too well aware that the simplicity of the way of salvation is a great stumbling-block to the world. The mass of men who hear the gospel are stumbled on this very rock, and turn aside and go about to work out some form of self-righteousness. It is too simple a thing in their esteem to have salvation for merely believing on Jesus Christ — not to say also that it is too humiliating. They do not so well like to come into such a possession without having it to say that they have paid well for it. Hence they pass over the simplicity of the gospel, and miss of

heaven. Slow indeed are most men to see that it is by simple faith that we commit the soul to God, renounce self in all its forms, and cast ourselves upon the righteousness of God alone.

**12.** Unbelievers reject this way of salvation, and of course the unmitigated penalty of the law must fall on them. Although Christ has died for them, yet if they will not believe, they must be damned. So the Bible declares — “he that believeth not is condemned already” — “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Be it so that they have been bought with blood; yet if they deny the Lord that bought them, they are not redeemed unto salvation, but on the contrary, bring upon themselves swift and more awful destruction. In the nature of the case this must be so. A pardon proposed to the consent of the prisoner, and by him rejected, becomes no pardon at all. The prisoner’s rejection of it nullifies it utterly as to its reference to himself.

It deserves special notice that the apostle represents this mode of salvation by faith in Christ as something to be submitted to by the sinner. He says that certain men “going about to establish their own righteousness, have not *submitted themselves* unto the righteousness of God.” Now this submission to the righteousness of God implies a full and cordial assent to God’s justice in punishing, and to His grace in providing a substitute. The sinner admits most fully that he is just as hopelessly lost as God represents him to be, as hell-deserving, as guilty — as mean, as unworthy — and consents to take his place before God and man accordingly. He takes this system of salvation as God proposes it; submits himself to it; gets down in the dust; brings down his high crest, and makes no words about the hardship of taking his own place as a guilty sinner saved by grace. Sinner, can you hope to be saved in any other way than this? You can not but know that this is God’s way. Your own reason affirms that it is in harmony with right and with the truth in the case.

**13.** You may see the impressiveness and force of the question, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!” Do impenitent sinners imagine that after all God has done in the gospel scheme — He will trifle with it and set it all aside? Do you dream that the great God will treat your objections and your refusal with marked deference, and contrive for your special benefit some more acceptable plan, or will save *you* in particular

without any Savior or any written as with a point of a diamond — “*He that believeth not shall be damned.*” And do you hope by your objections to disannul these awful words?

Sinner, *what will you do* — make up your mind and answer — *what?* Do you say — “Well, if Christ has suffered for all my sins — it is enough; what more can I ask? If Christ’s righteousness may become mine, *it is enough.* Why should I forfeit it and go down to hell? The gospel is good enough for me; — farewell sin — farewell vain world; I take the Bible — I take Jesus Christ — I take all His blessed gospel to my very heart!” Will you say and do this, sinner, and do it at once — do it *now*, in this accepted time? Then, ‘tis well.

## REFUGES OF LIES

***“Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.” — Isaiah 28:17.***

If we would understand this passage, it is important that we should consider the context attentively. This will show what class of people are referred to in the text, and what position they are supposed to occupy.

“Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *them that are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, and precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: for with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to His people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken. Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.”

The class of persons spoken of here enjoyed great religious privileges. The word of the Lord came to them, “precept upon precept,” and they had most abundant means of knowing its revealed truths and enjoined duties. But they did not love these truths and would not do these duties. Consequently, restive under the unwelcome pressure of truth upon their consciences, they sought relief under some refuge of lies. It will be my

present object to notice some of the many refuges of lies to which men are wont to resort when their consciences are ill at ease.

**1.** *A selfish religion.* This is one of the most common delusions among men. In this case selfishness, instead of seeking worldly good alone, elevates its aim and seeks heaven. Selfishness is usually distinguished for its grasping some earthly good, in a spirit of reckless disregard alike of others' rights and interests, and of the known will of God. But it is not the character of the good it seeks which makes it selfishness; but rather the spirit with which the good is sought.

Thus in the case of the selfish religionist, his general end is the same now as ever — *personal happiness*; and the spirit in which he seeks it is the same as ever — a spirit that seeks and cares for nothing but its own individual good; but the *means* by which he pursues his end are changed, for now he resorts to religion as his means, while heretofore he has been content to seek it from the world, with no semblance of religion in his course. Now while his ultimate end remains the same, no change of the means for attaining it can change the man's moral character, or the moral quality of his conduct. In this case now contemplated, the individual aims at securing an interest for himself as really and as exclusively as ever. While he was careless about religion, he sought this selfish good from the world; now he seeks it from religion: before he sought to press his fellow men and every earthly agency into his service; now he seeks to make the Almighty God his infinite servant, and to dragoon the gospel into an instrumentality for securing his own eternal interests. This form of delusion is, as I have said, exceedingly common.

It is also very *subtle*, often so subtle that the deluded man is not at all aware that he has not in fact the very religion of the Bible. He might indeed see the truth if he would be faithful and honest, for it would stand out most plain and palpable to the eye of honest scrutiny. Whoever will may know as to himself whether all his religion is or is not selfish; whether or not all his seeking of heaven is a merely selfish seeking.

**2.** Another refuge of lies exists in *a religion of impulse*.

This also is a selfish religion, but of a different form from the preceding, and it manifests itself in a different way. The man of this kind of religion is

governed by his sensibility, or in other words, by his feelings, and not by the law of God as revealed to his intelligence. He thinks himself very religious because he has so much feeling. He supposes himself to be very sincere, for he is conscious of having much feeling and many strong desires, and of being exercised by these feelings and desires. And as he assumes this to be religion, he infers that he has real religion, and has it in an unusual degree.

This also is a very subtle form of delusion. For it is intrinsically right that the sensibility should be affected by religious truth. That it should be, will always appear fitting and proper to the human mind. But the mistake lies in making religion consist in this, and in making this the whole of religion; whereas nothing is more demonstrable than that religion must essentially consist in the will's allegiance to truth as revealed from God to man and apprehended by his intelligence. But more of this anon. This type of delusion is subtle because the subject of it is entirely conscious of having great feeling, and of being governed by it also. If he had no feeling, or if he had but little, he would suspect himself of being deceived as to his own piety; but having much feeling, as he very well knows, he feels quite sure of possessing most extraordinary and praiseworthy piety.

Now it should be considered that true religion carries with it deep feelings; but deep feelings may exist without religion; for true religion consists in the mind's being influenced by the intelligence and not by the sensibility. Deep feeling is in the Christian's mind, but it does not *govern* there. True and well-instructed Christians know that the impulses of the sensibility, however strong, are not religion. They regard these impulses as accompanying, but not as constituting real piety. They know that these feelings are the natural result of certain views presented to the mind, and hence they see at once the mistake of regarding them as in themselves either the evidence or the measure of piety.

I have often been struck with developments of this delusion in seasons of revival. Persons of naturally strong feelings will often seem to act like real Christians. They do indeed feel strongly, and for a season they are governed by these feelings. But these states and exercises do not involve the action of the will, in subservience to the demands of the intelligence, and hence in regard to their moral nature they are passive and not active,

and therefore not virtuous. And yet these persons in revival appear not only religious but eminently so. But these impulses soon subside — their excitements cool off; they become no less excited on other subjects, and then they show to everyone what spirit they have. Being creatures of feeling and sensibility, they follow the current of public feeling and the popular mind as sure as the straw floats down the rippling flood. Who has not seen persons of this stamp in every community? You may always expect them to be powerfully moved in every great revival, but they will just as certainly be moved by anything else that appeals strongly to their sensibility. Indeed they are constitutionally excitable and easily moved, and have not learned the solemn duty of being governed by the will and the intelligence, but float along in the uniform practice of being governed by their feelings.

Now I am not speaking against having feeling on religious subjects, but against being *governed* by it. I urge that it is wrong to seek supremely to gratify these feelings, irrespective of the claims of the intelligence. This is my position.

No subject more deeply interests the sensibility than religion. None with more power breaks up the fountains of the great deep of human feeling than this. Hence persons who make their excited feelings the whole of their religion, may luxuriate in their exercise and float along upon their current, deceiving and being deceived till they die. How fatally subtle oftentimes is this delusion!

**3.** Another refuge of lies consists in a religion of *opinion* — or mere *orthodoxy*.

It might be supposed that in this place there would be very little danger of this form of delusion. But there is danger even among us. Some even here hold in theory the doctrine of sanctification, think much of it, glory in defending it and make it a great thing, and yet seem to be very far from embracing the doctrine in the love of it, and from imbibing the spirit of it into their hearts. Now it matters not how good or how true your orthodoxy may be; if it is only opinion and theory in your head and not love and obedience in your heart, it is nothing better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

**4.** *Sectarian religion* is another form of delusion.

But can this be found among us? Do we not all belong to one church? Can it be that we need to have sectarianism preached against here? Many even among us I fear, are in this sin who are not themselves aware of it. I fear that some who defend Oberlin, do it on sectarian grounds and in a sectarian spirit. To be sure they are not sticklish for baptism, or election, or any of the common points of sectarian controversy; but they are most zealous for Oberlin, and often may be really more zealous to make men friends of Oberlin than to make them friends of Christ.

This is a most insidious delusion, wherever it may develop itself. It is perilous out of Oberlin, and no less perilous in Oberlin. And its danger does not turn upon the question whether the points contended for are true or false. It is dangerous to contend for the best truth ever revealed from God, if your zeal for it is a selfish zeal, and if you judge yourself a Christian because you have it.

**5.** Another delusion to be considered, is really a form of *self-righteousness*. It often manifests itself in this way. Men put external right-doing in the place of real benevolence of heart. They mean to do right towards their fellow men, but confine themselves to executive acts and overlook that in which real moral character inheres. They quite overlook the heart, and seem to forget that if there be not true love to God in all they do, nothing can be right at all. Suppose a man seeks to be honest in his business; is this all that God requires? Do we need to be told that nothing can be right even in our commercial business unless done *for God*, unless the motive be to glorify God — unless the great end be to honor God and do good to men? And yet a man will talk about being honest in his business, as if he might have this virtue, though he has no regard for God and no religion whatever at heart. He looks upon his own moral conduct very complacently. If a man comes into his store to trade he means to deal fairly with him. He estimates the cost of his articles — add a fair profit — takes no advantage by deceiving either as to quality or quantity. Very well; so he thinks. But suppose a man should pursue this honest course his life long; is this the whole of doing right? Is it in fact even the beginning of it? Must we not go farther back and ask — for what *end* is all this honesty? What does this honest man really aim at? Is it his aim to glorify God, or to benefit



himself? Is all this a real love to man because God requires such love, or is it a wise and far-sighted seeking of his own personal advantages?

Said an individual very sick and apparently near death, "I have always been honest in all my dealings with men; in all this I have nothing to reproach myself with; but O, as far as my God is concerned, all is dark — I have done nothing right to my God."

Now there is embodied here one of the most common forms of delusion — one of the most common and also the most perfectly fatal. It overlooks the fact that unless the mind be consecrated to God, there can be no real honesty at all; that unless a man treat his fellow men right *for God*, in view of the claims of God, and as obedience *to God*, it is no right doing at all. For how does God require you to treat your brother man? Does He ask only that you would not cheat him in business? Does God ask nothing more than this? Does not the law of God require that you should love your neighbor *as yourself*? And is it not also implied that you are to love him as one of God's created children, and in the spirit as to yourself of a dutiful and affectionate son towards God? Your love to him must therefore be that of a dutiful brother in the great family of God — a brother whom God, your Father, requires you to love as yourself.

Hence the man who thinks his duty all done towards his fellow man if he has simply forborne to cheat him, is egregiously deceived. Doing duty to God is indispensable for really doing duty to man. If anyone has loved his brother man right, then has he also loved his Father, God; for there can be nothing right in this matter which does not most fully and heartily recognize this great and blessed family relation. Loving man must be done as *duty to God* — from love to God, and with a distinct recognition of God as the common Father of both myself and my brother.

Thus, really to love man right implies loving God also. And on the other hand a proper love to God implies loving man also. You can not be in a benevolent state of mind towards God, without being also in a benevolent state towards His creatures. The very nature of religion and love implies that if we love God we shall also love His offspring. We cannot keep the first great command without keeping the second also.

It is remarkable that you may often detect the real state of your heart towards God by observing closely your state towards man; and so on the other hand you may learn your true position towards man by noticing your position towards God. For nothing can be more certain and invariable than this law of mind, namely, that if it be really in a benevolent state, its benevolence will be exercised towards both God and man, and indeed towards all known sentient beings.

Hence when a man on his death-bed says — “I have done all my duty towards man, but alas! all is wrong in regard to my duties to God,” he certainly deceives himself. There can not be such a state as that which he supposes his to be. For he certainly has not done his duty towards man if his heart has at the same time been alien and apostate from God.

**6.** Another refuge of lies consists in an *Antinomian religion*. In this, men rest in a faith which is not sanctifying. They have abandoned the idea of being saved by works, and have fallen back upon faith, but yet it is upon a faith that fails to sanctify — a faith which does not lead them to consecrate their all to God. This is an Antinomian faith — the very same of which the apostle James said, “Show me thy faith without thy works, (if thou canst) and I will show thee my faith by my works.” An Antinomian faith can never bear this test; for by the very supposition it begets no good works at all.

A sister in the Church once said in a prayer meeting, “I used to dwell much upon faith, but had little regard for works. My mind was constantly ranging upon faith, faith, but it was a faith which never led me to duty — it only kept me waiting, and — idle.”

Now this is a most dangerous delusion. This resting in a faith which acts only as an opiate; which gives no stimulus at all to the soul towards either love, or the labor which love begets; this must be a gross and most fatal delusion. You will see at a glance that this is not that Bible faith which worketh by love, and which in the ancient worthies “wrought righteousness, obtained promises, quenched the violence of fire, made the weak strong, and put to flight the armies of the aliens.” O this do-nothing religion, which professes to live upon Christ, but does nothing that Christ commands — this is not the religion of our ancient Bible! It is the same which our Lord portrays only to condemn it; one in which men cry, “Lord,

Lord,” but do not the things which He says. What can be a more fatal delusion than this?

**7. *Universalism*** is another refuge of lies. This system varies in some of its minor points, but in one great leading feature it remains ever the same — it *always denies the justice of endless punishment*. However much the advocates of Universalism may differ from each other in the less important points, they all agree that all men will ultimately be saved; that sin does not deserve an endless punishment; and that it would therefore be unjust in God to inflict it.

Hence, whatever modification this system may put on, it will practically make sin out to be a mere trifle. For example, they will tell you that men are fully punished for all their sin as they go along — that the evil necessarily incidental to sinning in this life is all the punishment it deserves. The slight compunction of conscience, more or less, that wicked men feel for sin, together with possibly some providential evils, is all that God can justly inflict upon them as a punishment!

Think of this! Look at it! What sort of religion is this? To say that all the punishment which sin deserves is a little compunction of conscience, and perhaps some providential trials in this life! — a little trouble which some men have as they go along in consequence of sinning! I want to know if this is not blaspheming God in the worst possible manner! It lifts up its brazen front before heaven and tells God — “Thou great Jehovah — sin against Thee is a small matter — Thy laws are a mean affair — if I trample on them and roll them in the dust, and grind my heel upon them, what is that to Thee? Who art Thou that Thou shouldst take in hand to punish such things in Thy creatures with any positive inflictions of suffering? Dost Thou not know that the sinner’s troubles in this life are full as much punishment as his sin deserves?”

Now see in this what Universalism is. See how it spits at God! Hear it proclaim, “Who art Thou that *sin* against Thee should be a thing of any account?”

And what is this but an attempt to dethrone Jehovah? It would fain make sin the merest trifle in the universe. And shall not the hail sweep away this

refuge of lies? If it does not, then God will have forgotten to sustain His own honor and His own glorious throne.

But you say that you don't deserve any other punishment than the natural compunctions of your conscience, and the attendant troubles of sinning in this life!

Indeed! all the time receiving good from the hand of God, cradled from your birth in His very arms — fed from His own table — every want supplied from His exhaustless bounty — and yet, though you scorn to remember God with gratitude, and though you trample His law in the dust, yet you don't deserve any other punishment for your sin than you get from your conscience and from providence, as you go along! O what outrageous abuse of God! And what a shameless perversion of human reason! I know not how to express the indignation I feel at such insults offered to God. O, to think how they are contemning their own most gracious Father! He is fattening them on the bounties of His providence, and yet they deserve, they say, no punishment for sin — no hell after death! What a ridiculous delusion is this! Was there ever a more striking proof afforded of the degree to which sin can stultify the human intelligence!

This doctrine of Universalism of course rejects salvation by Christ. Its advocates may sometimes talk about being saved by Christ; but they mean nothing by it, for they hold that men are punished all they deserve in this world as they go along. Of course if punished all they deserve in this world they are not pardoned at all. But salvation by Christ is pardon; if it mean anything it must include the idea of forgiveness, or pardon, so that the sinner saved by Christ is not punished, but pardoned. But Universalism punishes the sinner all he deserves, and yet pardons him too! It makes him suffer the full and utmost penalty of God's law, and at the same time saves him by Christ., so that he shall be pardoned, and not punished at all! What superb nonsense is this!

And again, what curious ideas of law and government are these which make the penalty of sin only the slight evils endured here from an uneasy conscience, and from a disciplinary providence. Here, in this world, is the sinner's hell — here, where sinners are in the main happy in all their sins,

and yet are suffering the full penalty of God's law! Ah, what notions of God's law must Universalists have!

This system strangely confounds justice with mercy. It punishes men to chasten and reform them, and this strange process is identical with forgiveness! Inflicting the penalty of law on principles of strict justice is with them the same thing as forgiveness and mercy! For here, in this world, on every sinner, precisely this development takes place — God punishes him all he deserves, in His justice; and yet pardons him most freely through Christ, in His mercy! Surely this is mixing up and confounding together justice and mercy — very much as if men had no just idea of either.

Again, Universalists confound the benevolence of God with mere good nature. God is in their view so good-natured that He will make no discrimination as to character. O He loves all men most comprehensively and altogether alike! So pure good-natured is He!

The favorite term with them to designate their opponents is "*partialists*," assuming that it would be *partial* in God to save one and not another. This can appear plausible only to the most short-sighted intelligence. For, consider — Is a ruler impartial who treats the righteous and the wicked alike? Is this *impartiality*? Can justice treat men of opposite character and opposite merits, just alike? There is the case of Abraham's prayer for Sodom, "O Lord," he says, "wilt Thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" Would that be right? That the righteous should be treated as the wicked are — "be this far from Thee, O Lord!" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Now here, with the best good sense and reason, Abraham assumes that God would be partial and unjust if He were to treat the righteous and the wicked all alike, and he pleads as if he felt most sure that the Judge of all the earth would do no such thing. Abraham was no Universalist.

Impartiality implies dealing with men according to their deserts. Therefore if God saves all men, be they righteous or wicked, He cannot be impartial, but must be partial.

Again, persons who hold this delusion must count Paul a madman. Hear him: "I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience bears me witness

that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren;” and why?

He tells us, moreover, that in one city, “by the space of three years he ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

But why is all this? If Paul really believed that all men will certainly be saved, what is he warning them against? And why those tears, and that continual heaviness and agony of spirit? Is he warning them to flee from the wrath to come? O no — no; but he trembles lest they should not all become Universalists. He finds that some of them are skeptical upon this doctrine, and hence are afraid of being finally lost, and he cannot endure that their minds should be disturbed by such fears for the few days of the mortal life. O he is in the greatest agony lest he shall not convert all his Jewish brethren and all the Gentiles of Ephesus to the belief of universal salvation!! He is in dreadful agony of soul lest they should be troubled with fears of being lost! Alas, lest they should never become Universalists! And this is the Universalist’s version of the character of the great apostle of the Gentiles!

But what does Paul say of himself? Does he tell us that in his view of the matter, Christ saves all? Aye, he says, that for himself, “he becomes all things to all men if by any means he might *save some*.” And this is the extent of his Universalism!

Again, this doctrine represents Christ as either full of deceit or void of sense. Hear its explanation of Christ’s words: Christ says, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Now look at the exposition put on this language by the Universalists. “Hell,” he says, “means nothing but the grave. There is no other hell but the grave.” Of course he makes Jesus Christ say this in the passage just cited — “Fear not the assassin or the executioner, who can only *kill* you; but I will forewarn you whom you should fear: fear him,” who after you are dead can throw your soul and body into — the grave — aye, yes, fear the *sexton*!! Ah, consider — he has power to bury you after you are dead — I say unto you, *fear him*! Now if Universalism makes no other hell but the grave, then Universalism makes Christ either a consummately deceitful man, or a man sadly deficient of intellect!

I might pursue the follies and absurdities of this delusion much farther; but time forbids, and I must therefore forbear.

## REMARKS

**1.** These delusions are only *refuges* to which people betake themselves to evade the claims of God. Who does not know this? Do men resort to these refuges for any other purpose? Does any man resort to Universalism in order to make himself more holy? Does he incline towards that doctrine because he thirsts after holiness, and longs to make himself and others more like God? Whoever say an instance of this kind?

So of all these forms of delusion. They are *refuges*, and nothing else. They are got up to screen the soul from the pressure of obligation to do duty, or to avert the dreaded displeasure and wrath of God against sin.

**2.** A hail storm is one of the most striking emblems of the wrath of God against sin, which is ever seen in this world. Have you ever seen one? Its roar is dreadful. Rolling up its dark, heavy mass of cloud, it moves along in grand and awful majesty, as if the very ocean had burst from its bed and broken over its bounds, and were ready in an instant to dash its mountain torrents over us. I have not seen a hail storm for these many years without being reminded of this passage of Isaiah: “The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.” How full of terror and sublimity is this image of Jehovah’s wrath! The roaring, rushing storm of all-destructive hail! It is as if the chariots of God were coming — coming with fire and storm and terrific indignation to overwhelm the guilty sinner in ruin under the out-burstings of His wrath.

Mark also how we are taught by varied figures, that the Lord will hunt out and destroy the fleeing, hiding sinner in the day of His enkindled anger. If the sinner has built up a refuge of lies, walling it in and supporting it with toil and care, the hail shall sweep it all away. If he betakes himself to caverns or to holes of the earth, “the waters shall overflow the hiding-place” — shall search him out and engulf him in ruin even there. What the wind and storm cannot batter down the overflowing waters will search out and sweep with remorseless ruin. For him who stands up against God there shall be no escape — no remedy — no hiding-place forever!

And now let me ask — Where are your hiding-places? Are you seeking to construct them with lies, and under falsehood to hide yourselves? Or are you standing firmly and calmly on the rock of eternal truth? Seek not to avoid the point of this question. Meet it, I pray you, in candor and honesty; for the sinner's refuge is in God alone.

Before I was myself a Christian, a man once said to me, "If Universalism is true, we are all safe; if false, all who rest on it for salvation are lost. I think it will be well to be on the safe side."

True enough, thought I, the view of the Universalist, if false, is an infinite mistake; it forfeits everything. Why then should I try to be a Universalist? Besides, if the doctrine be true, it cannot make me any better. Looking round on all the Universalists I knew, I asked myself, are they really holy men? Are they made any better men by their belief in this system? Are they made more holy by its influence? I could not even pretend that they were. Of course I must infer that the system had nothing of real value to commend it.

But aside entirely from this, I do not believe that there are many men who are able to believe in Universalism. They may be able to deceive themselves so far as to *hope* that the system will prove true — just as many professors of religion cannot believe themselves to be Christians, but they can gather evidence perhaps to *hope* that they may be. But let them be summoned to die in one hour, and they would be in utter consternation! Perhaps they do not know that they are deceived, but they are very far from knowing that they are not. They content themselves to slide along, and put over their anxieties and cares about the certainty of the matter to some unknown future.

So the Universalist has no such assurance as would make him calm in death. I well recollect the case of Dr. B., who loved to converse with me before my conversion about his favorite doctrine of universal salvation. On one occasion our conversation took a very serious turn without our being aware of it. I asked him, "Doctor, are you satisfied with Universalism as a system of religious faith?" "No," said he, "I must confess, I am not. I told Elder J. the other day (his own Universalist preacher) that I really had so many doubts that I could get no peace from the doctrine; and he told me it



was just so with himself, he could get no peace of mind in the doctrine, and he did not believe that any one else could.”

For myself, this shocked me beyond measure. What, indeed! a professedly gospel minister preaching what does not convince himself of its truth — what he does not believe himself! — what gives him no peace of mind! Horrible!! This put an end forever to all my desire to be a Universalist. I had no longer any desire to hide myself under such a refuge of lies.

# PRIDE OF HEART DECEIVES

*“The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee.” — Obadiah 3.*

The connection in which these words are found, not being important to my present purpose, I shall pass it without remark, and proceed at once to the subject it presents. It will be my aim,

- I. TO NOTICE BRIEFLY WHAT CONSTITUTES PRIDE OF HEART.**
- II. TO SHOW HOW IT DECEIVES MEN.**
- III. TO SPECIFY SOME OF THE FORMS OF DELUSION TO WHICH IT LEADS.**

I. Pride of heart may be defined to be a disposition of mind to exalt ourselves. It is a spirit of self-exaltation — a disposition to get out of our own place, and get above those who of right, even in our own estimation, ought to hold a place above ourselves.

## II. HOW DOES PRIDE OF HEART DECEIVE MEN?

**1.** *It renders men in a great measure blind to their own faults.* The man of a proud heart will not see his own faults. He has no desire to see them. He would sooner see anything else in the world than see the bad side of his own character, and of course he takes every precaution to avoid the honest view of himself. He has no intention or even desire to find his own proper level in society, but tries to deceive both himself and others. He would fain imagine that he is vastly better than he really is, and make everybody else believe it if he can. Hence he will overlook his own faults either wholly, or at least as far as he can, and would be glad to make others do the same. This is one of the workings of a proud heart.

**2.** *It leads men to excuse, or at least palliate their own faults.* If a proud man can no longer cover his own faults, this will be his next resort. When he cannot deny that many things in his conduct are palpably wrong objectively considered, he will yet maintain that under his *very peculiar*

*circumstance*, they are nearly or quite right. They will at least admit of much palliation; so he sets himself most diligently to this labor. He will be that last man to come down to a candid and through examination of his own faults. Ah, he does not relish this honest-hearted work.

**3.** *It leads men to imagine that they have virtues which they have not.* This is often manifest in their egotistical manner of speaking. In their common conversation they assume that they possess virtues which nobody ever saw them exhibit, or ever dreamed of attributing to them. Whatever in their own conduct has the remotest appearance of virtue, they are sure to drag into their service to prove themselves the best of men.

**4.** It leads men to overrate the apparent virtues which they really possess. I say *apparent* virtues, for while a man is proud of heart, he can have no *real* virtue. Semblances of virtue he may have, and these his pride of heart will lead him to exaggerate as much as possible. He will be sure to give himself more credit for even these than he deserves.

**5.** *It leads to an uncandid estimation of ourselves.* The proud man becomes of course partial in his views of his own merits — committed to self, and incapable of taking sober views of his own real character.

**6.** Pride of heart is always prone to make self-flattering comparisons. The proud man is never slow to institute comparisons between himself and others, but will be always sure to give himself the advantage. He is always better than his neighbors. Although he may be an impenitent sinner, he is better than most professed Christians. “The pride of his heart hath deceived him.”

**7.** The proud man avoids making humiliating comparisons between himself and others. If there are those with whom he cannot compare himself favorably, he turns away from them and avoids if he can, the painful self-mortification of contemplating superior excellence; or perhaps more often he will set himself to traduce their character, and will create or at least retail and aggravate slander against them until he can flatter himself that they are below him; then and then only can he feel happy to let them alone. The sight of superior excellence is annoying, not to say agonizing; so he goes about to level it down and make himself and others believe that the reputed best man is not as good as himself. It is pride of heart that begets

envy, that fills society with slander and makes it so grateful to the feelings of some men to pick at the character of their more excellent neighbors. This is the reason why so many of the best men are slandered, and why so few escape its shafts.

**8.** Pride of heart *induces an entirely dishonest application of truth*. If the proud man sits under preaching and if what he hears applies to himself ever so fitly, he is sure not to notice at all its application to himself, but will be very prompt and active in applying it to his neighbor. See him stretch up his neck to look over the heads of the congregation; he wants to see if Mr. B. is not there — this touch in the sermon hits him so nicely. O, thinks he, how completely that point hits such a one, and such a one — so the poor fool (for none are such fools as the proud) cheats himself out of all the truth that fits his own case, and with a strange, self-deceptive politeness, serves out all the food to others and gladly starves himself. Has not his pride of heart deceived him?

**9.** Pride leads men to evade self-knowledge. How often in conversing with men have I been struck with this! You cannot make them see their own faults. They will dodge and shuffle — change the subject if they can, and look in every other direction rather than within. In courts of justice you may sometimes see a man pushed to admit a fact that incriminates himself, and you may mark his shuffling and evasion, and his skill in denying or concealing the fact that he is badly crowded; but the same thing occurs often enough out of court when the pride of a man's heart makes him hate the light and stubbornly, though often awkwardly, shut his eyes against it. You may hold up the light close to his face — he can't see. Try to open his eyes — he doesn't see anything. You may draw his character to the life — he does not recognize the likeness — *because he does not wish to!* What is the reason? Pride of heart. It often seems as if a proud man would sooner go to hell than open his eyes to see candidly his own faults. So terribly does pride deceive those who love to indulge it!

### III. I AM NEXT TO SKETCH SOME OF ITS FORMS OF DELUSION

**1.** *It makes men imagine that they believe the Bible when they do not.*

Nothing in my own experience has ever more surprised me than the deep and strong delusion under which I labored during my early life on this point. I honestly supposed that I believed the Bible to be God's word. For a long time it had been impossible for me to evade the arguments in its favor. Indeed so thoroughly was I convinced on this point, that the first thing I did after my conversion was to make out a skeleton of an argument to prove on legal grounds the truth of the Bible — which I deemed to be unanswerable. If anybody had told me then that I did not believe the Bible, I should have felt that they slandered me most ungenerously and shamefully. But yet mine was then only a mere historical belief, and no act of the heart at all. My will did not bow to the supremacy of Bible truth. Indeed I gave it no place at all in my heart; I did not allow it to have the influence of admitted truth upon my heart or my life. Hence my notion that I believed the Bible to be true was a mere delusion.

That this sort of merely historical faith *is* a delusion is manifest in various ways.

**(1.)** Whoever really believes the Bible will be strongly exercised in view of its truths. In the nature of mind it is impossible that such truths — believed, can fail to influence the mind powerfully. It is intrinsically essential to the nature of mind to be moved by the truth. Hence there never was and never can be a mind of man or angel that will be unmoved by the belief of such truth as the Bible reveals. Yet who does not know that thousands read the Bible and profess to believe it, but are not half so much interested or affected by it as they are in reading Tom Thumb. It is a fact. Many say they believe the Bible, and yet are more interested in reading the silliest story-book ever got up to amuse mere children. Do these people really *believe* the Bible? Oh, “the pride of their heart hath deceived them.”

This delusion is also manifest,

**(2.)** in the fact that, professing to believe the Bible, they yet take no pains to understand what it teaches.

Suppose Br. M. comes to me saying, I have something very important indeed to communicate — something you never heard of before; do you believe it to be true, Br. F? O yes, beyond all doubt, I reply. But stop; how can I quite say this without first knowing what it is. Let me know what it is and then I can better — more rationally, tell you whether I believe it.

Suppose an angel from heaven should present you a book, sealed with seven seals, saying — *This is a revelation from God to you*; and you believe that it really is so; would you let it lie unopened and unread? Would you let it rest a moment till you should have understood its contents! You would search after the means to understand it — would traverse this whole nation if need be, and if all this sufficed not, you would explore all Europe and even to the ends of the earth. No labor would seem to you to be labor at all in an enterprise like this.

Yet here is the Bible, with its resistless and admitted claims of being direct from God. How many tens of thousands believe it to be the word of God, yet never take pains to read it — are never upon their knees before God pleading for light to shine upon that blessed page. O this is, as Dr. Young says, one of “guilt’s blunders, and the loudest laugh of hell,” that men should delude themselves about their belief of the Bible. Do you believe that this Bible is a revelation from God to your deathless soul! And then do you treat this book as if it were a silly tale? You never need ask for stronger proof of your being grossly and fatally deluded.

**2.** Men are deluded by their pride when they think they love God, yet do not love to please Him. Who does not know that it is a law of our being that we delight to please those whom we love, and always shape our conduct accordingly? Love will have a kind of omnipotent influence upon us affecting everything we do. Love has this influence in every relation of life — between husbands and wives — parents and children. Who does not know it? Who does not know that if the husband love his wife or the wife love her husband, every word and every act will show it; every word and every act will come under the influence of a desire to please, a desire to promote the real interest of the party loved? It cannot be otherwise. It is in the very nature of love to study to please, and to seek the happiness of its object. Withdraw this element from love and what is there left?

Hence it is impossible that true love to God can exist, and yet with it no desire to please Him and do His will. The heart of love will be continually raising the question — “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” “Lord, how shall I most fully please Thee?”

What then shall we think of those thousands of nominal Christians who profess to love God, and yet do nothing to please God, and everything to please themselves? Every day and hour they are doing things and indulging states of mind which they know God must abhor, and yet they flatter themselves that they love God! What delusion!

**3.** Men think they are willing to be Christians, yet do not consider what is implied in it. They satisfy themselves with the loosest notions of this subject; else how could they fail to see that they are not Christians, and really have no intention to be? For consider, what is implied in being a Christian? Nothing less than a total renunciation of all self-seeking — a hearty confession of sin — in one’s inmost soul renouncing it, once for all, and forever; and a perfect consecration of ourselves to the service and pleasure of God. Of course this implies a breaking up of all our selfish associations and habits — a real *change* — so that it may most truly be said — “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

Now it is a fact that multitudes say they are very willing to become Christians; but they never take pains to know what this means, nor would they be willing to be such Christians as Christ was.

**4.** Men, deceived by pride of heart, think they are really Christians and truly reconciled to God, while in fact they do not obey God. Are they reconciled to God? No, for if they were, they would be reconciled to His government, and would obey His laws. What does a man mean by saying that he is reconciled to God, while he is at war with His government, and trampling every hour on His laws? What does he mean when he says he is pleased with God’s government and laws? He answers that he means nothing more than that he knows those laws and that government to be intrinsically right and good. He knows this, he says, and therefore thinks himself a Christian. So does the devil know this, and the devil might just as well on this ground pretend and profess to be a Christian as any man might, who does not obey God’s law with all his heart. Yes, unless a man

obeys the divine law with all his heart, he has not ground whatever to think himself a friend of God. No matter as to this point how much he knows about this law — the more he knows the greater and blacker will be his guilt, if he does not obey. No matter how much his reason and conscience approve the law as very good — all the worse for his Christian hope — all the worse for the doom of his soul from a just God — if he refuse to obey a law known and acknowledge to be holy and just and good.

Yet how many there are who claim to be Christians, but nevertheless live in sin, and plead for Christians living in sin, and would be very indignant if anyone should urge them to cease from all sin! They would perhaps think it an insult to their orthodoxy, or that at least there is some plot to ensnare them into a fatal heresy. What do I hear you say about your Christian experience? “O, I don’t profess to be perfect — I sin and repent all the time.” Oh, *there* is your mistake utterly. *You don’t repent*. Indeed you don’t repent if you sin all the time. The first part of what you say is probably true — but if so, the last part is of course false — utterly false. Consider for a moment. What is repentance? Many who say this don’t know, or at least don’t consider at all what it is. If they did, they certainly would not utter such an absurdity as to say that they sin and repent all the time. What is repentance? It is turning heartily and wholly away from sin. And how does this coincide with sinning all the time? What would you think of a man who claims to be all the time sober, and yet all the time drunk; or more precisely thus — all the time drinking, and yet all the time abstaining most sincerely and heartily from drinking — always drinking, and always reformed? All the time murder and love together in his heart — obeying God and yet disobeying, all the time, and simultaneously! Any man must be badly deluded who can believe this.

**5.** Unregenerate men deceive themselves in supposing that they are as good as Christians. They say — We give as much to support the gospel, we are just as kind to the poor, as ready and active in every good work, and as strong in all the reforms of the age as the best of them; why then are we not as good of Christians as they, and sometimes even better?

Laboring many years since in Rome, I found there a man living in the practice of great external morality. Nothing was more common than for impenitent sinners to make comparisons between him and professed



Christians, and to maintain that he was a better Christian than most of them. How did they judge? They said — Mr. B. gives as much as any of them — attends meetings as much — is as regular in all good things, and Mr. B. is the man for us. No man sets a better example than he; he is our model and pattern. If he is not good enough to go to heaven, who is and who can be? But he makes no profession of religion; so we think we shall get along as well without religion as with it.

The revival went on, but long before it closed, Mr. B. found that he was far enough from being as good as any Christian in the place. He came to see that his heart was full of all uncleanness — that he was proud of his reputation, and utterly far away from God in every possible respect.

But let us sift this subject more thoroughly. Take the case of the moral man. He is externally a well-behaved man, perhaps in this respect, even faultless. Well, what of this? Is it therefore certain that he is intrinsically a good man? Can you infer from his external conduct that his heart is right before God? It is indeed true in general that we are to judge men by their fruits; yet who does not know that we can not always judge correctly of the heart from the mere outside of a man? We can judge of his heart no farther than we can understand his motives and intentions.

Now in these respects, the best moralist, being unregenerate, is precisely opposite in character to the lowest Christian. See them walk to the house of God in company; take together the attitude of worshippers; alike each pays his proportion of the expenses, and each sustains all gospel institutions by his example. And yet if you could look into their hearts you would see that one does all this to be seen of men — the other to be seen of God; the one really worships at the shrine of fashion and respectability — the other at the shrine of his Maker. Can there be a wider contrast than this?

Again, suppose two men — the best impenitent moralist and the lowest Christian, meet on mutual business. The points involved are exceedingly perplexing, intricate, trying; both become very excited and both speak very unadvisedly. Both sin against God and against each other. Consequently, up to this point, you see no difference in their development of character. But now they part, and the Christian threads his solitary way towards his home. His mind is ill at ease. He thinks no longer of the great abuse he has

received, but only of his own *great sin*. O, how this burns on his conscience and his heart! How can I live, he cries, for I have sinned against God and I have scandalized His name before the wicked. He seeks some solitude, that if possible he may find God. If you could follow him with velvet step you might hear him pouring out before God his confessions and imploring forgiveness. You might see his bitter tears — you might hear his groans of sorrow. He pours out the anguish of his heart as if it were an ocean of grief. Alas! he has sinned against God and brought disgrace on the loved and honored name of Jesus!

But in all this, you hear not a word about the abuse he has received — not one word. If however you track the other man away from this scene of common, mutual wrong, what will you see? He turns aside into the next shop — draws around himself a cluster of associates — proclaims with trumpet-tongue how he has seen a Christian falling into ill-temper, and seeks to hide his own wrong in the clamor he gets up over his erring friend. Not a word has he to say before either God or man, of his own wrong. Not a word has the Christian neighbor to say of the wrong of the moralist. The one confesses; the other has no confession to make. Can there be a broader distinction than this?

You may recollect a case, sketched in some of the Sabbath School books, of a Dr. Hopkins who was a very pious man, but who had a very wicked brother-in-law — a man who had long cherished a malign spirit towards Dr. H., for he could not bear his piety, and therefore wanted to ensnare him into sin. A case of very difficult business occurred between them. The brother-in-law abused Dr. H. most shamefully in his own house, and ultimately got him angry. They parted, each to their homes — the wicked man to glory over the Dr.'s sin, and taunt his pious wife, saying — “There is the man you glory in as being a good Christian. He got angry with me today. I've got him down and got my foot on him, and I'll hold him there. He will not hear the last of this for many a day.”

But where is the Doctor? Gone home, but not to rest. All night he walks the room in agony — his only meat is tears — his heart is bursting with sorrow and grief. With morning light he hastens to that brother-in-law, and pours out his confessions before him — his heart smitten and broken as a bruised reed. It is said that the wicked man was first confounded, then

melted. “Now,” said he, “I know there is truth in religion. I never believed it before; now I see it and know it.” Oh, those confessions were like arrows dipped in blood to the heart of that wicked brother-in-law, and through the blessing of God they resulted in his hopeful repentance.

Another precious fact is recorded, namely, that thirty years after this event, Dr. H. said to a friend — “I have never known the emotion of anger since that night of agony.” So thoroughly did he renounce that sin — so intense were his convictions then — so earnestly and effectually did he bathe his soul in the blood of sprinkling, that the sin was slain, to live no more.

Here now were two men who quarreled and seemed alike in it; but say — were they really alike in character? Who does not see that they were as unlike as heaven and hell?

When sinners have the conceit that they are really as good as Christians, because their conduct is as fair externally, they overlook the fact that moral character belongs to the intention. They differ entirely from Christians, as appears from their *opposite motives*, and from the fact that *one is impenitent* and the *other penitent*. They also differ fundamentally in their *dependence for salvation*. The Christian trusts in Christ alone; the sinner not in Christ but in some form of self-righteousness. It always is and must be essential to the state of an unbelieving sinner, that he does not submit himself to the righteousness of Christ, but goes about to establish some form of righteousness of his own. Go, visit and compare the death-bed experience of the impenitent moralist, and of the Christian. Their lives may have been externally not greatly unlike, for both have sinned, and both have done many things externally proper and right. But try them on their death-beds. Visit the sinner. “You seem to be very sick.” “Yes, I am.” “Do you expect to recover?” “O, I don’t know. I am very sick.” “Are you willing to die?” “I can hardly say I am; yet if God thinks it best I suppose I must submit. I believe God is just; He will do me no injustice.” “What do you think of your past life?” “O, I have always meant to be an honest man. I have not been as bad a man as many have supposed. I can’t bear to think that God will send me to hell, for He knows that I have done about as well as I could.”

You see, my hearer, that this man has been pretty good, pretty good in everything, and he looks to God's *justice*, not to His *mercy*, as his ground of hope. His own righteousness is his ultimate ground of reliance.

But let us go into another sick-chamber. Here lies a Christian, near his end. "How do you do, brother? You seem to be very low; do you expect to recover?" "No, not at all." "Well, you have been a very good man." (Mark, he turns his face away ashamed and troubled.) "I have no goodness at all to speak of before God or man. There is no ground for me to hope in that direction. If God were to lay righteousness to the line, I could not stand a moment before Him. If however I may be made the representative of Christ's righteousness, I may be saved. All my hope is in Christ. I never look elsewhere than to Him alone. I am a great sinner and deserve the deepest hell." "What, sir, have you been a hypocrite?" "O, no sir, but before I was converted, and often since, I have greatly dishonored God, and have utterly forfeited all claim to salvation on the ground of my own merits." "Well, brother, are you afraid to die?" "No, not in the least; I see no reason to fear. I believe that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, and I have cast my naked soul on Him alone."

Now you can not but notice the great contrast between these two men whose dying experience we have just been contemplating. The moralist passes into an atmosphere of clouds and darkness. Despite of all his delusions and of all the false quiet they can give him, his soul is full of trouble and can find no rest.

But mark the Christian — his soul is in peace. It rests not on his own righteousness — he makes no account of his good works. My hope, he says, is in Christ alone. But his countenance is placid as a summer's sunset. His heart rests on the everlasting promises. It is enough for him that God is faithful and that Jesus is near — inexpressibly near to his soul.

Another development of self-deception occurs in the case of professors of religion. They deceive themselves by comparing themselves with other professors, and assuming that it is right for themselves to do whatever they see other professors do. Now as to this, it is in the first place an utter mistake to set up any other standard of Christian duty than the life and example of Jesus Christ. This, and only this, is the Christian's model. If the spirit of religion reign in his heart, he will naturally enquire — not

whether some other professor of religion does so, but whether Jesus Christ, in these circumstances, would do so. For his object is not to please this deacon, or that minister, but his own blessed Lord and Savior. Of course he can not make so great a mistake as to pattern after some deacon or some professed Christian of his own choice, and not after Christ.

In the second place, this practice of making some other professor of religion your model, is delusive and untrustworthy, because what may be admissible for him, may be utterly wrong for you. He may have so much less light than you that God may wink at his ignorance, but condemn you for sinning against actual knowledge of your duty. A few days since I said to a young man who was about leaving this place — “You will find different habits abroad from what you have been accustomed to here. You will doubtless find many Christian people using tea, coffee, tobacco and perhaps wine; and if you allow yourself to argue that you may rightly use these articles because other Christians do, you will be grievously ensnared, and may ruin your soul. They may have so little light on the subject that possibly it may not be wrong for them to use these articles; but you know better than to use them, and you can not hope that God will excuse your sin in the case on the ground that you had not light enough to create moral obligation. And surely it were of no avail for you to flatter yourself that with all the light you have, you can be allowed to do wrong because others do the same things under circumstances which make their sin much less than yours, or even as the case may be, which remove all guilt from their conduct.”

**6.** Some persons deceive themselves by mistaking the excitement and play upon their sensibilities for real religion. Some persons, for example, are so constituted physiologically, that under the stimulus of ardent spirits they become exceedingly pious, and can sing and talk religiously, so that you might be tempted to think them the greatest saints.

In my early life I boarded with a family in which the father would sometimes come home at night half drunk, and then be so good-natured, and read his Bible, and weep and pray, as full of religious feeling apparently as any man could be. I looked on and marveled; but I could not be long in solving the mystery. But suppose I had argued from this that it is good for a man to get half drunk, because it makes him so beautifully

pious. Suppose I were to argue in maintaining it that I had seen its fruits with my own eyes. Fortunately the common sense of mankind has taught them that the spirit from above and the spirit from below are not at all akin to each other. Yet one might just as well plead for an alcohol religion — one which manifests itself in soft and tender developments of the sensibility — as for any other type of mere sentimentalism — as for any religion which lives only in an excited sensibility. Good music may sometimes answer the same purposes of excitement as alcohol, and may be equally deceptive. If it acts only upon the sensibility, leaving the heart untouched, its results can be in the end no more converting, and are no better proof of real piety than the similar results of ardent spirits.

Let me say further that this type of apparent piety is exceedingly deceitful, for the reason that often it seems to carry not the sensibility only, but even the will. The whole heart seems to be melted — the whole man changed and everything borne along so sweetly in the spring-tide of religious emotions. If you were to see this man of alcohol in some of his pious moods, you would be astonished at such developments. If you only keep a little distance from him so as not to smell his breath, you would think him very spiritual — as indeed, (in a *peculiar* sense,) he is.

Now let it be remembered, this man's religion is just as good before God as any other type of pseudo-religious excitement which only plays upon the sensibilities, but touches not the heart.

**7.** Over against this is another form of delusion in which men have no other religious impulses except the hard driving and goading of their conscience. No love, no faith, no sweet drawing towards God, no cordial trust in a divine Father and a sympathizing Savior; nothing but compunction, goading, coercion, under the lash of conscience. They live in a strait jacket — grind like the blind Sampson in the mill, and wear out life in agony. A minister once said to me — “I think I must have mistaken my calling. It seems as if I had preached all I ever had to preach, and emptied it all out. You can not think how much hard labor it costs me to work out my two sermons a week. I don't see as I have any heart for the work, and you may judge that I don't have a very pleasant life of it.”

For myself I thought so indeed. If a man has no more gospel in him than this, and finds it such enormous labor to grind out enough for a sermon in

four or five days' labor, he has probably mistaken his calling. Above all, if he has no heart for the work, or in it either, he might better try some other business.

Emphatically and characteristically is it true of these self-deceived men, that *religion is not their theme*. This is not the subject upon which they love to converse. They can talk freely and abundantly on other subjects, but on this one subject of religion their hearts are not interested, and of course their words cannot flow out from the fullness of their hearts. If they should get to heaven, unchanged, how could they live there unless they might have up there their favorite topics? How could they endure to stay where "*Holiness to the Lord,*" is blazing in light and fire all around?

But they expect to go to heaven? Let us see. Suppose they get in. What do they say? Hear them talk: What's the price of wheat? Now for great bargains. What news from the polls? How goes the election? But these men would think you had lost all your Christian charity, if you should intimate that they are not on the way to heaven.

Now let it be known forever, all real Christians have the spirit of religion in their hearts — their souls are full of it. Worldly men are full of the world, and no wonder that it boils over and flows out incessantly. Christ says — "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks;" and who does not know that this is profoundly philosophical? Of course this principle will be developed in the Christian. The Spirit of Christ has taken possession of his soul, and now, how can it help gushing out in rich overflowings of love, meekness, faith and humility? Mark me now — as God is true — if this is not your character — if love does not reign in your heart, and fill your soul, so that religion must be your theme — nearer and dearer to your heart than all things else — if this be not the case with you, you are a hypocrite, and when your death-knell tolls, you are damned! Mark what I say!

**8.** Many think themselves Christians, although conscious that they have no peace of mind. What but a desperately wicked and deceitful heart can cherish such a hope? For what is religion? "Not meat and drink" surely; "but righteousness and *peace* and joy in the Holy Ghost." What says the Bible? That "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness and all her paths peace."

“Come unto Me all ye that labor, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”  
 “His commandments are not grievous.”

Now look around you and mark those professed Christians whose religion involves no peace of mind. You see them all afloat — drifted and driven by all those impulses which agitate other minds. Where is their religion? Do they know anything about peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost? Do they withdraw from the agitations of worldliness and selfishness, and find repose as on the bosom of their Savior? Have they such faith that they can glory in tribulation, and does their tribulation work for them experience, and experience hope; and is their hope one that does not make ashamed? Is this their experience? If so, then ‘tis well; but how can men who go on year after year without peace of mind and without trust in God, flatter themselves that they are real Christians?

**9.** Many think they are accepted of God although aware that they are indulging in sin. This delusion is more common than any other I have mentioned, and becomes so for the reason that even the church have lost sight of the fact that Christians can and do live without sin. Strange to tell, multitudes of professed Christians — with ample access to the Bible — do hold that all men are to be expected to live in sin, notwithstanding all the gospel can do in this world to deliver them from its power.

Under this view, it is no wonder such results should follow. They expect, they say, to be saved through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and they hold that this will avail for them without any righteousness of their own. But let us reason a moment about this. I admit most fully that men are to be justified by Christ alone, and on the condition of personal faith in Him; but mark, *not without personal holiness*. Here lies the fundamental error of those who think to get to heaven without being free from sin; they assume that saving faith in Christ *does not involve personal holiness*. No mistake can be greater than this! The Bible says, “faith works by love.” It declares “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Of course there can be no such faith as this while the soul is in the bondage of sin.

A certain Doctor of Divinity not long since, in opposing the doctrine of sanctification, insisted that holiness is in no sense and in no degree a condition of salvation, and that the condition is nothing but faith. Faith, he



holds, can exist, pure and acceptable to God, ensuring the salvation of the believer, and *all without holiness*. Monstrous absurdity! What! teach that a man can have saving faith without being turned from sin, without forsaking all or even any of his iniquities! *Horrible!* HORRIBLE! There never was a worse error taught by men or devils! I would as soon rebuke a man for this as for downright atheism. There is not a truth in the moral universe more palpable and certain than that saving faith must imply holiness. The faith that justifies must also sanctify. If not, it were easy to show that God has made a grievous and fatal mistake in the conditions of salvation! What! has God contrived a system for justifying sinners IN THEIR SINS?

**10.** Multitudes suppose themselves converted who have never been even convicted. I have often fallen in with a certain man who has been instrumental in convicting many sinners, and probably of converting some, but who could give no account whatever of the spirituality of God's law and of what sin is. Not less than a dozen times in a single week has he asked me what benevolence is. He could not retain the idea of what constituted true religion. "What is it," he would say, "How did you define disinterested benevolence?"

Now it is no wonder that he could not develop the true idea of sin and impress it on the minds of others. He did not seem to have himself the very first idea of what sin is. It is therefore natural that under his instructions many should suppose themselves converted who were not even convicted. They had not felt deep and pungent conviction for sin, and therefore it was not naturally possible that they should repent and put it away. Nothing can be more philosophical than this — that men must know the truth, and the truth must make them free.

**11.** Many fall into the error of mistaking conviction for conversion. The great distress of conviction passes away; the ease and peace that follow give birth to the hope that they are converted. There is indeed a change, and they flatter themselves it is from sin to grace. They have been alarmed and the alarm has subsided, but they have not received Christ at all.

Now I want you to apprehend this. Many get a hope, but do not get Christ. They get a different state of mind, but not a Christian state. They have no other faith than they had before. They are not conscious of having

cast off their own righteousness and put on Christ's. They have not renounced sin and self and gone over to the new covenant.

How is it with you? Do you know how you came by your hope? And what it is to go over from the law as a ground of salvation, to the gospel — to abandon the old way of self-righteousness, and trust in the righteousness of Christ alone? Have you begun really to drink of Christ's fullness — to know the depths of that fountain of living waters — to have it in your very soul, a well of living water, springing up to everlasting life, bubbling up and pouring forth as if really an exhaustless fountain were in your very soul? You know we read of such things in the Bible. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "And this Christ said of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive."

Have you received it? If not, then there must be a mistake about your having believed with saving faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Rely upon it, if a man has this faith in Christ, the living waters from his full soul will flow out, and there will be a green spot around him, however barren the region round about may be. Religion will be his theme. He can not live without manifesting forth that Christ who lives and reigns within him.

How is it with you in this respect? Do your spirit and life bear witness that you have this faith in Jesus Christ, and this indwelling Spirit of Christ in your soul?

**12.** Many confound resolutions to do what they think right, with real religion. Now it should be considered that mere resolutions are purely *legal*, and differ fundamentally from the religion of love. Suppose, for illustration, that the wife should say, "I must do just right towards my husband — precisely right in everything;" — and she screws herself up by dint of resolutions to do every thing that is *right* — and this is all. Would you suppose this to be *love* — the whole of the love which befits the relation of a wife to her husband?

I saw a lady in Boston who manifested the greatest anxiety lest some word or thought should be wrong. Indeed she seemed to be in agony lest she should infringe upon some principles of duty towards God or man. I noticed her great legality. I said to her, "Sister, I see you seem to be in

great distress lest you should not please your Savior — you seem to be in agony about it all the time; now tell me — Have you the same sort of distress and agony lest you should not please your husband?” “O no,” said she. “Why not?” “Because,” said she, “It is natural for me to please my husband, and I know that I do. I love to please him and it does not seem to cost me any effort.” “Why then,” said I, “should it not be so towards Christ? Why not make His service a sweet labor of love? Why act as if nothing but the pricks of conscience can keep you in the path of obedience? Why not yield up your soul to all the impulses of pure love, and let it reign, strong, sweet, attractive, all-controlling? This would make your religious duties a paradise.”

**13.** Many have made up their minds to serve God, as they suppose, and this is the form of their religion and the whole of it. Now it is plain that if they have not formed the right conception of what this service is, it may be the case and probably is, that they have no religion at all.

Let us illustrate this in reference to one vital point. Suppose a wife should make up her mind to serve her husband. By this she understands that she shall do all the things externally which he requires. She is going to be his real servant and evermore do all his bidding. But unfortunately in her estimate of duties, the element of love has entirely dropped out, and she takes no notice of this whatever. She means to be faithful in all her domestic duties — she will keep his house and his clothes in first rate order and will leave no external duty neglected — but all may be as heartless as if it were done by a steam engine. Now although such duty, so performed, might be enduring in an employed domestic, yet who could endure it in a wife? What husband would not say — “You are the chosen companion of my life — the chosen object of my love, and when I vowed my conjugal affections to you, I flattered myself the vow was really reciprocated. I do not want your tasks — I want your *heart*.”

And is it strange that God also should ask for the *heart*? Has He not given us His, in such forms as most impressively demand the reciprocal devotion of ours?

But let us see what this man proposes to do who has made up his mind to serve God. First, he is going to pray — pray to be forgiven. Wonderful service this, if rendered as come profitable work for the Lord — with no

brokenness, or affection of heart in it! Just as if I should go to a man fifty times a day or twice a day and ask him to cancel my debt to him; and should enter my charge in account for each prayer, paying off my debt — in praying!

What else? Well, he will go to church. O, what service is this, of mocking insult to God, if no heart is in it! In truth no matter what the outside service may be, it is an odious abomination to God, unless the deep outgoings of the heart are with it. You might circumnavigate the globe with your zeal, or give your flesh to a martyr's flame, yet all would be less in Gods' esteem, no heart being in it — than the little tear of penitence and affection which quivers in the dying eye of a saint who can not raise his finger in any act of outward service for God. Aye, it is the *love* lying deep in the heart, which catches the eye of the great God. And for you to talk about serving Him without love is supreme nonsense.

**14.** Many deceive themselves by supposing that selfish regrets and sorrow are real repentance. That sorrow and regret are always selfish, which leave sin still in existence — which can be felt and sin still be indulged. Nothing can be plainer than this. You would all judge thus in the case of your child who should regret and sorrow bitterly about his crime and its consequences, *if he still kept up the practice of the crime*. You could not have any confidence in his tears, if you knew they only covered the purpose to steal or lie as soon as your back is turned. You would know what account to make of *such tears*.

Let those professors who can weep and pray about their sin, yet never give it up, but hold on in sinning, look into this mirror and behold their own hearts.

**15.** Many deceive themselves by a faith which abolishes instead of establishing the law. Obviously such faith never can answer under the government of a righteous God.

**16.** Many suppose that God justifies and accepts them while they really condemn themselves. They seem to think that God approves of them and of their moral state while deep in their minds there is self-condemnation. Now the Bible says that if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, and of course condemns us. No delusion can

be greater than this. Strange notions must he have of the purity of God and the strictness of His law, if he supposes that his own conscience is more strict than God is. He sees that he himself must condemn such a state as his own; but he flatters himself that God is not so particular about little sins as his own conscience is! O, what a delusion!

## REMARKS

1. These delusions are all *voluntary*. Men *need* not be deceived by their pride of heart, and would not be if they were not quite willing to have it so.
2. God will by and by tear the mask away and reveal our real character to all the universe. He is now employing various means in His providence and through His grace to undeceive men; but if all these means fail, ere long He will send His hail to sweep away all refuges of lies forever. Then and thenceforward, “he that is filthy shall be filthy still,” forever hopeless of moral cleansing.
3. All these delusions are based upon dishonesty of mind. Where there is real honesty, carried out in faithful performance of known duty, and humble trust in divine guidance, there is no danger of being deluded.
4. We see the great folly of those who imagine that if they are only sincere, they shall be saved. What do they mean by sincerity? This; namely, that they really believe what they profess. But may not men *really believe a lie*? Is it not said of some that because they “do not love the truth, God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness?” The fatal mistake made by those who think that all sincere men will be saved, is this: they overlook the fact that men may be sincerely wicked, and, becoming sincerely wicked, they may bring themselves to believe a lie sincerely, and God may judicially leave them to the natural influence of a wicked heart upon the mind’s apprehension of truth.
5. Many cry “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” I often wonder how it happens that when they go alone and fall down before God to pray, it

does not strike them at once that they are shut out, and have no communion with God at all. Why do they not see that they have made a fatal mistake in supposing that they have any spiritual access to God, and real communion of soul with Him?

**6.** Many love to have their hurt healed slightly. They cannot bear to have their wound thoroughly probed. Hence instead of throwing their naked bosom open to the probe of truth, and crying — God of mercy, let this search me, and let it go to the bottom of all the hidden evils of my heart — they wrap themselves all about with mufflers of self-righteousness, and then they will sit and writhe and dodge through fear that some word of truth will make unwelcome revelations of self to their own view. O, what will they say when God shall come down in the cool of the day, and talk with them face to face about this!

**7.** Some seem determined never to know themselves. They will evade self-knowledge, press it upon their attention as you may. You may try to seize them to hold the mirror before their eyes; they will shut their eyes or turn their heads round — you cannot make them look into any moral self-revealer. I have known cases in which a man's friends have tried to seize him, and hold him still long enough to get the truth before his eyes, but they might as well have tried to grasp the North wind.

**8.** Pride of heart is one of the most disgusting as well as most dangerous of all forms of sin. A proud man is perpetually exposed to deceive himself in everything. There he stands on top of a precipice; sheets of lightning blaze around his head, and dark waves of damnation roll beneath his feet. What is he doing there? Ah, me! *dancing!* dancing giddily as if he never had the first idea of danger in his mind.

*“I heard the wretch profanely boast,  
Till at Thy frown he fell;  
His honors in a dream were lost,  
And he awoke in hell.”*

O, let us put all these delusions away. Go to your closet. Search your inmost heart; tear away every delusion — cry out, O, my God, *bring in a light!* Let me see myself! O for a *light* — A LIGHT; let me know my own heart to the bottom. O, search and find out where you are, before an arrow smite you!

Hark? has it struck him? Is he dead? Yes, dead; and from my knowledge of him, I fear he has gone down to hell! *Religion never was his theme.* He did not love God's most searching truth. He never loved to examine his own heart. I think without a doubt, he is afar down in the depths of hell.

# THE EXCUSES OF SINNERS

*“Wilt thou also disannul my judgment?  
Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” — Job 40:8.*

Although in the main, Job had spoken correctly of God, yet in his great anguish and perturbation under his sore trials, he had said some things which were hasty and abusive. For these the Lord rebuked him. This rebuke is contained in our context:

“Moreover the Lord answered Job, bad said — Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.

“Then Job answered the Lord, and said — Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, but I will proceed no further.

“Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said — Gird up thy loins now like a man; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” — Job 40:1-8

It is not, however, my object to discuss the original purpose and connection of these words, but rather to consider their present application to the ease of sinners. In pursuing this object, I shall

- I. SHOW THAT EVERY EXCUSE FOR SIN CONDEMNS GOD.**
- II. CONSIDER SOME OF THESE EXCUSES IN DETAIL.**
- III. SHOW THAT EXCUSE FOR SIN ADDS INSULT TO INJURY.**



## I. EVERY EXCUSE FOR SIN CONDEMNS GOD. THIS WILL BE APPARENT IF WE CONSIDER,

**1.** That nothing can be sin for which there is a justifiable excuse.

This is entirely self-evident. It therefore needs neither elucidation nor proof.

**2.** If God condemns that for which there is a good excuse, He must be wrong. This also is self-evident. If God condemns what we have good reason for doing, no intelligence in the universe can justify Him.

**3.** But God does condemn all sin. He condemns it utterly, and will not allow the least apology or excuse for it. Hence, either there is no apology for it, or God is wrong.

**4.** Consequently, every excuse for sin charges blame upon God, and virtually accuses Him of tyranny. Whoever pleads an excuse for sin, therefore, charges God with blame.

## II. WE WILL CONSIDER SOME OF THESE EXCUSES,

and see whether the principles I have laid down are not just and true.

**1.** INABILITY. No excuse is more common. It is echoed and re-echoed over every Christian land, and handed down age after age, never to be forgotten. With unblushing face it is proclaimed that men cannot do what God requires of them.

Let us examine this and see what it amounts to. God, it is said, requires what men cannot do. And does He know that men cannot do it? Most certainly. Then He has no apology for requiring it, and the requisition is most unreasonable. Human reason can never justify it. It is a natural impossibility.

But again, upon what penalty does God require what man cannot do? The threatened penalty is eternal death! Yes, eternal death, according to the views of those who plead inability as an excuse. God requires me, on pain

of eternal death, to do that which He knows I cannot do. Truly this condemns God in the worst sense. You might just as well charge God outright with being an infinite tyrant.

Moreover, it is not for us to say whether on these conditions we shall or shall not charge God with infinite tyranny, for we cannot help it. The law of our reason demands it.

Hence, those who plant themselves upon these grounds charge God with infinite tyranny. Perhaps, sinner, you little think when you urge the excuse of inability, that you are really arraigning God on the charge of infinite tyranny. And you, Christian, who make this dogma of inability a part of your “orthodox” creed, may have little noticed its blasphemous bearings against the character of God; but your failure to notice it alters not the fact. The black charge is involved in the very doctrine of inability, and cannot be explained out of it.

I have intimated that this charge is blasphemous against, God — and most truly. Far be it from God to do any such thing! Shall God require natural impossibilities, and denounce eternal death upon men for not doing what they have no natural power to do? Never: Yet good men and bad men agree together to charge God with doing this very thing, and doing it not once or twice only, but uniformly through all ages, with all the race, from the beginning to the end of time! Horrible! Nothing in all the government of God ever so insulted and abused Jehovah! Nothing was ever more blasphemous and false! God says, “his commandments are not grievous;” but you, by this excuse of inability, proclaim that God’s words are false. You declare that His commands are not only grievous, but are even naturally impossible! Hark! what does the Lord Jesus say? “My yoke is easy and my burden is light.” And do you deny this? Do you rise up in the very face of His words and say — “Lord, Thy yoke is so hard that no man can possibly endure it; Thy burden is so heavy that no man can ever bear it.” Is not this gainsaying and blaspheming Him who can not lie?

But you take the ground that no man can obey the law of God. As the Presbyterian Confession of Faith has it, “No man is able, either by himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.” Observe, this affirms not only that no man is naturally able to keep

God's commands, but also that no man is able to do it "by any grace received in this life;" thus making this declaration a libel on the Gospel as well as a palpable misrepresentation of the law of its Author, and of man's relations to both. It is only moderate language to call this assertion from the Confession of Faith a libel. If there is a lie, either in hell or out of hell, this is a lie, or God is an infinite tyrant. If reason be allowed to speak at all, it is impossible for her to say less or otherwise than thus. And has not God constituted the reason of man for the very purpose of taking cognizance of the rectitude of all his ways?

Let God be true though every man be proved a liar! In the present case, the remarkable fact that no man can appease his own conscience and satisfy himself that he is truly unable to keep the law, shows that man lies, not God.

**2.** A second excuse which sinners make is want of time. Suppose I tell one of my sons — "Go, do this or that duty, on pain of being whipped to death." He replies, "Father, I can't possibly do it, for I have not time. I must be doing that other business which you told me to do; and besides, if I had nothing else to do, I could not possibly do this new business in the time you allow." Now if this statement be the truth, and I knew it when I gave him the command, then I am a tyrant. There is no evading this charge. My conduct toward my son is downright tyranny.

So if God really requires of you what you have not time to do, He is infinitely to blame. For He surely knows how little time you have, and it is undeniable that He enforces His requisitions with most terrific penalties. What! is God so reckless of justice, so regardless of the well-being of His creatures, that He can sport with red-hot thunder-bolts, and hurl them, despite of justice and right, among His unfortunate creatures? Never! NEVER! This is not true; it is only the false assumption which the sinner makes when he pleads as his excuse, that he has not time to do what Good demands of him.

Let me ask you, sinner, how much time will it take you to do the first great duty which God requires — namely, give Him your heart? How long will this take? How long need you be in making up your mind to serve and love God? Do you not know that this, when done, will be done in one moment of time? And how long need you be in persuading yourself to do it?

Your meaning may be this: Lord, it takes me so long to make up my mind to serve thee, it seems as if I never should get time enough for this; even the whole of life seems almost too short for me to bring my mind to this unwelcome decision. Is this your meaning, sinner?

But let us look on all sides of the subject.. Suppose I say to my son — “Do this now, my son;” and he replies, “I can’t, father, for I must do that other thing you told me to do.” Does God do so? No. God only requires the duty of each moment in its time. This is all. He only asks us to use faithfully just all the power He has given us — nothing more. He only requires that we do the best we can. When He prescribes the amount of love which will please Him, He does not say — Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with the powers of an angel — with the burning heart of a seraph — no, but only “with all thy heart” — this is all. An infinitely ridiculous plea is this of the sinner’s, that he cannot do as well as he can — cannot love God with all his own heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Thou shalt do the best that thou art able to do, says God to the sinner. Ah, says the sinner, I am not able to do that. Oh, what stupid nonsense!

You charge that God is unreasonable. The truth is, God is the most reasonable of all beings. He asks only that we should use each moment for Him, in labour, or in rest, whichever is most for His glory. He only requires that with the time, talents, and strength which He has given us, we should do all we can to serve Him.

Says that mother — “How can I be religious? I have to take care of all my children.” Indeed! and can’t you get time to serve God? What does God require of you? That you should forsake and neglect your children? No, indeed; He asks you to take care of your children — good care of them; and do it all for God. He says to you — Those are my children; and He puts them into your hands, saying — Take care of them for Me, and I will give thee wages. And now will it require more time to take care of your children for God, than to take care of them for yourself? O, but you say, I cannot be religious, for I must be up in the morning and get my breakfast. And how much longer will it take you to get your breakfast ready to please God, than to do the same to please yourself? How much longer time must you have to do your duties religiously, than to do them selfishly?

What, then, do you mean by this plea? The fact is, all these excuses show that the excuser is mad — not insane, but mad. For what does God require so great that you should be unable to do it for want of time? Only this, that you should do all for God. Persons who make this plea seem to have entirely overlooked the real nature of religion, and of the requisitions that God makes of them. So it is with the plea of inability. The sinner says, “I am unable.” Unable to do what? Just what you can do; for God never requires anything beyond this. Unless, therefore, you assume that God requires of you more than you can do, your plea is false, and even ridiculous. If, on the other hand, you do not assume this, then your plea, if true, would not show God to be unjust.

But I was saying that in this plea of having no time to be religious, men entirely overlook or pervert the true idea of religion. The farmer pleads — “I can’t be religious; I can’t serve God — I must sow my wheat.” Well, sow your wheat; but do it for the Lord. O, but you have so much to do! Then do it all for the Lord. Another can’t be religious for he must get his lesson. Well, get your lesson, but get it for the Lord, and this will be religious. The man who should neglect to sow his wheat or neglect to get his lessons because he wants to be religious, is crazy. He perverts the plainest things in the worst way. If you are to be religious, you must be industrious. The farmer must sow his wheat, and the student must get his lesson. An idle man can no more be religious than the devil can be. This notion that men can’t be religious, because they have some business to do, is the merest nonsense. It utterly overlooks the great truth that God never forbids our doing the appropriate business of life, but only requires that we shall do all for Himself. If God did require us to serve Him in such a way as would compel us to neglect the practical duties of life, it would be truly a hard case. But now the whole truth is, that He requires us to do precisely these duties, and do them all honestly and faithfully for Him and in the best possible manner. Let the farmer take care of his farm, and see that he does it well, and above all, do it for God. It is God’s farm, and the heart of every farmer is God’s heart, therefore let the farm be tilled for God, and the heart be devoted to Him alone.

**3.** Men plead a sinful nature for their excuse. And pray, what is this sinful nature Do you mean by it that every faculty and even the very essence of your constitution were poisoned and made sinful in Adam, and came down

in this polluted state by inheritance to you? Do you mean that you were so born in sin that the substance of your being is all saturated with it, and so that all the faculties of your constitution are themselves sin Do you believe this?

I admit if this were true, it would make out a hard case. A hard case indeed! Until the laws of my reason are changed, it would compel me to speak out openly and say — Lord, this is a hard case, that Thou shouldst make my nature itself a sinner, and then charge the guilt of its sin upon me! I could not help saying this; the deep echoings of my inner being would proclaim it without ceasing, and the breaking of ten thousand thunderbolts over my head would not deter me from thinking and saying so. The reason God has given me would forever affirm it.

But the dogma is an utter absurdity. For, pray, what is sin? God answers — “transgression of law.” And now you hold that your nature is itself a breach of the law of God — nay, that it has always been a breach of God’s law, from Adam to the day of your birth; you hold that the current of this sin came down in the veins and blood of your race — and who made it so? Who created the veins and blood of man? From whose hand sprang this physical constitution and this mental constitution? Was man his own creator? Did sin do a part of the work in creating your physical and your mental constitution? Do you believe any such thing No you ascribe your nature and its original faculties to God, and upon Him, therefore, you charge the guilty authorship of your “sinful nature.”

But how strange a thing is this; If man is in fault for his sinful nature, why not condemn man for having blue or black eyes? The fact is, sin never can consist in having a nature, nor in what nature is; but only and alone in the bad which we make of our nature. This is all. Our Maker will never find fault with us for what He has Himself done or made; certainly not. He will not condemn us, if we will only make a right use of our powers — of our intellect, our sensibility, and our will. He never holds us responsible for our original nature. If you will observe, you will find that God has given no law prescribing what sort of nature and constitutional powers we should have. He has given no law on these points, the transgression of which, if given, might somewhat resemble the definition of sin. But now since there is no law about nature, nature cannot be a transgression.

Here let me say, that if God were to make a law prescribing what nature or constitution a man must have, it could not possible be otherwise than unjust and absurd, for the reason that man's nature is not a proper subject for legislation, precept, and penalty, inasmuch as it lies entirely without the pale of voluntary action, or of any action of man at all. And yet thousands of men have held the dogma that sin consists in great part in having a sinful nature. Yes, through long ages of past history, grave theologians have gravely taught this monstrous dogma; it has resounded from pulpits, and has been stereotyped for the press, and men have seemed to be never weary of glorifying this dogma as the surest test of sound orthodoxy! Orthodoxy! There never was a more infamous libel on Jehovah! It would be hard to name another dogma which more violently outrages common sense. It is nonsense — absurd and utter NONSENSE! I would to God that it were not even worse than nonsense. Think what mischief it has wrought! Think how it has scandalized the law, the government, and the character of God! Think how it has filled the mouths of sinners with excuses from the day of its birth to this hour!

Now I do not mean to imply that the men who have held this dogma have intelligently insulted God with it. I do not imply that they have been aware of the impious and even blasphemous bearings of this dogma upon Jehovah; — I am happy to think that some at least have done all this mischief ignorantly. But the blunder and the mischief have been none the less for the honest ignorance in which they were done.

**4.** Sinners, in self-excuse, say they are willing to be Christians. They are willing, they say, to be sanctified. O yes, they are very willing; but there is some great difficulty lying further back or something else — perhaps they do not know just where — but it is somewhere, and it will not let them become Christians.

Now the fact is, if we are really willing, there is nothing more which we can do. Willing is all we have to do morally in the case, and all we can do. But the plea, as in the sinner's mouth, maintains that God requires of us what is naturally impossible. It assumes that God requires of us something more than right willing; and this, be it what it may, is, of course, to us, an impossibility. If I will to move my muscles, and no motion follows, I have done all I can do; there is a difficulty beyond my reach, and I am in no

blame for its existence, or for its impediment. Just so, if I were to will to serve God, and absolutely no effect should follow, I have done my utmost, and God never can demand anything more. In fact, to will is the very thing which God does require. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted." Do tell me, parent, if you had told your child to do anything, and you saw him exerting himself to the utmost, would you ask anything more? If you should see a parent demanding and enforcing of a child more than he could possibly do, however willing, would you not denounce that parent as a tyrant? Certainly you would. The slave-driver, even, is not wont to beat his slave, if he sees him willing to do all he can.

This plea is utterly false, for no sinner is willing to be any better than he actually is. If the will is right, all is right; and universally the state of the will is the measure of one's moral character. Those men, therefore, who plead that they are willing to be Christians while yet they remain in their sins, talk mere nonsense.

**5.** Sinners say they are waiting God's time. A lady in Philadelphia had been in great distress of mind for many years. On calling to see her, I asked — "What does God require of you? What is your case?" "Oh," said she, "God waited on me a long time before I began to seek Him at all, and now I must wait for Him as long as He did for me. So my minister tells me. You see, therefore, that I am waiting in great distress for God to receive me."

Now what is the real meaning of this? It comes to this; God urges me to duty, but is not ready for me to do it; He tells me to come to the Gospel feast, and I am ready; but He is not ready to let me in.

Now does not this throw all the blame upon God? Could anything do so more completely than this does? The sinner says — "I am ready, and willing, and waiting; but God is not yet ready for me to stop sinning. His hour has not yet come."

When I first began to preach, I found this notion almost universal. Often, after pressing men to duty, I have been accosted — "What, you throw all the blame upon the sinner!" "Yes, indeed I do," would be my reply. An old lady once met me after preaching and broke out, "What! you set men to getting religion themselves! You tell them to repent themselves? You



don't mean so, do you ?" "Indeed I do," said I. She had been teaching for many years that the sinner's chief duty is to await God's time.

**6.** Shiners plead in excuse, that their circumstances are very peculiar. I know my duty well enough, but my circumstances are so peculiar. And does not God understand your circumstances? Nay, has not His providence been concerned in making them what they are? If so, then you are throwing blame upon God. You say — "O Lord, Thou art a hard Master, for Thou hast never made any allowance for my circumstances."

But how much, sinner, do you really mean in making this plea? Do you mean that your circumstances are so peculiar that God ought to excuse you from becoming religious, at least for the present? If you do not mean as much as this, why do you make your circumstances your excuse at all? If you do mean this, then you are just as much mistaken as you can be. For God requires you, despite of your circumstances, to abandon your sin. If, now, your circumstances are so peculiar that you cannot serve God in them, you must abandon them or lose your soul. If they are such as admit of your serving God in them, then do so at once.

But you say — "I can't get out of my circumstances" I reply, You can; you can get out of the wickedness of them; for if it is necessary in order to serve God, you can change them; and if not, you can repent and serve God in them.

**7.** ' The sinner's next excuse is that his temperament is peculiar. "Oh," he says, "I am very nervous; or my temperament is very sluggish; I seem to have no sensibility." Now what does God require? Does He require of you another or a different sensibility from your own? Or does He require only that you should use what you have according to the law of love?

But such is the style of a multitude of excuses. One has too little excitement; another, too much; so neither can possibly repent and serve God! A woman came to me, and pleaded that she was naturally too excitable, and dared not trust herself; and therefore could not repent. Another has the opposite trouble — too sluggish — scarce ever sheds tear — and therefore could make nothing out of religion if he should try. But does God require you to shed more tears you are naturally able to shed? Or does He only require that you should serve Him? Certainly this is all.

Serve Him with the very powers He has given you. Let your nerves be ever so excitable, come and lay those quivering sensibilities over into the hands of God — pour out that sensibility into the heart of God! — this is all that He requires. I know how to sympathize with that woman, for I know much about a burning sensibility; but does God require feeling and excitement? Or only a perfect consecration of all our powers Himself?

**8.** But, says another, my health is so poor that I can't go to meeting, and therefore can't be religious.

Well, what does God require? Does He require that you should go to all the meetings, by evening or by day, whether you have the requisite health for it or not? Infinitely far from it. If you are not able to go to meeting, yet you can give God your heart. If you can not go in bad weather, be assured that God is infinitely the most reasonable being that ever existed. He makes all due allowance for every circumstance. Does He not know all your weakness? Indeed He does. And do you suppose that He comes into your sickroom and denounces you for not being able to go to meeting, or for not attempting when unable, and for not doing all in your sickness that you might do in health? No, not He; but He comes into your sick-room as a Father. He comes to pour out the deepest compassions of His heart in pity and in love; and why should you not respond to His lovingkindness? He comes to you and says — “Give me your heart, my child.” And now you reply — “I have no heart.” Then He has nothing to ask of you — He thought you had; and thought, too, that He had done enough to draw your heart in love and gratitude to Himself. He asks — “What can you find in all my dealings with you that is grievous? If nothing, why do you bring forward pleas in excuse for sin that accuse and condemn God?”

**9.** Another excuse is in this form — “My heart is so hard, that I can not feel.” This is very common, both among professors and non-professors. In reality it is only another form of the plea of inability. In fact, all the sinner's excuses amount only to this — “I am unable” — “I can't do what God requires.” If the plea of a hard heart is any excuse at all, it must be on the ground of real inability.

But what is hardness of heart? Do you mean that you have so great apathy of the sensibility that you can not get up any emotion? Or, do you mean that you have no power to will or to act right? Now on this point, it should

be considered that the emotions are altogether involuntary. They go and come according to circumstances, and therefore are never required by the law of God, and are not, properly speaking, either religion itself, or any part of it. Hence, if by a hard heart you mean a dull sensibility, you mean what has no concern with the subject. God asks you to yield your will, and consecrate your affections to Himself, and He asks this, whether you have any feeling or not.

Real hardness of heart, in the Bible use of the phrase, means stubbornness of will. So in the child, a hard heart means a will set in fixed stubbornness against doing its parent's bidding. The child may have in connection with this, either much or little emotion. His sensibilities may be acute and thoroughly aroused, or they may be dormant; and yet the stubborn will may be there in either case.

Now the hardness of heart of which God complains in the sinner is precisely of this sort. The sinner cleaves to his self-indulgence, and will not relinquish it, and then complains of hardness of heart. What would you think of a child, who, when required to do a most reasonable thing, should say "My heart is so hard, I can't yield." "O," he says, "my will is so set to have my own way that I can not possibly yield to my father's authority."

This complaint is extremely common. Many a sinner makes it, who has been often warned, often prayed with and wept over, who has been the subject of many convictions. And does he really mean by this plea that he finds his will obstinate that he can not make up his mind to yield to God's claims? Does he mean this, and does he intend really to publish his own shame? Suppose you go to the devils in hell, and press on them the claims of God, and they should reply "O, my heart is so hard, I can't" — what would be their meaning? Only this: I am so obstinate — my will is so set in sin, that I can not for a moment indulge the thought of repentance. This would be their meaning, and if the sinner tells the truth of himself, and uses language correctly, he must mean the same. But oh, how does he add insult to injury by this declaration. Suppose a child should plead this — I can not find it in my heart to love my father and my mother; my heart is so hard towards them; I never can love them; I can feel pleasure only in abusing them, and trampling down their authority. What a plea is this?

Does not this heap insult upon wrong Or suppose a murderer arraigned before the court, and permitted before his sentence to speak, if he had ought to say why sentence should not be passed; suppose he should rise and say — “May it please the court, my heart for long time has been as hard as a millstone. I have murdered so many men, and have been in the practice so long, that I can kill a man without the least compunction of conscience. Indeed, I have such an insatiable thirst for blood that I can not help murdering whenever I have a good opportunity. In fact, my heart is so hard that I find I like this employment full as well as any other.”

Well, how long will the court listen to such a plea? “Hold there! hold!” the judge would cry — “you infamous villain, we can hear no more such pleas! Here, sheriff, bring in a gallows, and hang the man within these very walls of justice, for I will not leave the bench until I see him dead! He will murder us all here in this house if he can!”

Now what shall we think of the sinner who says the same thing? O God, he says, my heart is so hard I never can love Thee. I hate Thee so sincerely I never can make up my mind to yield this heart to Thee is love and willing submission!

Sinners, how many of you (in this house) have made this plea — “My heart is so hard, I can’t repent. I can’t love and serve God!” Go, write it down; publish it to the universe-make your boast of being so hard-hearted that no claims of God can ever move you. Methinks if you were to make such a plea, you would not be half through before the whole universe would hiss you from their presence and chase you from the face of these heavens till you would cry out for some rocks or mountains to hide you from their scathing rebukes! Their voice of indignation would rise up and ring along the arch of heaven like the roar of ten thousand tornadoes, and overwhelm you with unutterable confusion and shame! What, do you insult and abuse the Great Jehovah? Oh! do you condemn that very God who has watched over you in unspeakable love — fanned you with His gentle zephyrs in your sickness — feasted you at His own table, and you would not thank Him, or even notice His providing hand? And then when the sympathy of your Christian friends has pressed you with entreaties to repent, and they have made you a special subject of their prayers — when angels have wept over you, and unseen spirits have lifted their warning

voices in your pathway to hell — you turn up your face of brass towards Jehovah, and tell Him your heart is so hard you can't repent, and don't care whether you ever do or not! You seize a spear and plunge it into the heart of the crucified One, and then cry out — "I can't be sorry, not I; my heart is hard as stone! I don't care, and I will not repent" What a wretch you are, sinner, if this is your plea.

But what does your plea amount to? Only this — that your heart is fully set to do evil. The sacred writer has revealed your case most clearly — "Because vengeance against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." You stand before the Lord just in this daring, blasphemous attitude-fully set in your heart to do evil.

**10.** Another form of the same plea is, My heart is so wicked I can't. Some do not hesitate to avow this wickedness of heart. What do they mean by it? If they mean that they are so hardened in sin, and so desperately wicked, that they will not bow? This is the only proper sense of their language, and this is the precise truth.

Since you bring this forward, sinner, as your excuse, your object must be to charge this wickedness of heart upon God. Covertly, perhaps, but really, you imply that God is concerned in creating that wicked heart: This is it, and this is the whole of it. You would feel no interest in the excuse, and it would never escape your lips but for this tacit implication that God is in fault for your wicked heart. This is only the plea of inability, coupled with its twin sister, original sin, coming down in the created blood and veins of the race, under the Creator's responsibility.

**11.** Another kindred plea is — My heart is so deceitful. Suppose a man should make this excuse for deceiving his neighbour — "I Can't help Cheating you. I can't help lying to you and abusing you; my heart is so deceitful!" Would any man in his senses ever suppose that this could be an apology or excuse for doing wrong? Never. Of course, unless the sinner means in this plea to set forth his own guilt and condemn himself, he must intend it as some sort of justification; and, if so, he must, in just so far, cast the blame upon God. And this is usually his intention. He does not mean sincerely to confess his own guilt; no, he charges the guilt of his deceitful heart upon God.

**12.** Another excuses himself by the plea, I have tried to become a Christian. I have done all I can do; I have tried often, earnestly, and long.

You have tried, then, you say, to be a Christian; what is being a Christian? Giving your heart to God. And what is giving your heart to God? Devoting your voluntary powers to Him; ceasing to live for yourself and living for God. This is being a Christian — the state you profess to have been trying to attain.

No excuse is more common than this. And what is legitimately implied in this trying to be a Christian. A willingness to do your duty is always implied; that the heart, that is, the will is right already; and the trying refers only to the outward efforts — the executive acts. For there is no sense whatever in a man's saying that he is trying to do what he has no intention or will to do. The very statement implies that his will is not only in favour, but is thoroughly committed and really in earnest to attain the end chosen.

Consequently, if a man tries to be a Christian his heart is obedient to God, and his trying must respect his outward action. These are so connected with the will that they follow by a law of necessity unless the connection is broken; and, when this takes place, no sin attends our failure to secure the outward act. God does not hold us responsible.

Hence, the sinner ought to mean by this plea — “I have obeyed God a long time” — I have had a right heart — and I have tried sincerely to secure such external action as comports with Christian character.

Now, if this be true, you have done your duty. But do you mean to affirm all this? No, you say. Then what do you mean?

Suppose I should say to my son, “Do this; do it, my son; why have you not done it?” “O,” he says, “father, I have tried;” but he does not mean that he has ever intended to do it — that he has ever made up his mind to obey me; he only means, “I have been willing to try — I made up my mind to try to be willing;” that is all! “O,” he says, “I have brought myself to be willing to try to will to do it.”

So you say — I have tried to get religion. And what is religion that you could not get it? How did you fail? You have been trying, probably, in this

way. God has said, “Give me thy heart,” and you turned round and asked God to do it Himself, or perhaps you simply waited for Him to do it. He commanded you to repent, and you have tried to get Him to repent for you. He said, believe the Gospel, and you have only been thinking of getting Him to believe for you. No wonder you have tried for a long time in vain. How could it be otherwise? You have not been trying to do what God commanded you to do, but to induce God to change His system of moral government and put Himself in your place to do Himself the duty He enjoins upon you. What a miserable perversion is this. Now, as to this whole plea of having tried to be a Christian, what is the use of it? You will easily see its use when you realize duly:

- (1.) That it is utterly false when understood as you intend it.
- (2.) That it is a foul implication of the character of God. You say — Lord, I know I can’t — I have tried all I can, and I know I cannot become a Christian. I am willing to get religion, but I cannot make it out.

Who, then, is to blame? Not yourself, according to your statement of your case. Where, then, is the blame? Let me ask — what would be said in the distant regions of the universe if you were believed there, when you say, I have tried with all my heart to love and serve God, but I can’t?

But they never can believe such a libel on their own infinite Father! Of course they will pronounce your doom as you deserve.

**13.** Another excuses himself by the plea — it will do no good to try. And what do you mean by this? Do you mean that God will not pay well for service done Him? Or do you mean that He will not forgive you if you do repent? Do you think (as some do) that you have sinned away your day of grace?

Well, suppose you have; is this any reason why you should go on in sin? Do you not believe that God is good? O, yes. And that He will forgive you if the good of the universe admits? Most certainly. Then is the impossibility of His forgiving you any reason why you should go on in sin for ever, and for ever rage against a God of infinite goodness? You believe Him to be compassionate and forgiving; then should you not say, I will at least stop sinning against such a God! Why not say with the man who dreamed that he was just going to hell, and as he was parting with his

brother — going, as his dream had it, to heaven, he said — “I am going down to hell, but I want you to tell God for me that I am greatly obliged to Him for ten thousand mercies which I never deserved; He has never done to me the least injustice; give Him my thanks for all the unmerited good He has done me.” At this point he awoke, and found himself bathed in tears of repentance and gratitude to his Father in heaven. O, if men would only act as reasonably as that man dreamed, it would be noble — it would be right. If when they suppose themselves to have sinned away the day of grace, they would say, “I know God is good — I will at least send Him my thanks — He has done me no injustice.” If they would take this course they might have at least the satisfaction of feeling that it is a reasonable and a fit one in their circumstances. Sinner, will you do this?

**14.** Another, closely pressed, says, “I have offered to give my heart to Christ, but He won’t receive me. I have no evidence that He receives me or ever will.” In the last inquiry meeting, a young woman told me she had offered to give her heart to the Lord, but He would not receive her. This was charging the lie directly upon Christ, for He has said — “Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” You say, I came and offered myself, and He would not receive me. Jesus Christ says, “Behold I stated at the door and knock; if any man” — not if some particular, some favored one — but any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come to him.” And yet when you offered Him your heart, did he spurn you away? Did he say — Away, sinner, BEGONE? No, sinner, he never did it, never. He has said He never would do it. His own words are, “Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “He that seeketh, findeth: to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” But you say, I have sought and I did not find. Do you mean to make out that Jesus Christ is a liar? Have you charged this upon Him to His very face? Do you make your solemn affirmation — “Lord, I did seek — I laid myself at Thy gate and knocked — but all in vain?” And do you mean to bring this excuse of yours as a solemn charge of falsehood against Jesus Christ and against God? This will be a serious business with you before it is done with.

**15.** But another says — “There is no salvation for me.” Do you mean that Christ has made no atonement for you? But he says, He tasted death for every man. It is declared that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him shall have eternal life.



And now do you affirm that there is no salvation provided and possible for you? Are you mourning all your way down to hell because you cannot possibly have salvation? When the cup of salvation is placed to your lips, do you dash it away, saying, That cannot be for me! And do you know this? Can you prove it even against the word of God Himself? Stand forth, then, if there be such a sinner on this footstool of God — speak it out, if you have such charge against God, and if you can prove it true. Ah, is there no hope? none at all? Oh, the difficulty is not that there is no salvation provided for and offered to you, but that there is no heart for it. “Wherefore is there a price put into the hands of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart for it?”

**16.** But perhaps you say in excuse — “I cannot change my own heart.” Cannot? Suppose Adam had made this excuse when God called him to repent after his first sin. “Make you a new heart and a right spirit,” said the Lord to him. “I cannot change my own heart myself,” replies Adam. Indeed, responds his Maker, how long is it since you changed your heart yourself! You changed it a few hours ago from holiness to sin, and will you tell your Creator that you can’t change it from sin to holiness

The sinner should consider that the change of heart is a voluntary thing. You must do it for yourself or it is never done. True, there is a sense in which God changes the heart, but it is only this: God influences the sinner to change, and then the sinner does it. The change is the sinner’s own voluntary act.

**17.** You say, again, you can’t change your heart without more conviction. Do you mean by this that you have not knowledge enough of your duty and your sin? You cannot say this. You do know your sin and your duty. You know you ought to consecrate yourself to God. What, then do you mean? Can’t you do that which you know you ought to do? Ah, there is the old lie — that shameless refuge of lies — that same foul dogma of inability. What is implied in this new form of it? This — that God is not willing to convict you enough to make it possible for you to repent. There is a work and a responsibility for God, and he will not do His work — will not bear His responsibility. Hence, you, alas, have no alternative but to go down to hell. All because God will not do His part towards your salvation! Do you really believe that, sinner?

**18.** Again, you say in excuse, that you must first have more of the Spirit. And yet you resist the Spirit every day. God offers you His Spirit, nay, more, God bestows His Spirit; but you resist it. What, then, do you mean when you pretend to want more of the Spirit's influence?

The truth is, you do not want it — you only want to make it appear that God does not do His part to help you to repent, and that as you can't repent without His help, therefore the blame of your impenitence rests on God. It is only another refuge of lies — another form of the old slander upon God — He has made me unable and won't help me out of my inability.

**19.** The sinner also excuses himself by saying — God must change my heart. But in the sense in which God requires you to do it, He cannot do it Himself. God is said to change the heart only in the sense of persuading you to do it. As in a man's change of politics, one might say — “Such a man changed my heart — he brought me over,” which, however, by no means implies that you did not change your own mind. The plain meaning is that he persuaded, and you yielded.

But this plea made by the sinner as his excuse implies that there is something more for God to do before the sinner can become religious. I have heard many professors of religion take this very ground. Yes, thousands of Christian ministers, too, have said to the sinner — “Wait for God; He will change your heart in His own good time; you can't do it yourself, and all that you can do is to put yourself in the way for the Lord to change your heart. When this time comes, He will give you a new heart, while you are asleep, perhaps, in a state of unconsciousness. God acts in this matter as a sovereign, and does His own work in His own way

So they teach — filling the mouth of the sinner with excuses and making his heart like an adamant against the real claims of God upon his conscience.

**20.** The sinner pleads, again “I can't live a Christian life if I were to become a Christian. It is unreasonable for me to expect to succeed where I see so many fail.” I recollect the case of a man who said, “It is of no use for me to repent and be a Christian, for it is altogether irrational for me to expect to do better than others have done before me.” So sinners who make

this excuse come forward very modestly and tell God — “I am very humble; Thou seest, Lord, that I have a very low opinion of myself; I am so zealous of Thine honor, and so afraid that I shall bring disgrace upon Thy cause; it does not seem at all best for me to think of becoming a Christian, I have such a horror of dishonoring Thy name.

Yes; and what then? “Therefore, I will sin on and trample the blessed Gospel under my, feet. I will persecute Thee, O my God, and make war on Thy cause, for it is better by far not to profess religion than to profess and then disgrace my profession.” What logic: Fair specimen of the absurdity of the sinner’s excuses.

This excuse assumes that there is not grace enough provided and offered to sustain the soul in a Christian life. The doctrine is, that it is irrational to expect that we can, by any grace received in this life, perfectly obey the law of God. There is not grace and help enough offered by God! And this is taught as BIBLE THEOLOGY! Away with such teaching to the nether pit whence it came!

What! is God so weak that He can’t hold up the soul that casts itself on Him? Or is He so parsimonious in bestowing His gracious aid that it must be expected always to fall short of meeting the wants of His dependent and depending child? So you seem to suppose. So hard to persuade the Lord to give you a particle of grace! Can’t get grace enough to live a Christian life with honour! What is this but charging God of withholding sufficient grace.

But what say the word and the oath of Jehovah? We read that “God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” You say, however, “If I should flee and lay hold of this hope I should fail for want of grace. I could have no ‘consolation’ in reposing upon the word of Him who cannot lie. The oath of the immutable God can never suffice for me.”

So you believe the word of God, and make up a miserably lie and guilty apology for your impenitence.

**21.** Another excuse claims that this is a very dark, mysterious subject. This matter of faith and regeneration — I can't understand it.

Sinner, did you ever meet the Lord with this objection, and say, "Lord, Thou hast required me to do this which I can't understand?" You know that you can understand well enough that you are a sinner — that Christ died for you — that you must believe on Him and break off your sins by repentance. All this is so plain that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." Your plea, therefore, is as false as it is foul. It is nothing better than a base libel on God!

**22.** But you say, "I can't believe." You mean (do you?) that you can't believe a God of infinite veracity as you can believe a fellow man? Would you imply that God asks you to believe things that are really incredible — things so revolting, to reason that you cannot admit them on any testimony that even God himself can adduce?

And do you expect to make out this case against God? Do you even believe the first point in it yourself?

But, you urge again that you can't realize these things. You know these things to be true, but you can't realize—you can't realize that the Bible is true — that God does offer to forgive — that salvation is actually provided and placed within your reach. What help can there be for a case like yours? What can make these truths more certain? But, on your own showing, you do not want more evidence. Why not, then, act upon the known truth? What more can you ask?

Do you ever carry your case before God and say, "O Lord, Thou sayest that Christ died for me, but I can't realize that it is so; and, therefore, Lord, I can't possibly embrace Him as my Saviour?" Would this be a rational excuse?

But you also plead that you can't repent. You can't be sorry you have abused God. You can't make up your mind now to break off from all sin. If this be really so, then you cannot make up your mind to obey God, and you may as well make up your mind to go to go to hell! There is no alternative!

But at any rate, you can't become a Christian now. You mean to be converted some time, but you can't make up your mind to it now. Well, God requires it now, and of course you must yield or abide the consequences.

But do you say, You can't now? Then God is very much to blame for asking it. If, however, the truth be that you can, then the lie is on your side, and it is a most infamous and abusive lie against your Maker.

### III. ALL EXCUSES FOR SIN ADD INSULT TO INJURY

**1.** A plea that reflects injuriously upon the court or the lawgiver is an aggravation of the original crime. It is always so regarded in all tribunals. It must be pre-eminently so between the sinner and his infinite Lawgiver and Judge.

**2.** The same is true of any plea made in self-justification. If it be false, it is considered an aggravation of the crime charged. This is a case which sometimes happens, and whenever it does, it is deemed to add fresh insult and wrong. For a criminal to come and spread out his lie upon the records of the court — to declare what he knows to be false; nothing can prejudice his case so fearfully.

On the other hand, when a man before the court appears to be honest, and confesses his guilt, the judge, if he has any discretion in the case, puts down his sentence to the lowest point possible. But if the criminal resorts to dodging — if he equivocates and lies, then you will see the strong arm of the law come down upon him. The judge comes forth in all the thunders of judicial majesty and terror, and feels that he may not spare his victim. Why? The man has lied before the very court of justice. The man sets himself against all law, and he must be put down, or law itself is down.

**3.** It is truly abominable for the sinner to abuse God, and then excuse himself for it. Ah, this is only the old way of the guilty. Adam and Eve in the garden fled and hid themselves when they heard the voice of the Lord approaching. And what had they done? The Lord calls them out and begins to search them: "Adam, what hast thou done? Has thou eaten of the

forbidden tree in the centre of the garden?" Adam quailed, but fled to an excuse: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." God, he says, gave him his tempter. God, according to his excuse, had been chiefly to blame in the transaction.

Next He turns to the woman: "What is that thou hast done?" She, too, has an excuse: "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." Ah, this perpetual shuffling the blame back upon God! It has been kept up through the long line of Adam's imitators down to this day. For six thousand years God has been hearing it, and still the world is spared, and the vengeance of God has not yet burst forth to smite all His guilty calumniators to hell! O, what patience in God! And who have ever abused His patience and insulted Him by their excuses more than sinners in this house?

## CONCLUSION

**1.** No sinner under the light of the Gospel lives a single hour in sin without some excuse, either tacit or avowed, by which he justifies himself. It seems to be a law of man's intelligent nature that when accused of wrong, either by his conscience or by any other agent, he must either confess or justify. The latter is the course taken by all impenitent sinners. Hence, the reason why they have so much occasion for excuses, and why they find it convenient to have so great a variety. It is remarkable with what facility they fly from one to another, as if these refuges of lies might make up in number what they lack in strength. Conscious that not one of all the multitude is valid in point of truth and right, they yet, when pressed on one, fly to another, and when driven from all in succession they are ready to come back and fight the same ground over again. It is so hard to abandon all excuses and admit the humbling truth that they themselves are all wrong and God all right.

Hence, it becomes the great business of a Gospel minister to search out and expose the sinner's excuses; to go all round and round, and, if possible, demolish the sinner's refuges of lies, and lay his heart open to the shafts of truth.

**2.** Excuses render repentance impossible. For excuses are justifications; and who does not know that justification is the very opposite of confession

and repentance? To seek after and embrace excuses, therefore, is to place one's self at the farthest possible remove from repentance.

Of course the self-accusing sinner makes it impossible for God to forgive him. He places the Deity in such a position toward himself, and, I might say, places himself in such an attitude toward the government of God, that his forgiveness would be ruin to the very throne of God. What would heaven say, and hell too, and earth besides, if God were to forgive a sinner while he, by his excuses, is justifying himself and condemning his Maker?

**3.** Sinners should lay all their excuses at once before God. Surely this is most reasonable. Why not? If a man owed me, and supposed He had a reasonable excuse for not paying the debt, he should come to me and let me understand the whole case. Perhaps he will satisfy me that his views are right.

Now, sinner, have you ever done so in regard to God? Have you ever brought up one excuse before the Lord, saying, "Thou requirest me to be holy, but I can't be; Lord, I have a good excuse for not obeying Thee?" No, sinner; you are not in the habit of doing this — probably you have not done it the first time yet in all your life. In fact, you have no particular encouragement to carry your excuses before God, for you have not one yet that you yourself believe to be good for anything except to answer the purpose of a refuge of lies. Your excuses won't stand the ordeal of your own reason and conscience. How then can you hope they will stand before the searching eye of Jehovah? The fact that you never come with your excuses to God shows that you have no confidence in them.

**4.** What infinite madness to rest on excuses which you dare not bring before God now! How can you stand before God in the judgment, if your excuses are so mean that you cannot seriously think of bringing one of them before God in this world? O, sinner, that coming day will be far more searching and awful than anything you have seen yet. See that dense mass of sinners drawn up before the great white throne — far as the eye can sweep they come surging up — a countless throng; and now they stand, and the awful trump of God summons them forward to bring forth their excuses for sin. Ho, sinners — any one of you, all — what have you to say why sentence should not be passed on you? Where are all those excuses you were once so free and bold to make? Where are they all? Why

don't you make them now? Hark! God waits; He listens; there is silence in heaven — all through the congregated throng — for half an hour — an awful silence — that may be felt; but not a word — not a moving lip among the gathered myriads of sinners there; and now the great and dreadful Judge arises and lets loose His thunders. O, see the waves of dire damnation roll over the ocean-masses of self-condemned sinners! Did you ever see the judge rise from his bench in court to pass sentence of death on a criminal? There, see, the poor man reels — he falls prostrate — there is no longer any strength in him, for death is on him and his last hope has perished!

O, sinner, when that sentence from the dread throne shall fall on thee! Your excuses are as millstones around your neck as you plunge along down the sides of the pit to the nethermost hell!

**5.** Sinners don't need their excuses. God does not ask for even one. He does not require you to justify yourself-not at all. If you needed them for your salvation I could sympathize with you, and certainly would help you all I could. But you don't need them. Your salvation does not turn on your successful self-vindication. You need not rack your brain for excuses. Better say, I don't want them-don't deserve them — have not one that is worth a straw. Better say, "I am wicked. God knows that's the truth, and it were vain for me to attempt to conceal it. I AM WICKED, and if I ever live, it must be on simple mercy!"

I can recollect very well the year I lived on excuses, and how long it was before I gave them up. I had never heard a minister preach on the subject. I found, however, by experience, that my excuses and lies were the obstacles in the way of my conversion. As soon as I let these go utterly, I found the gate of mercy wide open. And so, sinner, would you.

**6.** Sinners ought to be ashamed of their excuses, and repent of them. Perhaps you have not always seen this as plainly as you may now. With the light now before you it becomes you to beware. See to it that you never make another excuse, unless you intend to abuse God in the most horrible manner. Nothing can be a more grievous abomination in the sight of God than excuses made by a sinner who knows they are utterly false and blasphemous. O, you ought to repent of the insult you have already



offered to God — and now, too, lest you find yourself thrust away from the gate of mercy.

**7.** You admit your obligation, and of course are stopped from making excuses. For if you have any good excuse, you are not under obligation, If any one of you has a good excuse for disobeying God, you are no longer under obligation to obey. But since you are compelled to admit obligation, you are also compelled to relinquish excuses.

**8.** Inasmuch as you do and must admit your obligation, then if you still plead excuses you insult God to His face. You insult Him by charging Him with infinite tyranny.

Now, what use do you calculate to make of this sermon? Are you ready to say, “I will henceforth desist from all my excuses, now and for ever; and God shall have my whole heart? What do you say? Will you set about to hunt up some new excuse? Do you at least say, “Let me go home first — don’t press me to yield to God here on the spot — let me go home and then I will?” Do you say this? And are you aware how tender is this moment — how critical this passing hour? Remember it is not I who press this claim upon you — but it is God. God Himself commands you to repent today — this hour. You know your duty — you know what religion is — what it is to give God your heart. And now I come to the final question: Will you do it? Will you abandon all your excuses, and fall, a self-condemned sinner, before a God of love, and yield to Him yourself, your heart, and your whole being, henceforth and for ever? WILL YOU COME?

# THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, AND THE SPIRIT OF TRUE CHRISTIANITY

*“Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.  
— Hebrews 12:2.*

These words are spoken of Jesus Christ. They stand in the following connection. “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.”

To develop fully the sentiment of our text, I will consider

- I. WHAT THIS JOY SET BEFORE CHRIST WAS NOT.**
- II. WHAT IT WAS.**
- III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE STATE OF MIND HERE DESCRIBED.**
- IV. SHOW THAT NOTHING SHORT OF THIS IS REAL CHRISTIANITY.**

**1.** This joy is not the joy of His own personal salvation. Christ did not undertake this great work for the sake of saving His own soul, and hence the joy in prospect was not the joy of being Himself saved from ruin. It is most manifest from the whole Bible that the object which Christ had in view was not His own good.

**2.** Neither was it His own glory. He everywhere insists that He does not seek His own glory, and that in this respect His course was directly contrasted with that of the Jews “who sought honor of one another.”

## II. WHAT THEN WAS THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM?

I answer, it was the great good to be secured, and the satisfaction to be found in securing it. He saw a world to be redeemed, out of whom a great multitude which no man can number could be actually saved. He saw the blessedness that would accrue to them eternally from this salvation. He saw the augmented joy of the heavenly hosts in their rescue and in their eternal joy; and He saw how His Father rejoiced in reclaiming the lost; these joys set before Him were enough to make His cross sweet and the shame of it a mere trifle.

## III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS STATE OF MIND

1. Consecration to the good of being, a real devotion of one's self to this object.
2. A single eye to this end. Persons are never satisfied and filled with joy in view of an object unless their hearts are fully set upon it, and set upon it evermore in proportion to the value of that object. Our joy in any object will depend very much upon the singleness of eye with which the end is sought.
3. The end must be chosen for its own sake. This must be a condition of our receiving joy in any object; that we choose it for what it is in itself. It must be a good object; an object the attainment of which is naturally adapted to give us joy. Then let it be sought earnestly and sincerely, and its pursuit will not disappoint us. The Bible represents Christ as having set His heart on this great end of securing the good of others.

## IV. NOTHING SHORT OF THIS STATE OF MIND, POSSESSED AND MANIFESTED BY JESUS CHRIST, IS REAL CHRISTIANITY

Nothing else than this is the spirit of Jesus Christ; and we have the highest authority for saying that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," and can not have any real religion. If we would understand

what Christianity is, we must understand what Christ is. It is plain that we can never understand Christianity only as we understand Jesus Christ. He is the great and perfect embodiment of real Christianity. Hence to know Christianity we must know Christ — must know His ends and His means for attaining those ends. Now it is certain, as we have seen, that His end was the highest good of being. Hence nothing else than this can be Christianity.

Again, nothing short of this is intrinsically right. Nothing short and nothing else can satisfy the demands of the intelligence. We know it to be essentially and necessarily right that all beings — even the Deity Himself, should devote themselves to this end. We know that we, and that all our race ought to consecrate ourselves to this end sincerely and supremely. Hence nothing less, and nothing else than this can be real Christianity.

Nothing short of this can prepare us for heaven. How could we receive joy in the employments of heaven unless we are prepared for it by sympathy with their great ends and objects? Who does not know that there must be interest felt in an end before its attainment can give us joy? How then could even heaven be agreeable to us only as our hearts are set upon those objects, the attainment of which makes heaven blissful to its inhabitants?

The Spirit of Christ will naturally manifest itself in all men as it did in Christ Himself. Why should it not? Why should not the same Spirit manifest Itself in the same forms and modes?

Hence when persons have set their hearts upon the same object as Christ set His heart upon, they will count all things else but trifles in order to attain this. They will cheerfully make any sacrifices and count them mere trifles, enduring the cross, and despising the shame, as if all or either were matters of small account in view of an object so valuable. Who does not know that when men have a worldly fortune in view, they carry out this principle to its full extent? How many will tear themselves away from all the social endearments and comforts of home and go to California for gold, encountering hardships without number and perils of almost every sort, and yet they shrink not, because the *object* before them is so attractive and their hearts are so earnestly set upon it. We often see worldly men set their hearts so strongly upon some favorite object that they make no account of the greatest sacrifices. In the same manner, it was perfectly

natural for Christ in His state of mind to endure the cross, despising the shame. No hardships could discourage, no perils could daunt, no scorn could deter Him; for His great end seemed too glorious, so precious, there was nothing so forbidding that He would not endure for the sake of securing it.

Often when you are thinking of His self-denials and sacrifices you ask yourself, How can this be? What motive could have induced such a course of life and of suffering? But when you get your eye upon His *state of mind* and see the deep love of His heart for the souls of men, all is explained. It is perfectly in accordance with a law of our mind that we count everything else of trifling value compared with the one great end upon which the heart is set. Who has not experienced at least some degree of this? When your heart has been set upon some great worldly good — property, a valued companion for life, some post of honor and emolument, — you have not deemed it a great thing to labor and toil and make many sacrifices. How many count it no great hardship to labor and toil their life long to secure a competence for themselves and their families.

Now with this universal law of mind in view, consider the great end which Christ placed before Himself. You can now understand His devotion to this great end; His readiness to make sacrifices for its attainment; you see how He could despise all the shame and endure all the pains, never shrinking for one moment from anything whatever which He had to encounter.

Now let any man have the same end in view that Christ had and he too will account all things but loss for such an object. Self-denial will be as easy and natural as a second nature. By the very laws of our mind, it is sweet to deny ourselves of a lesser good for the sake of a greater. Husbands and wives deem it no hardship to deny themselves of positive good for each other's benefit, the pleasure of giving scope to their deep and pure affection for each other readily overbalances and throws into the shade all the hardships they may be called to endure for each other's welfare. That mother will labor till her strength is gone that she may meet the wants of the children she loves. That father will toil till he is bent and worn with years and many infirmities — so does the love of his household fill his heart, and make toil for them a daily pleasure. The fond mother will toil

over her washtub year after year to educate her son at college, until at last, he comes forth a young man of promise, and she says — “I am more than paid for all my sacrifices and all my toils.” You might perhaps have entered her humble dwelling at some hour when most ladies are at leisure, but you find her over her washtub. You accost her — “Madam, I am indeed sorry that you have so hard a lot — that you are doomed to such and so much labor.” “Are you indeed,” she replies; “I am glad of it. I enjoy it. There you see my dear children educating themselves I trust for God, and to serve their generation according to the will of God, and it is my daily joy to toil and suffer if need be for such an object. I can endure any cross and despise any shame for their sakes.” You, my hearers, have seen exemplifications of this principle even among yourselves. It may have occurred to you as it has often to me that such cases develop the same spirit which we see in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, “who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross despising the shame.” It is only what we always see when the mind lays hold of the great end that God lays hold of. Then men cannot grudge the sacrifices they may be called to make, however great, or frequent, or long protracted, any more than God does.

## REMARKS

1. True Christians need no appeal to their selfishness or to their self-interest to secure their highest exertions. You need not urge them to deeds of charity that they may be seen by men; not implicate their good name in any way, and the reason is, they sympathize with Christ. They have a single eye to the same end which He sought. Hence they do not ask as many others do — “Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice?” or “*What profit shall we have*” if we give anything for His cause? You need only place before them the good to be secured; and at once the joy springs up in their hearts, and they use most cheerfully the means to secure the good contemplated.
2. True Christians enjoy everybody’s good things. There is no such thing as robbing them of happiness. If they see anyone else enjoying good, they are always sure of being blessed in it and by it, themselves. They rejoice in their neighbor’s happiness and welfare as much as in their own. So long as souls are converted and blessed, they are blessed in it and rejoice over it.

They will rejoice as long as God is honored and glorified. They sympathize in His infinite joy; hence, they can never be unhappy while God exists in all the fulness of His infinite blessedness.

**3.** Those who have the same end in view as Christ had, will have happiness similar to His. Those who sympathize with Christ cannot fail of Christ's happiness. While Christ lives, they will live. While Christ rejoices, they will rejoice. If Christ rejoices in the joy of His Father, so will they. Hence their happiness, like that of Christ, is forever interlinked with that of the infinite God. While His great ends are promoted, they will rejoice exceedingly. Why? Because this is what they most of all desire. This meets the most earnest and longing desires of their hearts. Hence, just so certainly as God is not disappointed, they will have joy. Let them know that God's great ends are secured, and their cup of joy is full. They sympathize with Him, and therefore, they cannot fail of being happy while God lives and remains the same benevolent and blessed Being.

**4.** It is so far from being true that sinners enjoy the good things of others, that in their selfishness they do not half enjoy their own. That sinner never has enough so long as he sees anything enjoyed by others which is not at his command. Haman may be next in honor to the great king, and yet a single Jew sitting at his gate, irreverent, may spoil his enjoyment. So with the selfish sinner always. If there is anything in the universe, not his own, he cannot be happy. Everything good which he sees must sustain a certain relation to himself, or he cannot be happy in view of it, but it rather excites his envy. O how he enlarges his desire as hell, and cannot be satisfied! All the good he sees beyond his reach is evil to him. He sees others enjoying it, and this spoils his own enjoyment of what he actually possesses. So restless is he, so anxious, so hungry, so thirsty after everybody else's happiness; so miserable because there are good things within his view which he cannot appropriate wholly to himself. Thus he is so far from enjoying other's good things, that the sight of their good, lying beyond his reach, effectually poisons his own. Poor wretched being! Who has such a tide of misery as he? If a benevolent God fills the world with happiness, this very fact dooms him to misery. How just and fitting that he should be wretched! He has chosen and cultivated the disposition which must make him so forever.

**5.** Every selfish person is at war with God by his very position and character as selfish. Hence if God secures His ends, the selfish sinner must fail of his. As surely as God succeeds, so surely must His selfish enemies be frustrated. Both cannot triumph for the good reason that each party is arrayed against the other, each pursuing opposite and conflicting ends. God would make all beings happy according to their merits — that is, as far as they coincide in spirit and effort with His own ends; but the selfish sinner breaks away from God’s plan, and makes it his chief end to bless himself. Of course there can be not harmony; indeed there can be nothing but eternal opposition between God and all selfish beings. Hence, as I said, if God carries His point, the selfish must certainly fail of carrying theirs. While eternity endures, the selfish may hunger and lust after good; but they must forever hunger and lust in vain.

**6.** True Christians find their life by sacrificing it. They find their bread by throwing it on the waters; it comes to them after many days. Their own highest well-being they secure by laying their souls and their all upon the altar. Jesus Christ set them an example. He did not come to our world to please Himself. No; He came to do the will of His Father in heaven. In thus living to please God and secure the good of being, sacrificing even His own life for this end, He saved His life in the noblest sense. By self-denial He obtained the highest possible good to Himself.

This is the very nature of all benevolence. It gives away, to make its own rich, immortal gain. Its profits are always in the ratio of its expenditures. True Christians save their lives by sacrificing them for God. Christ said — “He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.” It is remarkable to see what an illustration we have in the life of Christ, of the truth and the meaning of this doctrine which He taught.

**7.** Sinners sometimes lose their lives by trying selfishly to save them. This result follows by an inevitable law. By grasping at their own good, and by refusing to make any sacrifice, or even any sort of effort purely for other’s good, they of course and of necessity lose that at which they do aim.

**8.** True Christians necessarily enjoy their religion. I am aware that people often talk about enjoying religion in a way which subjects the very idea to scandal. This language is often abused and misunderstood, and as a



consequence, the idea is scandalized, and hence some lose sight of the truth that religion must bring its own enjoyment.

I am aware that some make the great mistake of supposing that religion is all emotional, is all a matter of excited feelings; and hence often neglecting what is essential in true religion, and yet talking largely of their enjoying religion, they scandalize the whole subject.

Yet the real truth must forever remain; *religion must be a source of real joy to its possessor*. Look at the case of the mother who toils day and night for the education of her children. Ask her how she can endure such a life of toil, and she will tell you, "I enjoy the labor and the toil for the end I have in view." Ask the missionaries. You may suppose that their whole life is misery — that their numerous self-denials and sacrifices must make them wretched; but if you think so, you have made one of the greatest mistakes. These self-denials and sacrifices constitute their revenue and income of daily happiness.

To illustrate this, let me refer to a young lady who had left home, friends and country to go to the heathen, and who, the next morning after leaving port at New York, makes this entry in her private journal: "On rising this morning found that we were fairly out at sea, out of sight of land. Felt ready to give three cheers."

So, many would think that the life of Christ must have been full of sorrow; but no; few ever enjoyed so much even in this life as He; nay, more, we are safe in saying that as none ever carried out so perfectly the law of self-sacrifice for others' good, so none ever enjoyed so much of the real bliss of benevolence. In accordance with this, we hear Him say — "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." You recollect the remarkable circumstances under which this was said. Traveling in midday on foot over the hill country of Judea and Samaria, He came, weary and worn, to Jacob's well, and sat down to rest Himself there. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. The benevolent heart of the weary one felt for her spiritual welfare, and prompted efforts for her good. He spake to her of the waters of life — of the pure and spiritual Being who should be worshipped in Spirit and in truth. His tenderness and sympathy won her heart; His doctrine and His wonderful bearing convinced her that this must be her Messiah; she called her neighbors, and many seem to have been converted there. So soon did

the benevolent efforts and sacrifices of Christ bring forth their fruit in the salvation of souls. Hence, though faint with hunger and toil, He could say — “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” Such labors and results really refreshed His soul, and He seems to have forgotten that He was hungry.

This is just like all true religion. It forgets its own labors and self-denials. You may go and talk to the Christian of his labors and of his self-denials, and pity him; but you don't understand his case. He is the last man to think of his toils or to pity himself. Look at the men who go to the wilds of the far West. You say to them, Brethren, you must be very unhappy; how could you bear to leave your mother and your dear brothers and sisters? They reply — You do not understand the nature of our work. We have meat to eat that you know not of. We are laboring for Jesus Christ, and He never fails to give us our wages.

A missionary in the remote North West traveled one bitter cold day last winter over ice which was covered mostly with six inches of water. He says, “I froze my feet dreadfully, and suffered more from fatigue and cold than I recollect ever to have suffered before in one day; but I find that these days of greatest sufferings bring me my highest wages. The rich blessedness of divine love fills my soul only the more by how much the more I suffer for His name.”

**9.** Let no man think he is doing the work of the Lord who can not enjoy it, or rather, let no man think he is doing the Lord's work when all his religious duties are like rolling a stone up hill. He needs not flatter himself that he is doing the Lord's work unless this is the very path in which he wants to go. There can be no greater mistake than is made by those who think they have the religion of Jesus Christ, and yet do not enjoy it. The fact is, if they are doing His work they can bear and endure all things for Christ's sake, and find delight in it too. They will not ever be called to suffer as He did in degree, and yet we know that even in His case, the cross was made light by a view of the joy set before Him. His dreadful cross was not a small matter in itself considered, but it became small when compared with the great end in view. And so it will be with the Christian.

**10.** It will always be found true that real Christians make light work of their religion, just in proportion as they make a just estimate of the great ends in view and as they earnestly set their hearts upon those ends. In the

same degree as they give themselves up to their work will they find their trials light and their joys abounding.

On the other hand, as they swerve away from God will their trials and crosses seem great and unendurable, and they will feel as if they did not know how to meet their difficulties.

**11.** Self-indulgent persons are not Christians. The proof that they are not is simple and short; they are not Christ-like — for “Christ pleased not Himself.” And “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”

**12.** The most laborious and self-denying Christians are the most happy. The more sacrifices, honestly made for the good of souls, the more blest in the very deed themselves. Only let his eye be single — let it be in his heart to do all for God, and he cannot fail to give the deepest and purest joy in the midst of his toils and sacrifices.

Great mistakes are wont to be made in this matter. Indeed sinners usually make them. Many suppose that to give up all idea of being rich is almost awful. It is a great thing, scarcely to be endured for any consideration. That young man says in his heart, Why should I go and preach and toil for almost nothing, laboring for a very small salary and for a most ungrateful people? Ah indeed! You cannot make up your mind to follow in the steps of Him who “had not where to lay His head,” and who “came unto His own and His own received Him not.” It would involve too many sacrifices! But did you not know that after all, the most devoted and self-sacrificing ministers of Christ, are among the happiest people in the world? You entirely mistake, young man, if you think otherwise. Even when nobody thanks them, God smiles on their souls and all is joy and blessedness within. If nobody else gives to supply their wants, God does. He knows how to supply the great deep want of the soul for peace and joy, and He is not forgetful to do so towards His faithful, self-denying servants. Ask the faithful missionary of the cross in what portion of his life he has had most satisfaction. You will be told that by how much the more he has sacrificed, by so much the greater is his joy. He will say to you — I love my work; it is good for me to endure the cross, despising the shame. Ask any true missionary — Are you rewarded for your toils and self-denials? He will reply — O if I might see salvation flow to those heathen tribes, it would

be my greatest joy. Nothing else could make me so happy. It is the hope of this success and the consciousness of pleasing God in my labors that makes all my toils sweet. Why should I not give myself up to such a work with my utmost might?

**13.** Persons who have no true religion are made less happy by what religion they have. Look at such a man. If his heart is not in his work and upon it, he certainly gets no good from it. Let a man preach the gospel who does not love the work, and all is labor without compensation; toil without a redeeming object. But if he loves his work, it sheds a fresh and precious balm over his spirit; and fills his daily cup with joy.

**14.** The most selfish are the most unhappy. The very fact of being selfish is an infinite mistake. If a man keeps his money for selfish purposes, instead of pouring it out bountifully for others' good, he makes the greatest mistake possible. If he thinks to enjoy it most by self-gratification, he does not begin to know what the highest enjoyment is. He could not suppose so if his heart were set upon God's work.

By the very laws of mind, a man is never so much delighted with the disposal of his property as when it goes most directly to promote his most favorite object. He hates to bestow upon objects foreign to his heart's chief desire. Whenever, therefore, you see Christians giving grudgingly, you may know that selfishness is the law of their life. For all men, and of course Christians too, will naturally make most efforts to secure their chief object. Whatever stands highest in their esteem and regard will command the most of their efforts, and of their money. If they are selfish, they will think they cannot do better than to lay out their money for self. Hence you will see them constantly shaping all their plans to give little and keep much. Why, say they, should I not do this thing since it will be *for my good*? Instead of finding their highest satisfaction in giving, they find it in hoarding.

Did you ever see a miser? If so, you have seen a man who grudged everything he gave unless the object were to secure property. I knew one in New York. He wore a buckskin coat for his only covering, and as this was never washed, he made an important saving of money on it. He seemed to grudge himself even his necessary food, and to find all the comfort he ever had in hoarding up money. So all-controlling did his

passion become that he could starve himself for the sake of laying up the more money. Of course when this passion of money-hoarding is so terribly developed that men will pinch and wring everything they can out of themselves to put into their great iron chest, you need not expect them to be merciful, if they are even so much as just, towards their fellow men. O how terribly does that man curse both himself and his race who gives himself up to this form of selfishness!

But Christianity is entirely another thing. It sets the heart with most intense and all-consuming energy upon the great object of serving God and one's generation according to the will of God. It is the same great principle which, energizing in the depth of the Infinite Mind, moved Him to create beings whom He might bless. The same glorious principle gave birth to the plan of redemption. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" to save it. There arose an exigency. A race had fallen, and must be rescued or lost. The Divine Word saw and felt the exigency; rushed forward to the rescue; seized as it were upon human flesh, that in and with our nature He might live and labor, suffer, bleed and die. This great work became with Him an all-absorbing passion. See Him toil in Judea, traverse the regions of Samaria and Galilee; hear Him pray during the long hours of the night; hear His deep groans in the garden of Gethsemane, and mark that bloody sweat; see Him on the cross, pierced and bleeding; — then ask — What is all this? What but the working out of the great principle of benevolence — love to God and love to man, consuming the energies of His being! Mark how He rolls off to the right and to the left all other objects that invite attention and would divert Him from His work. He suffers nothing to intervene between His heart and the labors and sacrifices needful to effect the work of human salvation.

And now must it be deemed so great a cross for His people to spare even a dollar to complete this work by sending the gospel to every creature? Shall they grudge their shillings where Jesus Christ gave ungrudgingly His heart's blood! It must be that many Christians are under a great and radical mistake in this matter. Every true Christian as really has a cross to endure and shame to despise as Christ had, although his crucifixion may come in a very different form. But it is equally his duty to live and to die for the promotion of the same great object. This is so far from seeming to be a hardship to the real Christian, that it is the very thing which before all

other things he would choose. Ask him which among all the objects of life he deems most precious, and most desirable. He will tell you at once, this, of suffering and toiling for Jesus Christ and for His cause. I ask no higher honor, and no purer enjoyment than to deny myself and bear my cross for my dear Lord and Master.

**15.** If men would be merely comfortable, they must abandon living for self. I need not say that none can *enjoy* selfishness. I say more. If men would not be positively unhappy they must cease to be selfish. Self is so utterly unreasonable in its demands, and makes you so wretched if all its demands are not met, there is no living in peace unless it is thoroughly kept under. No man, or woman either, ever yet satisfied self by indulgence. Like the horse-leach, it cries forever, Give, give; and might well have been numbered among the three and four things which never say — “It is enough.” Consequently, persons only torture themselves and make their own happiness impossible by giving scope to their selfishness.

**16.** Those who have Christ’s Spirit will have also His peace of mind. They who “bear His cross will wear His crown,” not in the future world only, but in the present. “If they suffer with Him, they shall also be glorified together.”

**17.** You may see why so few professors really enjoy their religion. If their eye were single for God, they would not fail of enjoying His service; but being selfish, they starve themselves, and pave their path with many thorns. The principle which prompts all their religious duties is, that they had rather do them than go to hell. These religious duties give them no pleasure, and never would be done for their own sake; but they can be endured as a choice of evils, it being better to endure them than do so much worse. The hope of escaping hell thereby makes even these religious duties tolerable. All these toils and hardships are better than hell. But as for positive satisfaction in their Christian work, they know nothing about it. If they want any present satisfaction, of course they look for that in the way of self-gratification.

Let the reader pause and ask — Am I the character described here? Is this a painting of *my* heart?

**18.** Selfish persons may as well give up their selfishness first as last, for they cannot get good by it. Have you not seen plainly enough that it is of no use to be selfish; that if you gain anything, it is all of no use as to the matter of substantial enjoyment? If you should gain the whole world, it would be of no avail to you as a fund of enduring happiness. There can therefore be no real motive — no good motive for being selfish. Have you not often seen this so clearly as to be compelled to say — “I will never again act for self, for I may just as well not act at all, and better too.” It does no good to seek to gratify self, for it only serves to enlarge one’s desire even as hell, and it can never be satisfied. It is as if a man diseased should drink to slake his thirst, and it only makes him the more thirsty; or should eat to allay his hunger and it only sharpens his appetite the more. What then can you gain by pushing on in this direction or in that, to gratify the insatiate demands of self? Suppose you should drive your efforts selfishly even for your own salvation. You make a great mistake — yea, an infinite mistake. You will only make the matter inexpressibly worse. I can well recollect a crisis in my own religious history. I felt that there was not another step to take in the direction I was going. I had pursued my worldly interests a long time, all in vain; I had sought God selfishly, but all in vain; and I now betook myself to mighty prayer as I supposed, as if I would pull down blessings at any rate upon my needy soul. Often since, I have looked back with wonder to that moment. I came then to see and I actually said to myself — I may just as well stop this course of seeking now as ever. I hastened away to the woods to pray, pressed with the consideration — I am a selfish man — altogether selfish. I must come to a dead stand in this course; my selfish efforts are of no use, and even my selfish prayers are nothing better than an abomination before God. I had gone out with the determination never to leave the place without giving myself to God. I could see that all had been perfectly selfish, and that now the thing God demanded of me was to desist from my selfishness and give up myself supremely and wholly to Him.

While laboring in Western New York, I saw a young woman who seemed to be by nature and education most amiable and lovely. Indeed, she was regarded by her friends as a perfect model of propriety. Her sisters and relatives could not bear to think that she was a sinner, or to hear her spoken to as a sinner. Yet she was selfish. When I saw her I could not help

being strongly impressed with this fact, and urged it earnestly upon her conscience. At length she saw it and then exclaimed, I have sown to the wind and I must reap the whirlwind. My whole heart is selfish. I see that I might as well make no effort for salvation as to make selfish ones, and that truly I have but one right and hopeful way, and this is, to renounce my selfishness at once and forever.

See that young man selfishly pursuing his education. What do you want of your education? What will you do with it? You reply, "O, perhaps I shall be a great man." Then persisting in your selfishness, you will be the greater in hell. "Perhaps I shall get to be the President of these United States." Then, unless you repent of your selfishness, you will sink to be the merest drudge in hell. "Oh," says that young man, "I shall get into some learned profession and make a brilliant display of my talents, and make an impression on the world." And will all this make you happy? If selfishness rule in your heart, it will only make you a greater curse to yourself. You may drive in this direction and in that, you can only fill up the cup of your own misery, if you will make self your idol god. Suppose you toil for fame; there will be a canker-worm at its root. What good will it do you? All is against you and nothing can work for your real good so long as you will not yield your heart to God and crucify your selfishness.

Do you ask, Who will show me any good? I will show you all the good you can ever need. I have been showing you today where real good is to be found. You have money, and do you ask, what money is good for? To do good with. This is all. What is the strong arm for, and the ardor of youthful energy? To do good with — nothing else. O young man, you who do not want to be a minister of the gospel because there will be so much hardship and so little emolument — if you don't know the peace and blessedness of self-denial, you know nothing yet as you need to know. You have not yet begun to learn how to live for real blessedness.

Living for the general good is the only way to secure your own individual good. If you would be happy, pour out your heart for others' good. Set your heart on the great end which God is laboring to secure, and your happiness is safe.

Brethren, is it a matter of real experience with you that you enjoy your religion? Do you enjoy it even without any of the accompaniments of



superadded respectability, and public confidence, and social regard? Do you enjoy the simple business of doing good, in itself, and for its own sake? Is self-denial for Christ's sake, a positive enjoyment to you in view of the great and glorious end of the joy set before you of honoring God and doing good? Does your religion, attended though it be with many toils and trials, become to you daily the very elixir of life? *How is this?*

# THE SELF-HARDENING SINNER'S DOOM

*“He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” — Proverbs 29:1*

In discussing this subject I will consider:

- I. WHEN AND HOW PERSONS ARE REPROVED**
- II. GOD'S DESIGN IN REPROVING SINNERS**
- III. WHAT IT IS TO HARDEN THE NECK**
- IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE SINNER'S BEING SUDDENLY DESTROYED, AND**
- V. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN ITS BEING WITHOUT REMEDY**

**I.** God's reproof of sinners may properly be considered as embracing three distinct departments; namely, reproof by means of *His word*, by means of *His providence*, and through *His Spirit*. My limits will allow me to make only a few suggestions under each of these heads.

**1.** God reproofs the sinner by His word whenever He in any way presents truth to his mind through His word, which shows the sinner His sins, which reveals to him duties that he is not performing. Any such revelation of duties not done, and of sins positively committed is reproof from God. Suppose you are a parent, and you point out to your child some neglect of duty. You by this act reprove your child. There may be connected with this some degree of threatening explicitly announced, or there may not be; in either case it is reproof for it must always be understood that threatening is involved. Hence if you call the attention of your child to anything in his conduct which displeases you, this very act is reproof. So when God by the revealed truth of His word calls the sinner's attention to the fact of sin, He virtually reproofs him, and this is God's intention in calling his mind to the fact of his sin.

2. By God's providence sinners are reprov'd, when their selfish projects are defeated. Sinful men are continually planning selfish schemes, and God often through His providence frustrates those schemes; and does so for the very purpose of reprov'ing their projectors. He could not rebuke them in a more emphatic way than this.

Sinners often form *ambitious* projects. The student seeks for himself a great name as a scholar; in other spheres, men seek the renown of the warrior, or the civilian — their aspiration being to enroll their names high above their fellows on the pillar of fame; but God in His providence blasts their hopes, frustrates their plans, and would fain make them see that they had better by far get their names written in the Lamb's book of Life. So He blots out their name on Ambition's scroll as fast as they can write it there; as if He would show them their folly, and allure them to write it where no power can ever erase it.

Again, it often happens that men by means of their selfishness become involved in difficulty; perhaps by a selfish use of their property, or by a selfish indulgence of their tongues; and God springs His net upon them, and suddenly they are taken, and find themselves suddenly brought up to *think* of their ways, and to experience the mischiefs of their selfish schemes. How often do we see this! Men make haste to be rich, and start some grasping scheme of selfishness for this purpose; but God suddenly springs His net upon them — blasts their schemes, and sets them to thinking whether there be not a "God in heaven who minds the affairs of men."

Another man finds himself entangled in lawsuits, and his property melts away like an April snow; and another pushes into some hazardous speculation — till the frown of the Almighty rebukes his folly.

As men have a thousand ways to develop their selfishness, so God has a thousand ways to head them back in their schemes and suggest forcibly to their minds that "this their way is their folly." In all such cases men ought to regard themselves as taken in the net of God's providence. God meets them in the narrow way of their selfishness, to talk with them about the vanity and folly of their course.

Everything which is adapted to arrest the attention of men in their sins may be regarded as a providential reproof. Thus, when God comes among sinners and cuts down some of their companions in iniquity, how solemn often are those dispensations! Often have I had opportunity to notice these effects. Often have I seen how solemn the minds of sinners become under these reproofs of the Almighty. Their feelings become tender; their sensibilities to truth are strongly excited. Who can fail to see that such events are designed to arrest the attention, and to rebuke and reprove them in their course of sin?

Every obstacle which God in His providence interposes in your way of selfishness, is *His* reproof. You can regard it in no other light.

God sometimes reproves sinners in a way which may be deemed more pungent than any other. I allude to that way which the Bible describes as heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head. A man abuses you; and in retaliation, you do him all the good in your power. Glorious retaliation! How it pours the scorching lava on his head! Now God often does this very thing with sinners. They sin against Him most abusively and most outrageously; and what does He do? How does He retaliate upon them? Only by pouring out upon them a yet richer flood of mercies! He pours new blessings into their lap till it runs over. He prospers their efforts for property; enlarges their families like a flock, and smiles on everything to which they put their hand. O how strangely do these mercies contrast with the sinner's abuse of his great Benefactor!

I can recollect some cases of this sort in my own experience, when the deep consciousness of guilt made me apprehend some great judgments from God. But just then, God seemed in a most remarkable manner to reveal His kindness and His love, and to show the great meekness of His heart. O what a rebuke of my sins was this! Could anything else so break my heart all to pieces? Who does not know the power of kindness to melt the heart?

So God rebukes the sinner for his sins, and seeks to subdue his hard heart by manifested love.

Often sickness is to be regarded as a rebuke from God. When persons for selfish purposes abuse their health and God snatches it away, He in a most forcible way rebukes them for their madness.

Sometimes He brings the lives of men into great peril, so that there shall be but a step between them and death; as if He would give this movement of His providence a voice of trumpet-power to forewarn them of their coming doom. So various and striking are the ways of God's providence in which He reproveth men for their sins.

**3.** God also reproveth men by His Spirit. According to our Savior's teachings, the Spirit shall "reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment." Hence when sinners are specially convicted of sin they should know that God has come in His own person to reprove them. His Spirit comes to their very hearts, and makes impressions of truth and duty there — revealing to the sinner his own heart, and showing him how utterly at variance it is with a heart full of divine love.

Again, I have no doubt that in the present as in former days God reproveth men of their sins by means of dreams. If all the reliable cases of this sort which have occurred since the Bible was completed were recorded, I doubt not they would fill many volumes. I am aware that some suppose this mode of divine operation upon the human mind has long ago ceased; but I think otherwise. It may have ceased to be a medium of revealing new truth — doubtless it has; but it has not ceased to be employed as a means of impressing and enforcing truth already revealed. Sometimes the great realities of the coming judgment and of the world of doom are brought out and impressed upon the mind with overwhelming force by means of dreams. When this is the case, who shall say that the hand of the Lord is not in it?

A striking instance of a dream in which the hand of the Lord may be seen, is related by President Edwards. One of his neighbors, an intemperate man, dreamed that he died and went to hell. I will not attempt to relate here the circumstances that according to his dream occurred there. Suffice it to say that he obtained permission to return to earth on probation for one year, and was told distinctly that if he did not reform within one year, he must come back again. Upon this he awaked, under most solemn impressions of the dreadful realities of the sinner's hell. That very morning he went to see

his pastor, Pres. Edwards, who said to him — “This is a solemn warning from God to your soul. You must give heed to it and forsake your sins, or you are a ruined man for eternity.” The man made very solemn promises. When he had retired, Edwards opened his journal and made an entry of the principal facts; the dream, the conversation, and of course the *date* of these events. The inebriate reformed and ran well for a time; attended church and seemed serious; but long before the year came around, he relapsed, returned to his cups, and ultimately, in a fit of intoxication opened a chamber door in a shop which led down an outside stairway — pitched headlong and broke his neck. Pres. Edwards turned to his journal and found that the one year from the date of his dream came round that very night, and the man’s appointed time was up!

Now it is no doubt true that in general, dreams are under the control of physical law, and follow, though with much irregularity, the strain of our waking revelries; and for this reason many persons will not believe the hand of the Lord ever works in them; yet their inference is by no means legitimate; for God certainly *can* put His hand upon the mind dreaming as well as upon the mind waking, and multitudes of instances in point show that He sometimes does.

Again, God reproves the sinner whenever His Spirit awakens in the mind a sense of the great danger of living in sin. I have often known sinners greatly affected with the thought of this danger — the terrible danger of passing along through life in sin, exposed every hour to an eternal and remediless hell.

Now these solemn impressions are God’s kind warnings, impressed on the soul because He loves the sinner’s well-being, and would fain save him if He wisely can.

Often God’s Spirit gives sinners a most impressive view of the shortness of time. He makes them feel that this general truth applies in all its power *to themselves* — that their own time is short, and that they in all probability have not long to live. I am aware that this impression sometimes originates in one’s state of health; but I also know that sometimes there is good reason to recognize God’s own special hand in it; and that men sometimes ascribe to nervous depression of spirits what should be ascribed directly to God Himself.

Again, God often makes the impression that the present is the sinner's last opportunity to secure salvation. I know not how many such cases have fallen under my own observation, cases in which sinners have been made to feel deeply that this is to be the very last offer of mercy, and these the very last strivings of the Spirit. My observation has taught me in such cases, to expect that the result will verify the warning — that this is none other than God's voice, and that God does not lie to man, but teaches most solemn and impressive truth. O how does it become every sinner to listen and heed such timely warnings!

Again, God's Spirit reproves sinners through their particular friends, or through gospel ministers. The affectionate admonitions of a brother or a sister, a parent or a child — a husband, or a wife, how often have these been the vehicle through which God has spoken to the soul! His minister also, God often employs for this purpose, so directing their minds that they in fact present to the sinner the very truth which fits his case, and he says, "It must be that somebody has told the minister all about my thoughts and feelings. Who can it be? I have never told anybody half so much of my heart as he has preached today." Now in such cases you may be safe in ascribing the fitting truth to the guiding hand of the divine Spirit. God is making use of His servant to reprove the sinner.

In all such cases as I have now been adducing, the reproofs administered should be ascribed to the Spirit of the Lord. In the same manner as God often in various ways administers consolation to penitent souls; so does He administer reproof to the impenitent. He has a thousand modes of making His voice audible to the sinner's conscience, and in His wisdom He always selects such as He deems best adapted to produce the desired result.

## II. THE DESIGN OF GOD IN REPROVING SINNERS

One thing aimed at is to press them with the means of reform. A benevolent God sincerely desires their salvation and honestly does all He wisely can to secure this desired result. Hence His oft repeated reproofs and warnings. He will at least leave them without excuse. They shall never have it to say — "Oh, if we had only been forewarned of danger in those

precious hours and years in which salvation was possible!” God designedly forestalls such exclamations by taking away all occasion, and putting in their mouths a very different one — “How have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof!”

For this purpose God forewarns the sinner in season. Take the case of the man who dreamed of going down to hell. This dream was a loud and timely warning, adapted as well perhaps as any warning could be to induce reform and real repentance. It effectually took away all excuse or apology for persisting in his sins.

God designs by these reproofs to prepare men for the solemn judgment. It is in His heart to do them good — secure their seasonable — that is, their present, immediate repentance, so that they may meet their God in peace at last. His benevolence prompts Him to this course and He pursues it with all His heart.

It is no doubt equally true that the great God designs to be ready Himself for the final judgment — to meet every sinner there. He foresees that it will be important for Him there to show how He has dealt with each sinner — how often and how faithfully He has acted towards them the part of a kind Father. For this end every reproof ever given to a sinner will come in place. That dream recorded by Pres. Edwards will then be found recorded also by an angel’s pen — to be revealed before all worlds then and there! This is one step in the process of parental efforts for reclaiming one sinner. The admonition so faithfully given by Pres. Edwards is another. All will go to show that truly God has been “long suffering towards sinners because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

Thus will God in these providential warnings glorify Himself by exhibiting His true character and conduct. Nothing more is ever needful in order to glorify God than that His true character and conduct should be known as it is. The developments brought out at the judgment-day will thus reveal God, and of course will enhance His glory.

It is also interesting to see how God makes one warning create another. One providential event, sent as a judgment upon one sinner, multiplies its warning voice many fold as it falls upon the ears of hosts of other sinners.



God cuts down one out of a class of hoary sinners, or of sinners in middle life, or in youth, and the event speaks in notes of solemn warning to hundreds. At Rome N.Y., several years ago a great revival occurred, the power of which rocked and rent the stout hearts of many sinners, as the forest trees are rocked and rent by a tornado; but with it came some awful judgments revealing another form of the mighty hand of God. There were in that place a small class of hard drinkers who seemed determined to resist every call from God to repent. On the Sabbaths they would get together for drinking and reveling. On one of these occasions, one of their number suddenly fell down dead. Mr. Gillett, pastor of the church in that place, hastened to the spot, found the fallen man yet warm, but actually dead; and turning to the surrounding company of his associates, said, "There — who of you can doubt that this man has gone right down into hell!" This case made a deep and thrilling impression.

Another man, a famous apostate from a profession of religion, greatly opposed the revival. All at once God smote him with madness, and in his insane ravings he sought to take his own life. Men by turns had to watch him and restrain him by violence from committing suicide. Ere long he died a most horrid death — an awful warning to hardened apostates of their impending doom! So God tries to reform and save guilty men.

Again, God would manifest the utter madness, recklessness and folly of sinners. How striking it will appear in the judgment to see such a multitude of cases of reproof brought out to light, and then in connection to see the folly and madness of sinners in resisting so many reproofs! What a gazing-stock will sinners then be to the gathered myriads of intelligent beings! I have sometimes thought this will be the greatest wonder of the universe, to see the men who have displayed such perfect and long-continued infatuation in resisting so much love and so many kind and most heart-affecting appeals and reproofs! There they will stand monuments of the voluntary infatuation of a self-willed sinner! The intelligent universe will gaze at them as if they were the embodiment of all that is wondrous in madness and folly!

### III. WHAT IS IT TO HARDEN THE NECK?

The figure is taken from the effect of the yoke on the bullock. Under constant pressure and friction the skin becomes callous, and past feeling. So with the sinner's conscience. His will has resisted truth until his constant opposition has hardened his moral sensibility, and his will rests in the attitude of rebellion against God. His mind is now fixed; reproofs which have heretofore chafed his sensibilities no longer reach them; friction and resistance have hardened his heart till he is past feeling. No dispensations of providence alarm him; no voice from God disturbs him; under all appeals to his reason or conscience his will is doggedly fixed; his moral feelings are insensible.

In this state, one might well say, the neck is hardened. The figure is pertinent. Who has not seen cases of this sort? Cases of men who have become so hardened that every reproof passes by them as if it touched them not — as if their moral sensibility had ceased to be any sensibility at all. I was struck the other day in conversing with a man of seventy-five, with his apparent insensibility to religious considerations. Are you a Christian, said I? “No; I don't know anything about them things — what you call Christians. I never murdered anybody, and I guess I have been as honest as most folks in my way.”

But are you prepared to enter heaven — to go into another state of existence, and meet God face to face? “O, I don't believe anything about them things. If I only live about right, that's enough for me.” I could make no impression on such a mind as his; but God will make such men know something about these things by and by. They will change their tone ere long!

You sometimes see men in this condition who have given their intelligence up to embrace error, and have of free choice put darkness for light, and light for darkness; have stultified themselves in their own iniquities, and have said to evil, “Be thou my good.” These have a seared conscience and a hard heart; their neck is an iron sinew, and they are fixed and fully set never to yield to God's most reasonable demands.

What then shall God do with such men? The text tells us. They “shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.” This leads me to inquire.

#### IV. WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING SUDDENLY DESTROYED?

**1.** It implies their being cut off *unexpectedly*, in such an hour as they think not. We often speak of things as coming suddenly not because they come early in life, but because they fall upon men all suddenly and without being at all anticipated. In this sense the term *suddenly* seems to be used in our text. When some awful stroke of God’s providence falls suddenly among us, smiting down some sinner in his sins, we say — What a sudden death! What an awful dispensation! So the Bible says, while they cry “Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.” No forewarning is given; no herald with trumpet-call proclaims the coming of that death-shaft; but all suddenly it cuts the air and strikes its blow! It has no need to strike another! Noiseless as the falling dew it comes; with velvet step it enters his bed-chamber; in such forms as no skill or power of man can baffle, it makes its approaches; death raises his bony arm — poises that never-erring shaft — in a moment, *where is the victim?* Gone; but *where?* The Bible says, he is “suddenly destroyed.” Does this mean that he is borne up as on a chariot of fire to heaven? Where the wicked men of Sodom and Gomorrah — “set forth as an ensample” of the doom of the wicked — caught away up to heaven in mounting columns of fire and brimstone? If that had been, methinks all heaven would have fainted at the sight! Or were the people of the old world, who had all corrupted their way before God, and who were so full of violence and bloodshed that God could not endure them on earth — were they all swept by the flood into heaven, while poor Noah, scorned by the men of his generation, must toil many long years to prepare him an ark to save himself and family from being also *destroyed into heaven?*

What infinite trifling is this with God’s words! To say that the sinner’s destruction is only taking him by the shortest route and the quickest way into heaven! Does God say or mean this? No! If it had been His purpose to deceive men, He could not have taken a more direct and certain method

than this, of calling the taking of men suddenly to heaven, destruction! No, this mode of using language belongs to Satan and not to God. We should never confound the broad distinction between the God of truth and the Father of lies!

## V. WHAT IS MEANT WHEN THIS DESTRUCTION IS SAID TO BE “WITHOUT REMEDY?”

**1.** That this destruction can not be arrested. It comes with resistless and overwhelming power, and seems to mock all efforts made to withstand its progress. A most striking exemplification of this appeared in the dreadful *Cholera* which swept over many of our cities some years ago. I was then in New York city — an eye-witness and more than an eye-witness of its terrific power. My own system experienced its withering shock. A man of the strongest constitution occupied a room adjacent to mine; was attacked the same hour that I was, and within a few hours was a corpse. Its powerful sweep was appalling. You might as well put forth your hand to stay the tornado in its rush of power as think to withstand this messenger of the Almighty. So with those forms of destruction which come at God’s behest to whelm the hardened sinner in destruction. They come with the strides and the momentum of Omnipotence. The awful hand of God is in them, and who can stand before Him when once His wrath is moved?

Many other forms of disease, as well as the *Cholera* evince the terror of Jehovah’s arm. The strong man is bowed low; his physician sits by his bed-side, powerless for help; disease mocks all efforts to withstand its progress; human skill can only sit by and chronicle its triumph. God is working, and none but a God could resist.

**2.** The very language shows that the principle idea of the writer is that this destruction is *endless*. It is *destruction* — the utter ruin of all good — the blighting and withering of all happiness forever. No rescue shall be possible; recovery is hopeless; it is a grave beyond which dawns no resurrection. The destruction wrecks all hope in the common ruin, and in its very terms precludes the idea of remedy. Can you conceive of another element of terror, not already involved and developed in this most dire of all forms of destruction?

## REMARKS

**1.** We see how to account for the sudden deaths of the wicked that occur often, and what we are to think of them. Some such deaths have occurred here which were exceedingly striking to me. Here we have seen young men, sons of pious parents, children of many prayers and many warnings; but they waxed hard under reproof; and their days were soon numbered. Away they go — and we see them no more. There was one young man who came here to study. He had been warned and prayed for. Perhaps the Lord saw that there was no hope in any farther effort. His sickness I can never forget; nor his horror as death drew on apace. Away he passed from the world of hope and mercy. I will not attempt to follow him, nor would presume to know his final doom; but one thing I know — his companions in sin received in his death a most solemn and awful warning.

**2.** The danger of wicked men is in proportion to the light they have. Men of great light are much the more likely to be cut off in early life. Of this we have seen some very striking instances in this place. Some young men have been raised here — were here when I came to the place, and then, in the tender years of childhood and youth they saw their companions converted, and were often affectionately warned themselves. But they seemed to resist every warning and come quick to maturity in moral insensibility. I need not give their names; you knew them once; where are they now? It is not for me to tell where they are; but I can tell where they are not. They are not grown up to bless the church and the world; they did not choose such a course and such an end to their life. They are not here among us; No! the places that knew them once shall know them no more forever. You may call for them in our College halls; in the sad-hearted families where once they might be found; they respond to no call — till the blast of the final trumpet. They knew their duty but too well, and but too soon they apparently settled the question that they would not do it.

That old man of almost four score of whom I spoke was not brought up in any Oberlin. His birth place was in the dark places of the earth — in Canada — where he learned neither to read nor to write. There are children here not ten years old who have forty times as much knowledge on all religious subjects as he. He has lived to become hoary in sin; these

children, brought up here need expect no such thing. Tell me where you can find an old man who has been brought up on the midst of great light, who yet lives long and waxes more and more hard in sin and guilt. Usually such men as have great light in their youth will not live out half their days.

**3.** It is benevolent in God to make His providential judgments in cutting down hardened sinners a means of warning others. Often this is the most impressive warning God can give men. In some cases it is so terrible that sinners have not dared to attend the funeral of their smitten associates. They have seemed afraid to go near the awful scene — so manifest has it been that God’s hand is there. In many instances within my personal knowledge the hand of God has cut down in a most horrible manner, men who were opposing revivals. I cannot now dwell upon these cases.

**4.** We may learn to expect the terrible destruction of those who under great light, are hardening themselves in sin. I have learned when I see persons passing through great trials to keep my eye on them and see if they reform. If they do not I expect to see them ere long cut down as hopeless cumberers of the ground. Being often reprov’d yet still hardening their neck, they speedily meet their doom according to the principle of God’s government announced in our text.

**5.** Reproof administered either soon subdues, or rapidly ripens for destruction. This ripening process goes on rapidly in proportion to the pressure with which God follows them with frequent and solemn reproofs. When you see God following the sinner close with frequent reproofs, plying him with one dispensation after another, and all in vain, you may expect the lifted bolt to smite him next and speedily.

**6.** The nearer destruction is to men, the less as a general thing they fear or expect it. When you hear them cry, “Peace and safety, then sudden destruction” is at hand and they shall not escape. Just at the time when you are saying — “I never enjoyed better health” — just then when you are blessing yourself in the prospect of securing your favorite objects, then sudden destruction comes down like an Alpine avalanche, and there is neither time to escape nor strength to resist. How often do you hear it said — Alas! it was so unexpected, so sudden — who would have thought this blow was coming! Just when we least of all expect it, it fell with fatal power.

**7.** Sinners who live under great light are living very fast. Those who are rapidly acquiring knowledge of duty, standing in a focal center of blazing light, with every thing to arouse their attention — they, unless they yield to this light, must soon live out the short months of their probation. They must soon be converted, or soon pass the point of hope — the point within which it is morally possible that they shall be renewed. Men may under some circumstances live to the age of seventy and never get so much light as they can in a few days or weeks in some situations. Under one set of circumstances a sinner might get more light — commit more sin and become more hardened in a twelve month than he would under other circumstances in a life of four score years. Under the former circumstances he lives fast. A sabbath school child might in this point of view die an hundred years old. The accumulations of a hundred years of sin and guilt and hardness might in his case be made in one short year. Where light is blazing as it has blazed here; where children have line upon line as they are wont to have here, how rapidly they live! How soon do they fill up the allotted years of probation for the reason that the great business of probation is driven through with prodigiously accelerated rapidity! O how suddenly will your destruction come, unless you speedily repent! Of all places on earth, this should be the last to be chosen to live in, unless you mean to repent. I would as soon go to the very door of hell and pitch my tent to dwell there, as to come here to live unless I purposed to serve God. Yet many parents bring or send their children here to be educated — in hope often that they will be converted too; and this is well; so would I; but by all means, ply them with truth and press them with appeals and entreaties, and give them no rest, till they embrace the great salvation. Let these parents see to it that their children are really converted. If they pass along without being converted, do you not expect they will soon break away and plunge into some of the dark mazes of error? Who does not know that this is the natural result of resisting great light? “Because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved, God shall send them strong delusion that they may believe a lie, and all be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” O how they go on with rapid strides down to the depths of hell! You scarce can say they’re here, before they are gone. And the knell of their early graves proclaims, “He that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.”

# RECEIVING HONOR FROM MEN AND NOT FROM GOD

*“How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” — John 5:44*

The discussion of the subject presented in these words will lead me,

- I. TO SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN RECEIVING HONOR FROM MEN RATHER THAN FROM GOD.**
- II. TO ADDUCE THE EVIDENCES OF THIS STATE OF MIND.**
- III. TO SHOW THAT WHILE THIS STATE OF MIND CONTINUES, FAITH IS IMPOSSIBLE.**

**I. 1.** “Receiving” implies an act of the will. It is not therefore merely approbateness. When a person constitutionally desires the approbation of his fellow-men, and this constitutional desire remains a mere feeling — an involuntary state of the sensibility, and does not lead to any acts of the will aimed towards the attainment of the object sought, no blame can attach to it. This therefore can not be what our Savior intended. He could not complain of this constitutional tendency, and therefore it can not be that He designates this in this language.

**2.** It implies a will committed to this propensity. The will is devoted to the gratification of this desire. Men seek applause from their fellow-beings, and make it an object — usually a *great* object, to gain the high esteem of others of their species.

**3.** This state of mind implies *great spiritual blindness*. Men who can prefer the honor of their fellow men to the honor that comes from God only, must be exceedingly blind. Their minds must be in such a state that they really can see nothing relating to God and spiritual things in its true light. If they saw spiritually they would not make so unreasonable, so insane a preference. They must be stone blind to the value of God’s



approbation — else they could never place the approbation of man above it.

**4.** It implies *unbelief*. No man in the exercise of faith could receive honor from men rather than from God. If he believed what the Bible teaches of God and of spiritual things, it would be impossible for him to make such a choice.

**5.** It also implies contempt for God. No one could prefer man's approbation to God's if he did not really in heart condemn God. This state of mind practically says, Give me the esteem of my fellow-men and I am satisfied; they are of some consequence; their good opinion is worth something; but as for the honor that comes from God only — what is that to me? Why should I care for His good opinion?

Now who does not see that this is really the spirit of contemning God?

## II. EVIDENCES OF THIS STATE OF MIND

**1.** Men are certainly in this state when they are more affected by loss of character with man than with God. This would show of course that they are more solicitous for reputation with man than with God; or which amounts to the same thing, that they love the honor that comes from man more than that which comes from God only.

**2.** Persons are in this state of mind when they more naturally inquire what man will think of them than what God will; when they are more solicitous to know the former than the latter, and are more anxious about the result. This anxiety reveals one's state of mind on the point in question beyond all doubt.

**3.** We may know ourselves to be in this state if we do or omit to do anything from regard to what man will think rather than from regard to what God will think. To be more influenced by man's opinion than by God's — by man's word than by God's word, must be taken as decisive proof of this state of mind. For example, some go to meeting more from regard to what man will think than to what God will think — more to please man than to please God. This is sometimes the case with professed

Christians, and in their attendance upon the prayer meeting, as perhaps some of you can testify. Some persons abstain from labor, or from idle gossip on the Sabbath, with their eye more on man than on God. Some students get lessons more from regard to their teachers and classmates than to God. With many, how rare a thing it is to inquire — what will please my God and Father? Who does not see that such can have no faith? That remaining in this state of mind, they can not exercise faith in God.

In the same state of mind, persons will regulate their dress, their habits and manners more to please man than to please God. How much do we see of this?

**4.** Those are in this state of mind who need the impulse of approbateness to secure the performance of that which they are under obligation to do. Suppose it be the case that regard to God is not enough to induce us to do known duty, but we need also the inducement of human praise or human esteem, what does this prove, if not that we seek the honor that comes from men and are not satisfied with that which comes from God only? When our regard for God is thus impotent as a motive to duty, it proves most conclusively that the heart is set upon the honor that comes from man.

**5.** On the same principle when we find that we need this stimulus to make us omit anything that should be omitted, we have the same praise-loving state of heart revealed. It is often the case that persons will neither do nor omit things which duty and God demand, but which public sentiment forbids. Men need the spur of public sentiment to induce action, or to dissuade from action as the case may be; which shows an exceedingly corrupt state of mind — one over which God has no practical sway whatever.

**6.** Another proof of this state of mind is, that persons are deeply affected either by the applause or the censure of men. Paul could say — “It is a small thing for me to be judged by man’s judgment;” — so all-controlling was his regard for God’s judgment, it left small scope for the influence of man’s judgment. In fact who does not see that in the nature of the case it is of comparatively small account either way, whether man approves or disapproves; and a man who had proper faith in God and in spiritual things can never be greatly affected one way or the other by man’s

opinions. He will make this his main inquiry — Will this course please God? Who of you that have known by experience what it is to be drawn into deep communion with God, has not felt most impressively that the opinions of man are light as a feather? You have been lifted entirely above being affected by the applause or the frowns of men.

**7.** Decisive proof of the state condemned in our text is afforded when we suffer either the private judgment or public sentiment of men to restrain us from obeying God. In such case we may know that our regard for God is not supreme, and that it is impossible we should have faith.

**8.** Equally so when we conform outwardly to those duties which are popular with men, and neglect those which are not enforced by public sentiment. Often men will be punctual in duties sustained by public sentiment, but negligent in duties not thus sustained. For example, a man will violate the Sabbath in private, by reading books which he knows are unsuitable for that day, or in conversation which disqualifies the mind for the worship of God, when still he would by no means go abroad on the Sabbath, or in any way be known publicly as disregarding its sacred claims. Many will write such letters on the Sabbath as they would not have it known were written on that day, and many letters written on the Sabbath are dated either Saturday or on Monday. They are not ashamed to have God know their sins — only let it be hid from human view.

**9.** We evince the same state of mind if we refuse to avow ourselves the friends of God because such avowal would be unpopular with men. Persons may be in such circumstances that to avoid odium they will conceal the fact of their being professors of religion, or the fact of their holding some sentiments not generally popular; and this they do because they are far more afraid of injuring their popularity with men than with God. How wrong! How deeply corrupt before God must such a heart be!

**10.** We evince the same spirit whenever we seek to connect ourselves with those families, churches, societies, or institutions which will increase our popularity with men and not with God. For example, in cities, on this principle men will go to the most popular churches. Students will go to the most popular institutions, and in both cases the question is not — Which course will most please God? — but, which will be the most popular with

men? In the same way, men will seek to form connections with families so as to augment their popularity with men, not their acceptance with God.

On the same principle men will avoid connections and associations which will only raise them in God's esteem, and not in man's. Suppose God is building up a church and men are afraid to join it because it is unpopular. If you understand the case as it is, and choose to avoid unpopularity among men rather than incur odium and reproach for Christ's sake, how clearly do you show what spirit you are of? I knew the case of a man of a very aristocratic spirit, a member of the Presbyterian church, who became ultimately converted, and his conversion was a real *turning*. He came square round; would go to church among the poor, among the people of color, among the most despised classes of society, and among those only. He said to me, "Going among these classes I feel a great deal more in my place, and my worship of God is far sweeter to me there. It is my very life to go and try to elevate those classes. I love to help them — to encourage them and give them all the countenance and sympathy I can. I love to go, said he, to that colored congregation; there is a blessed revival among them, and there I find men looking in the simplicity of their hearts for the approbation of God. There is none of that stiffness there which encumbers me among the aristocrats of the city."

**11.** We show the same spirit when we have more regard to outward appearance than to the state of our hearts before God. Take for example, any person in this house who has more regard to outward appearance before men than to inward appearance before God. You have taken more pains in your morning preparation to commend yourself outwardly to men than inwardly to God; have spent more time before your mirror than on your knees; have looked more carefully to your person and your dress than to your heart; ah, you come into God's house as a mocker, to insult God! You profess to worship Him, but in heart you worship the congregation, or perhaps, *yourself!* And must not this be an abomination to God?

**12.** Again, when persons have more regard to their manner and behavior in the sight of God, and the question with them is — not, what will God think of us, but what will men think? then all is corrupt in heart.

**13.** Also when men allow themselves to practice any secret sin which they would be ashamed to practice before men, they reveal their own hearts as loving the praise and fearing the censure of man more than God.

**14.** Again, if we do not sooner blush and hang our heads to find our hearts impure before God than we should to appear in the most disgusting exposure before men, we show that we have more regard to man's esteem than to God's. If we can be ashamed of anything which men disapprove, but can be backslidden before God and not be ashamed of it, we are certainly in a state in which we can not be saved.

**15.** When we feel the necessity of human applause to prompt us to the performance of any duty; as for example, if a wife needs the stimulus of a husband's applause to prevent her from neglecting her duties; or the husband needs his wife's applause to quicken him in his duties; or when a student needs the impulse of his teacher's praise to make him study, or the stimulus of commencement and of college honors to crowd him along so as to make even commendable progress; these cases and such as these evince that man's esteem is held before God's. When such stimuli are needed to induce proper application to study, all is wrong. When men need these or similar appliances to induce right action, where are they? What state of mind are they in?

**16.** When it is natural for us to conceive of action produced by such motives as right, we show ourselves to have entirely false views of the real nature of right and wrong. In fact if we can look upon such a state of mind otherwise than with loathing, we show that our hearts are far indeed from estimating things by the right standard. Suppose a student should come to me and I should see that he must have my applause or he would not study, could I regard him as a Christian? While I see that these are the considerations and appliances needed to prompt him along, and that he is influenced by applause only, can I have confidence in his piety? Can he afford me any evidence that his heart is with God? Must I not disapprove, nay, even loathe his spirit?

**17.** So if we are in a state of mind in which we can think of securing any real good to others by such appliances; if we can suppose that by such a course we can either promote their piety or their real usefulness, we are

ourselves entirely out of the way. Nothing could show more conclusively that we have missed the true idea of supreme regard for God.

### III. WHILE THIS STATE OF MIND CONTINUES FAITH IS IMPOSSIBLE

- 1.** This is asserted in the text. The question of our Savior implies the strongest form of negation. He could not more pointedly have said — It is impossible for you who receive honor one of another to have faith.
- 2.** The state of mind implied in our text is the very opposite of faith. Faith commits the will to God and implies a supreme regard to God's views, opinions and applause. Of course it is as widely contrasted with the state of receiving honor from men rather than from God, as it can be.
- 3.** The state of mind here described is a committal to gratify a propensity and must therefore be a state of total depravity. What less can you say of the man who prefers honor from men to honor from God?
- 4.** It is therefore naturally impossible to believe, and yet indulge in this state of mind. The state which prefers human applause and the state of the true believer are fundamentally opposed to each other and can never co-exist in the same mind. There is therefore ample ground in the very constitution and nature of things for the strong negation implied in the question put by our Lord — “How can ye believe who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that comes from God only?”

### REMARKS

- 1.** This is one of the most common forms of total depravity. This giving up the mind to be influenced more by man than by God — more by man's opinions than by God's, is exceedingly common and the propensity to it seems to be amazingly strong. Therefore this propensity, more than any other, takes the control of the will. Hence few things will excite more pain or more pleasure than those which affect reputation. How many a young woman — professed Christians too — would almost go deranged if she supposed her reputation were suffering, and yet she cares not for God's

disapprobation! How many young men would almost die if they felt themselves disgraced; if they saw themselves expelled from the Institution; while yet they are very little, if at all affected by God's known displeasure! O what a state of mind is this!

**2.** Yet this state of mind is often regarded as scarcely one of depravity at all. So far from being thought to be total depravity, it is by many scarcely deemed a sin. Men will show by their language and conduct that they have more respect for the esteem of men than of God, and yet they think this quite consistent with a profession of religion. This is in their view altogether a venial fault if indeed it be a fault at all. They would be astounded if you were to assure them that such a state of mind disproves Christian character. They have never dreamed any such thing.

**3.** Multitudes who profess religion are totally blind in this matter. Some are given up to one form of self-seeking and some to another; but almost none of them attribute this to total depravity. Are they not totally blind in these things? How can men be religious while their will is given up to selfishness? Surely this state is precisely the opposite of religion.

**4.** How few know what it is to renounce the world in the sense of renouncing all undue regard to its opinions and its honors, and giving themselves wholly to God. We sometimes see a case of this sort in which a Christian does really break the yoke of sin and selfishness — but how rare! Yet in no other cases have we the proof that persons are truly religious.

**5.** Many of the most endearing and important relations of life are perverted by selfishness and thus become a snare to souls. For example, the marriage relation. Many women feel worse to lose the affections of their husband than to lose the love of God. They will wander far, very far away from God, and incur His certain and sore displeasure; yet it gives them scarcely the least possible anxiety or pain; but these same persons at the same time may be tremblingly alive to the opinions of their husbands! Oh, if they could only please their husbands? But you see no manifestations of strong desire to please God.

The same thing is often true of husbands towards their wives. So in all the various relations of life. They are abused and perverted by the selfishness

of men. Designed by our Creator for our social happiness, they are so perverted as to become a great temptation to idolatrous affection and regard; then of course, God is disesteemed and forgotten, and the most fatal effects of human depravity are the natural results.

I have often thought that we as a people in this place have greatly erred in the way of too much regard to men's opinions. We began here a small and unknown people. No sooner did we become in some measure known than our names began to cast out as evil. There were many reasons why we should be opposed, some of which were to us unavoidable. But into this subject I need not now enter. I cannot however forbear to remark that there has been a manifest desire here for a long time past to conform so far to the course of other institutions as to get back to popular favor. It cannot be denied that there has been such a desire manifested here, nor that it has been somewhat general. There has been a tendency to turn and tack, and haul up to the wind of popular favor so as to avoid being reproached by those whom we cannot regard as being God's people and in sympathy with God. Now so far as we would do this, we are backsliders from God — real apostates from the God we have professed to love and obey. We ought to know and consider that the world is no more friendly to God than it used to be. In this world, said Christ to His real disciples, ye shall have tribulation. If we will be His unswerving disciples and followers, we have no more right to expect that we can escape public odium than that Christ could.

I am not now saying that we should excite public odium causelessly, or recklessly; but we should seek God's approbation supremely, and then leave all results to His over-ruling providence.

**6.** In the light of our subject we see the great secret of the loss of piety among students. It is a notorious fact that students, instead of rising are apt to degenerate in their piety. I know there are exceptions, but they are only exceptions, and solitary ones too. James B. Taylor was one, and for this reason he was the butt of ridicule in his class. Just because he sustained and developed his piety, was he unpopular with his class-mates — though far indeed from being unpopular with God.

How shall we account for this fact of general declension in the piety of students? We cannot ascribe it to the nature of their studies. It cannot lie



either in the mental exercise and discipline itself, nor in the kind of studies pursued usually in college. It must therefore lie in the motives under which study is pursued. The fearful fact is — students become ambitious. They have their eye on college honors; indeed not only their eye, but their earnest heart. To deny this were to deny one of the plainest matters of fact. Who does not know that they often manifest this to an odious extent? There may be more or less of the appearance of piety manifested in various ways along with this strong manifestation of ambition, but what then? How can ambition and pure religion come into sympathy and union with each other? If those students were to study nothing but the Bible, and yet do this for the sake of making a great commencement speech to show themselves off superbly, who does not see that there would be no piety at all in this? Suppose they studied Hebrew or Theology for such an end, could you say they had profited much by those studies, pursued for such objects?

**7.** This same form of ambition is the ruin of many ministers. They get this spirit in college, carry it into the Theological Seminary, and out of the Seminary into their pulpit, and so on perhaps through life. And who does not know that an ambitious minister is the next-door neighbor to the devil? Who in all the earth does more of Satan's work than he, or does it up to better advantage for his employer?

Now why should not an ambitious life be the result of such a course of training through the college and through the seminary? Why should not such causes produce such results? Is it strange?

I do not by any means say that college honors were intended for this end, but I do say that these are the results naturally, usually, and most deplorably. No wonder these results should distress the truly spiritual portion of the church, and grieve the intelligent and pious patrons of literary institutions. I have good reason to know that they do. I can see why they should.

**8.** Everybody feels that it is a dreadful sin for a minister to seek applause. Who does not feel this? Who does not know that he should himself oppose a minister whom he had reason to believe ambitious? You see a man evidently preaching from ambitious motives, seeking honor from men more than from God; you mark him, and notice how his ambition works

itself out everywhere — in the shape of his sermon, in his manner in the pulpit, and his manner out of the pulpit; in his remarks about himself and his inquires after praise; — seeing this and such things as these, you would cry out against him — Hypocrite! wretch! how can you desecrate God's sanctuary and altar by such a heart as yours!

But thou that condemnest another, beware lest thou also condemn thyself. Seeking honor from man more than from God is just as bad in other men as in gospel ministers: — is just as wicked in other employments as in the gospel ministry. A man in any sphere who allows himself to do the same things is just as odious to God as the minister is, and so would be the woman also who should do the same, and possess the same spirit.

**9.** Many persons at great pains educate their children more for the sake of elevating them in the world than for raising them in the esteem and favor of God. Many educate themselves for the same end, on the same principles. How dreadful that persons should educate either themselves or their children for sin and for moral ruin.

**10.** As long as young men study ambitiously, we need not expect a thoroughly consecrated, self-denying, and God-honoring ministry. Education has too much power to admit of results so unlike its own tendencies. Train your men ambitiously during their years of study, and you can expect nothing better than an ambitious life.

**11.** Students so trained, come gradually to lose a sense of the wickedness of this state of mind. They cease to realize how wicked it is to be more influenced by man than by God. They come gradually under this influence; but when once it has gained the ascendancy in their hearts, they carry it with them to the last moment of commencement day; then they go right off with it to some theological seminary, and perhaps will select their seminary with special reference to their own ambitious ends, preferring that which will give them most \_\_\_\_\_. No wonder this spirit of ambition follows them from the seminary into the ministry, and through their ministry to their very grave!

**12.** When a student is seen to be in such a state, instructors ought to have their eye on him, and ought to bring influences to bear upon him to save him if possible before the strength of habit becomes too strong to be

overcome — too rigid to be cured. Especially should councils and all bodies which exercise the function of granting license to preach, be peculiarly watchful if called to examine for licensure a candidate who is manifestly ambitious. No such candidate ought ever to be admitted into the ministry — no, *never!* Their influence in it cannot fail of being fearfully pernicious.

**13.** A great many persons it is to be feared are keeping up the form of religion before men, while they know themselves to have no communion with God. They may attend worship in their families — but to be seen of men rather than to be accepted of God. They go through the forms of Sabbath worship — their eye on man and not towards God. If they are unblemished in their moral life, it is from regard to their own reputation, lest they should incur the censure of the church and be seen to be really wicked before men. Perhaps they will even pray in public for the sake of their reputation among men, while they know that God regards it as an abomination. Ah, sometimes such men go and pray when the very midnight of the pit is not blacker than their hearts! Horrible!

You can easily see why so many complain of coldness and unbelief. No wonder there is unbelief in your hearts. “How can ye believe who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?” While you turn your back upon God, how can you expect anything better than that He will turn His face away from you? Could you even respect Him if He did not manifest self-respect enough to do this?

O then, cease ye from man! Cease to regard man as one whose opinions should affect you, and control your conduct or your heart. O how many are in bondage to public sentiment — a bondage fatal to their peace with God — fatal to their exercising faith in God — fatal — alas! in multitudes of cases to the final salvation of their souls!

# THE PEACE OF GOD RULING IN THE CHRISTIAN'S HEART

*“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” — Colossians 3:15*

In speaking from this verse, I propose to show,

- I. WHAT IS INTENDED BY “THE PEACE OF GOD.”**
- II. WHAT WE SHOULD UNDERSTAND BY ITS “RULING IN THE HEART.”**
- III. THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH GOD ENJOYS PEACE.**
- IV. THE CONDITIONS OF OUR ENJOYING A SIMILAR PEACE.**

**I.** The peace, called in our text the “peace of God” is obviously so called for two reasons:

- (1.) Because it is the same in kind which God Himself enjoys; and
- (2.) Because He imparts it. It comes to the Christian from God through the work of His Spirit on the heart. It is God’s peace because it is like His in character, and from Him as to its origin.

**II.** Peace may be said to “rule in the heart,” when it prevails over all disturbing influences; when it becomes stable, abiding and all-controlling. There are ever wont to be more or less causes in operation either external or internal to disturb our peace. Hence it can be said to “rule” in the heart only when it triumphs over all opposing influences, and abides, firmly established in the soul.

**III.** It is not improper for us to inquire reverently after the conditions under which God enjoys peace of mind. In the outset of our inquiry we have the fact that God is a moral agent, and in this respect is like ourselves. Or rather in this respect we are made in His image, and hence knowing ourselves, we learn the attributes requisite for moral agency, the laws of

their action, and consequently the conditions under which a moral agent can enjoy peace of mind. Pursuing this course of inquiry in respect to God it is easy to see,

**1.** That His powers of mind must be at peace with each other. All within the depths of the infinite mind must be in harmony. For example, His will must be in entire agreement with His reason. He must evermore choose that which His reason affirms to wisest and best.

Again, His sensibility, must be in harmony with His reason. He must be in such a state of mind as not to feel either more or less intensely than reason dictates, and such moreover as not to have feelings other in kind than His reason affirms they should be. For obviously, if His sensibilities were not in harmony with His reason they would necessarily disturb the repose of His mind because they would disturb its harmonious action.

In the same manner, if His will were not in harmony with His reason and His conscience, the most terrific discord would supplant the peace of the divine mind.

It must be therefore that God has no desires that are unreasonable, or impossible, or wrong; for if He had, He could not be at peace with Himself. There would be a deep and fearful struggle within — the energies of His infinite mind reaching after something that could not be attained, or aspiring after objects which reason or conscience forbids.

Again, it is essential to His peace that God should desire nothing inconsistent with the highest good. If He has any desires whatever, inconsistent with the highest good, He has no right to gratify them; and hence a struggle within must ensue — a struggle, too, of a fearful and terrible character — one whose energy must utterly destroy the internal peace of His mind. Hence if God has peace, it must follow that He has no desires inconsistent with the highest good.

Again, it is an essential condition of the peace of God that He should have no selfish desires. For if He had any selfish desires whatever, His benevolent heart must utterly disapprove them, and hence a conflict must ensue, and God must be at once at war with Himself.

Again, the peace which God enjoys must be conditioned upon the fact that He is conscious of doing as well as He can in all cases and evermore. For if otherwise, then He must know it, and know it, He cannot be happy. God can no more be happy than we can, while He is conscious of not doing the very best He can. It is essential to His peace of mind that He should be fully conscious of having done the very best He could during the whole eternity of His existence.

Again, His peace must be conditioned upon the fact that *He is satisfied with Himself*. For if He is not, He cannot have internal peace.

Moreover, He must be satisfied on the whole with the results of all He has done or has purposed to do. He must have in His own mind the assurance that He shall secure the great end upon which His heart is set. He must see that He has chosen the best possible end, and the wisest means for attaining that end. Seeing as He does the end from the beginning, — His infinite mind sweeping in its vast survey all events and their causes and results, He must see that on the whole the system of His choice is the best possible, and that therefore nothing more or other remains to be desired. Viewed therefore as a whole, He must be satisfied both with the ends to be secured, with all the means, and with all the modes of using those means.

It should be considered that there are many things that result incidentally, and it may be, unavoidably, from the best possible system of means — things which may be in themselves most distressing. Such, for example, is all the sin that exists in our world. It exists, as I suppose, unavoidably, in a system of moral government. Under such a system agents must be left so free that they can sin if they choose to do so; hence there must of necessity be a liability to the evils of sin. God must have foreseen from the beginning that in the progress of His moral government over men a great many evils would spring up which in themselves would be very trying, and which if viewed apart from their relations and bearings, would greatly disturb His peace. Yet on the whole, taking into view all the results, He has no regrets, for He sees that this system, even with all its incidental evils, is yet the best possible.

Again, it is another condition of His peace that there shall be nothing in all the universe which is to Him a cause of regret. He must know nothing of those regrets to which we are exposed, for He sees everything resulting as

He foresaw it would. His mind, therefore, can rest peacefully in all this, just as He foresaw it would rest.

It is essential to the peaceful attitude of the divine mind that He should view all things in their relations and results as developed under His overruling providence and not separate and isolated from them, as our finite minds usually do, and often are compelled to. We often see only one link of a chain at a time, and hence we may not even dream that there is a chain; or if we do, we cannot tell what points the extreme ends connect. We are quite incapable of seeing the end from the beginning even if we would — except by faith — except as we confide in the certainty of those ends which God has revealed as the result of His moral government.

In fine, God has purposed an end worthy of Himself — an end which He is certain of securing. Nothing can occur to surprise Him — nothing that He will on the whole have cause to regret. He may indeed see many things in moral agents which in themselves are to be regretted; but He sees that He can restrain them within such limits as He judges most wise — can say to sin and pain — Hitherto mayest thou go, but no farther. Being able to oppose limits to the reign of sin, and also to overrule all permitted evil to secure from it results of good, He has ample reason to be satisfied with the system as He has devised it. When therefore He sees it all spread out before Him as it were on a map, He finds nothing which disturbs the deep, eternal peace of His mind.

#### IV. THE CONDITIONS OF OUR ENJOYING A PEACE SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH GOD ENJOYS

I have said that our peace is called the peace of God, because it is like His. We too are moral agents, and are therefore in this respect like Him. Hence the conditions of peace of mind must be substantially the same in our case as in His.

**1.** It is essential that there should be internal harmony among the powers of our mind. Our sensibilities must be so subdued that all shall be in their proper place, and of the appropriate character. No one must be allowed to act in a manner inconsistent with reason. No one must be allowed to be

unreasonably excessive in degree, or be misdirected as to its object. Reason and conscience must regulate the sensibility, for if the sensibility has no regulator, the mind can hope for no internal peace. Not let it be forgotten, that the divine will, if revealed, and so far as revealed, must be paramount law to us. Then our sweet and cheerful obedience to it will secure internal rest and peace.

**2.** Our peace is conditioned not only upon the fact that we are at peace with ourselves, with conscience, and with God's revealed will, but also, and especially, upon our having *faith* in the place which *sight* holds in the mind of God. God sees all things with infinitely clear and perfect vision, and therefore rests; let us believe in His wisdom and love with implicit faith, and therefore rest. He sees the end from the beginning, and of course fearing no change — secure against all vicissitudes, He rests in peace; — our faith should do for us what sight does for Him, and in it we too may rest. It is naturally impossible for any creature to walk by sight as God does, for the good reason that none can see as He does. Hence arises a natural necessity that faith supply in the case of all creatures what God enjoys in the omniscient grasp of His infinite mind.

Substantially the peace of all moral agents must depend upon the same conditions. But God knows by seeing; we must know by believing. If God were left in doubt as to the issues and results of things, He could not have peace of mind. Neither could we. God's mind is at rest as to the issues of all events, because He sees through all, and knows all issues with infallible certainty; we may have a similar peace, if we have such faith in His wisdom, love and power as will equally assure us of the best possible ultimate results.

Suppose you are leading a blind man. You say to him, "Now we are ascending the plank walk; we are in the right way; you need not fear." In this case you walk along confidently and fearlessly because you can see. He cannot see; but he can *believe*, and this may answer the same purpose. If he has faith he can move along with as much confidence, holding the hand of his trusty guide, as though he had sight itself.

God has thus put it in our power to have the same peace substantially that He has. He cannot make us see as He sees. This would imply the gift of omniscience, an attribute which we do not need — an attribute which



would be no blessing to us unless we had with it all other divine attributes — that is, unless we were ourselves to become the infinite God. It were vain therefore for us to wish for omniscience. But we may wisely pray for faith. Faith is the very thing we need to supply for us the place which omniscience supplies to the Deity. Let God possess all the attributes of divinity, — omniscience, omnipotence, boundless wisdom, infinite love; these attributes are all needed in the Godhead; let them exist there, and let the Infinite Mind repose in the exercise of these attributes, assured that all is infinitely well which He does, and that all will result well in the end. Thus He will have perfect peace. How can we have a similar peace? Obviously not by aspiring to have Jehovah's natural attributes, but by simple faith in Him. We do not need His attributes; they would not befit us; but we need faith; for faith befits us and our relations to God above us and to a dark and trying world around us. It is enough that one great Being should possess divine attributes; He has them; He will use them; and He has told us *how* He will use them. He assures us that He wields all His natural attributes in infinite love and wisdom. What could we ask more?

Since therefore His attributes create a certainty that all shall be well as He can make it, and since this certainly gives Him a deep and unalloyed peace, it follows most clearly that faith on our part should give us the same certainty and the same sort of peace. If we believe that God has framed the best possible plan and will certainly execute it in the best possible way, we shall not feel anxious for the final result. Then let us have faith in His universal providence. Let us confide in the wisdom of all He does and of all He suffers to be done. It becomes us to acquiesce in all God does whether for its own sake, or as unavoidably incidental to His best possible system; whether occurring to us or to others; whether done so that we can understand its objects and end, or done in a manner inscrutable to our imperfect vision. It is easy for us to understand that in a universe of moral agents many things will result which cannot be avoided without defeating the end. Hence we should acquiesce in the wisdom, love and resources of God. Suppose a man takes some great and important journey, for some worthy and remunerative end. He accomplishes his journey and happily secures the end he sought, but here are various incidental evils accruing. He has blistered his feet by walking, or has worn out his shoes, or he has missed his dinner once or twice on the road, or has caught a shower; but

shall these light and incidental evils destroy his peace or make him regret his journey?

In like manner the incidental evils in the government of God should be patiently borne and the more so since they are not only light compared with the resulting value of the ends gained, but because infinite wisdom can overrule even these for much important good.

It is essential to our peace that we should be sure that under God all things are working out the utmost good, possible to God, and indeed, great and infinite good, absolutely. Here before you is a blind man who lives happily with his son. But suppose he had no confidence in his son at all. He is afraid as he takes his hand on a Sabbath morning to come to the house of God, that his son will pitch him off the steps. He cannot trust his wife or his daughter to prepare his food lest they should take advantage of his blindness and give him poison. How wretched he must be!

But if he has proper confidence, he may be as quiet as to these fears, and as placid, as the best eyes could make him. How natural that he should enjoy other people's eyes, and not only be happy that they can see, but also himself enjoy the advantages of their perfect vision. He can enjoy his breakfast as well as they do. Faith makes up in many respects the place of sight.

Suppose now that we have confidence that nothing can happen which shall disturb God in any wise, or shall frustrate His plans. Suppose God has assured us that He is working all things according to the counsel of His own will; shall we not confide in His management? True He apprises us that there are some things done by moral agents, which taken by themselves and considered as their voluntary acts, He utterly abhors, as for example, their sin; yet He assures us that He can overrule it for so much good that on the whole its incidental evils in the system of a moral government do not disturb His deep, eternal peace. As in a machine there will be friction, and yet its action and results are excellent and no man need be troubled because of the incidental evil of its friction, so in the government of God. Suppose the man who invented steam engines had foreseen all their friction — every case of bursting boilers, and all their consequences, and withal, every instance in which they should be used for evil purposes; if he should foresee these evil results and nothing else, he

might be deeply troubled; but if he sees also all the resulting and far-overbalancing good, he may set his mind at rest. Much more still might he repose in peace if he had resources enough to convert even the friction to some useful end; if he could overrule every explosion of an engine to work out important good. How reasonable in this case that he should say — “All is well; I can make all things work together for good.”

So deep and blessed is the calm, eternal repose of the Infinite Mind, despite of the presence of some sin in His moral universe. His eternal gaze pierces all that can occur, or ever shall, surveying all relations and bearings and all possible results. In view of all, His peace is unalloyed. Why? Because He understands all He is doing and all the possible results. But how can *His* peace become available to *us*? We must consider what He has told us; and what is this? That all things are wrought out according to the counsel of His own will. That whatsoever He has purposed, He will assuredly perform. That not one sparrow can fall to the ground without Him. That we may confide in Him to govern all things with infinite wisdom and love. Then let us receive all He has said, and trust Him for all He is doing, and ever shall do.

But we are finite beings and are liable to get exceedingly bewildered and confounded if we lose our faith in God. You take a child into an engine room amid the noise, the crash, the dreadful displays of power, and he screams with fright; you must take him out or he will go into fits. So we are often troubled when we see a world in commotion, rocking with tempests, bleeding in war, filled with the groans occasioned by sin and by death. But why so? Does not God reign on high? Has He not told us what He is doing, and why He has framed a system of machinery to us apparently so vast and complicated, and so fraught with evil? Indeed He has told us enough for us to know. He has assured us that nothing can occur, without His intelligent and wise permission; that He is working all things according to His own most wise and benevolent plans.

How broad and glorious is the ground laid for peace, if we will only sympathize with God and fully trust Him! What more could we possibly have?

Again, as a condition of peace we need a perfectly rectified sensibility. The fact is, that our sensibilities have been suffered so long to run riot, and

have become so enormous and so unreasonable, it is impossible that we should be at peace till they are subdued. The satisfaction of perfect peace can be had in no other way.

Our will, also must be subdued till there shall be no lusting after unreasonable and forbidden objects. Its stubbornness must all give place to a deep and unresisting submission to God's will. Then our souls will be at peace.

## REMARKS

1. God says in this text that He has called us to enjoy this state of mind. Indeed, can this be so? Has called us to enjoy what? His own eternal blessedness. He calls us to come and drink at the same eternal fountain whence flow the streams of His exhaustless felicity. Spreading out before us the infinite calm and repose of His own mind, He cries — Ho! come, ye troubled and anxious ones; come and partake of this blessed peace. Let it rule forevermore in your hearts.
2. If God has called us to this, it is of the utmost importance that we should understand our calling. What is this to which He has called us? To let the peace of God rule in our hearts. Then let us understand what this peace of God is, and on what conditions we can secure its permanent reign in our own hearts.
3. If we are not enjoying this peace now, it is high time we should enquire *why* we do not. If God has called us to it, and we have not come, *why* have we not? Is it because we do not choose to fall in with the natural and necessary conditions? The very fact that God leaves it with our choice may occasion our loss of it. It puts it in our power to lose the blessing if we will.

If you cannot be satisfied with what God must do, you cannot be satisfied at all. God has no right to satisfy you and you have no reason to expect that He will. If you are so unreasonable as to be unwilling God should pursue His own ends by His own means, He will leave you to take care of your own peace. He will by no means turn aside from His plan for your sake. He will not make Himself unhappy because you cannot be persuaded

to believe in Him, to confide in His wisdom and love, and submit yourself to His will. It would indeed please Him to make you happy; but if you will not be happy in Him, you must go your own way and provide for your own miserable happiness according to your own foolish wisdom.

**4.** Our peace cannot be perfect unless we ourselves are perfect.

**5.** To have unbroken peace, we must be physically perfect in this sense, namely, that our sensibility must be subdued so as not to be thinking and craving after impossible things, for obviously, so long as this is our physical state, it is vain for us to hope for uninterrupted peace.

**6.** We can see in this subject what constitutes the peace of saints on their death-bed. How often standing by the bedside of dying saints, have I philosophized on their case as I have marked their perfect peace of mind and have asked them questions to draw out their real feelings and views. I know not how often my former wife said to me on her death-bed, “My peace is perfect.” She said this too with an emphasis very unusual — an emphasis which showed me that she meant all her words implied. This led me to look at the question, — What can be the elements of this peace?

It is plain that this peace is of no ordinary character. No desire remains unsatisfied. There is no anxiety to live and no fear to die. No passions or appetites remain to lust and crave and disquiet the mind. The soul has no unbelief; its faith is perfect. It rests in God with inexpressible composure and satisfaction. Grasping His universal providence, the mind is satisfied that God will evermore do all things well. Suppose the dying saint has children to leave behind. They are left confidingly with God, in the most perfect confidence that He will take care of them and of all their interests. There remains in the mind no anxiety about the great object of the conversion of the world. This too is felt reposing on the everlasting promises, and the soul feels happy to rest the case with God.

How wonderfully deep this peace often becomes on the dying bed of God’s people! It seems as if nothing could disturb it. It beams forth from their eye; it rests in placid repose on every feature; their very pulse testifies that not an anxious thought intrudes. How wonderful and how calm! Said Dr. Burritt, a pious physician, to Dr. Robbins, an infidel student of his — “I am dying; please come and feel my pulse.” The young

man took his hand. Dr. Burritt said, “Can you die like that? You see all is calm and peaceful — not one troubled thought or fear ruffles my mind or my body. Could you die so? When you shall come to die I hope you may have pulse as calm as that.”

The scene affected the young doctor greatly, and became the means of his conversion. He saw that the gospel was doing for a dying saint what his infidelity could never do for him. He knew very well by the pulse of the dying Christian that there was not one agitated thought in his mind. He could not but see that the peace of God ruled in his heart, and spread its soothing influence over every object that could reach the mind.

**7.** With this subject before us we can understand the secret of the peace of heaven. There the mind is subdued into unalloyed and perfect peace — a peace which rules in the heart forever. Faith in God supplies the place of omniscience, so that though they cannot know all, they can trust all in the hands of Him who does. Let come what will, therefore their peace remains undisturbed, for they believe implicitly in God, and they know that His hand is in every event that does or possibly can occur.

Suppose a mother has gone to heaven, and she does not know that her children are yet converted, or will be. But this does not disturb her perfect peace. Why can that Christian look at death approaching and not so much as wink or twinge a particle? She fears not death’s bony arm; dreads not his posed and quivering dart; sees her children around her and yet is calm and undisturbed. Her calmness is not the stupor of mental imbecility, for she manifests a most wakeful concern in all that passes. Her mind was never more active and full of interest than it now is. Draw near and ask her the state of her mind. Hold your ear close down to her parched and stiffened lips, for she can scarcely articulate a word. Catch her gentle whisper — “peace, peace” she says, “all is perfect peace.” *But your children;* how is it with them? Are they converted? She replies, “I have left them all with God. He has the care of my children.”

Now if you can tell me the secret of the peace of the death-bed, I will tell you the secret of the peace of heaven. Or if you can tell me the secret of the peace of heaven, I can tell you the secret of the peace of the saint’s dying bed. Or if you can tell me either, I can tell you the secret of all spiritual peace.

**8.** To those of us who have lost near and dear friends, these thoughts must be peculiarly precious. We have seen them peaceful and calm, their minds smooth as the unruffled lake — their faith perfect and universal — their will sunk into the will of God, and the whole mind chastened and purified. O how such a mind looks out upon the foaming ocean of events! It sees the air filled with spray, hears the thunder of the roaring billows; it sees in the distance the fearful storm, but looks out calmly from the little cleft of the rock, securely, as if there never was a storm or a billow and never could be. Not so much as the wing of the storm can touch him — not a ripple of a wave can reach him. *His soul has peace in God.*

**9.** Many do not realize the conditions of peace of mind. They may have heard of them by the hearing of the ear, but no just impression of what they are has been made upon their minds.

**10.** The absence of peace of mind in any one Christian is often a great stumbling-block to others. When parents fail of possessing it, their state is often a great stumbling-block to their children. And yet they are not aware of the evil influence of their uneasy temper. In fact some seem to make a virtue of being eternally uneasy. They seem to think it becomes them to be anxious and troubled about many things. Mother, you may do more good in one single day by letting the peace of God rule in your heart, than by everything else you can do. Ah yes; let your children see your brow placid and calm; then they will see one thing in your religion attractive and not repulsive. But you may go on, bustling and fretting and talking of the wickedness of your children from morning till night, and you will only ruin them. Such influences have no natural tendency to save them. So long as your brow wears upon it storms and not sunshine, you cannot hope to win your children to embrace the gospel you profess.

**11.** Many seem to have so many wishes, they are likely to be damned unless God takes some strong measures with them to break up their uneasy and lusting spirit. This having an everlasting craving is entirely aside from the order of God. These lustings and cravings must be all put away, and you must learn to settle down into your own niche and be satisfied in all respects with what God does. But you cry out, “O I must have this thing, or I must have that!” You must learn to be satisfied with

what God gives you and be quiet. No longer insult God by assuming that He is making mistakes in His disposal of your affairs.

**12.** The peace of God will rule in us in proportion to the strength of our confidence in God. It requires strong faith to see God in everything, to believe that under His hand all things are working together for good — to know and realize that all events are pushed forward with one divine, eternal energy, and so controlled by infinite wisdom that all the wickedness of moral agents is made to work out moral good. To believe all this and live daily in the full and quiet assurance of it is no small thing.

Why does not God make Himself uneasy with the trouble and mischiefs of this crazy world? He rests in His own eternal knowledge and power. The Christian says — “Ah em, I don’t know what is before me.” But I do, says God to him — I know all most perfectly. But says the Christian, “I cannot see anything how these matters will turn out.” I can, says the Omniscient One, and you need not be anxious. Faith therefore — faith in God is the great remedy for all this disturbance of mind. “Said I not unto thee,” said Christ, “that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?” Then why, O Christian, wilt thou fret thyself down to the depths of hell!



# JUDICIAL BLINDNESS

*“And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I am come into this world; that they which see not might see, and that they which see, might be made blind.’ And some of the Pharisees which were with Him heard these words, and said unto Him, ‘Are we blind also?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘If ye were blind, ye should have no sin, but now ye say, “we see”: therefore your sin remaineth.”’*  
*John 9:39, 40.*

In discussing the subject presented in these words I propose,

- I. TO NOTICE SOME TRUTHS THAT ARE ASSUMED IN THIS TEXT.**
- II. TO POINT OUT SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE DIVINE ADMINISTRATION WHICH ARE REVEALED HERE.**
- III. TO ADDUCE SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THESE PRINCIPLES AS REVEALED IN THE HISTORY OF GOD’S PROVIDENCES.**

## I. SOME TRUTHS THAT ARE ASSUMED IN THIS TEXT

**1.** Christ obviously assumes that obligation is conditioned upon light. “If ye were blind ye should have no sin.” Beyond question the blindness here spoken of is mental not physical, so that our Savior here explicitly asserts that if the Pharisees had no knowledge of duty they would have no sin; which of course assumes that the presence of some knowledge of duty is a condition of sin — and consequently of moral obligation.

**2.** Christ also assumes that the guilt of disobedience is graduated by the degree of our knowledge. In proportion as we are enlightened, is our guilt, if we resist the demands of conscience, enhanced.

These principles are implied not only in our text but universally throughout the Bible. The careful reader of his Bible cannot fail to notice this.

In this as in other respects its teachings are most entirely accordant with the convictions of our own minds. Every unsophisticated mind affirms that these principles are righteous and that nothing else could be.

## II. I AM TO POINT OUT SOME PRINCIPLES OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT WHICH ARE REVEALED IN THESE WORDS

**1.** God does not require of us natural impossibilities. If He did He might require us to do duty although we do not understand either what the requirement is, or the authority of Him who requires it. Right over against this Christ says, "If ye were blind ye should have no sin." What principle is implied in this language? Beyond all question, this; that if we have no knowledge of duty, we can incur no guilt by neglect. Indeed, *neglect* always implies something known, which is neglected. As also *transgression* implies some known rule or law which is wickedly passed over.

Where no knowledge of law exists, it is impossible that there should be either culpable neglect or transgression. And God never requires such impossibilities. He never demands the making of brick without straw. As it is impossible for men physically blind to see physical objects; so is it impossible for men utterly ignorant of duty to act morally; therefore God never requires them to do it.

**2.** God really does require of us according to the blessings we have received. He holds us responsible for the light He has given us. As Christ said to the Jews, "But now ye say, "we see;" therefore your sin remaineth." You profess to be enlightened; grant that you are; then your sin is not only actual but great.

You will observe that the Pharisees scornfully repelled the idea that they were morally blind. "What!" they would say; "do you mean to insinuate that we have not the true knowledge of God? Indeed we have it, before any people on earth." "Very well," said our Lord; "then on your own ground you have the greater sin." Now this shows most plainly that Christ assumed the principle of guilt according to light, and neither holds the

morally dark-minded responsible, nor exempts the enlightened from responsibility.

**3.** God will visit with judicial blindness those who have light, but abuse it. “For judgment,” said Christ, “have I come into this world, that those who see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.” What is this “*judgment?*” Christ Himself explains it. It is awarding retribution according to deeds — especially those deeds of mind which respect the use or abuse of moral light. He comes to try with the presentation of light those who have not hitherto enjoyed it, (the dark-minded heathen) and to doom to judicial blindness those (the Jews) who have had light to see by, but have neglected to improve and use it. Christ comes to smite them with blindness for their great sin.

Since the sin lies in rejecting light, it is plain that the greater the light is which God gives to a people or to an individual, the more certainly and speedily will He visit them with judicial blindness, if they reject this light. All this seems plainly implied in what Christ says here.

### III. ILLUSTRATIONS OF THESE PRINCIPLES

We have one in the case of these Scribes and Pharisees. They had long enjoyed much light respecting God and their duty. In their hands they held many clear and precious prophecies of the coming Messiah, prophecies which unfolded His spiritual character, and which might have shown them that Jesus of Nazareth is the personage of whom Moses and the prophets spake.

But they did not relish the spiritual views of the Messiah; they preferred a different character; the wish became father to corresponding thoughts, and they formed an ideal mainly from their own hearts’ imagination. To this ideal the man of Nazareth did not correspond; so they rejected Him; and God by consequence rejected them. Christ’s actual coming added nothing to their light, but only confounded them in greater, deeper darkness. They had been enlightened above any other people on earth; but their worldly, sensual views, begotten in a worldly, sensual heart, led them to reject Him who came as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the result was that they speedily sunk into darkness more dense and dreadful than that of any

people on earth. The clearest exhibitions of truth only blinded them the more. Their wicked hearts seemed to react against the truth only the more violently by how much the brighter it shone.

The same was true of the nation as a whole although there were many individual exceptions. Among the more illiterate portions of the people were many who had never heartily sympathized in the great movements against Jesus of Nazareth; who had been the led and not the leaders; and who not unnaturally embraced the true light when it came distinctly before them. It is a most remarkable fact that Christ was obliged to choose His disciples from among the illiterate and unenlightened classes — inasmuch as those who had been educated after the Jewish mode had almost to a man become so hardened by long resistance of the light they had, as to render their reception of more, quite hopeless. To those who had enjoyed most light, and abused it, the teachings of Jesus Christ were only darkness. They might have seen before Christ came, but having made themselves voluntarily blind, they were precisely in a state to be cursed and not blessed by His teaching.

We often see the same principle illustrated in the case of children brought up in highly religious families. Such are in danger of experiencing the greatest moral blindness. Unless they embrace the truths made known to them, they must experience the terribly hardening influence of knowing yet not doing their duty.

Few men have lived under stronger light than Aaron Burr. A grandson of the elder President Edwards, son of an eminently pious mother, his parents and friends holding forth before him the best forms of gospel light then known, who could be more favored than he? Pierpont Edwards was another man of perhaps equally favorable early training — yet how dreadful the depth of hardness and crime to which he sank! If you had searched the whole world you might not have found two children brought up under stronger light and clearer instruction than they. Yet what sons were they of such pious parents! Aaron Burr, and Pierpont Edwards, stood among the highest class of gifted intellects; but O, how did they fall like Lucifer, son of the morning! The very name of Aaron Burr became a hissing and a bye-word. Few men have better earned a deep and lasting infamy. He trod the pearls of divine knowledge under his feet, and what

other result could follow than judicial blindness and the most utter moral desolation!

I might name a great many cases of this sort where men have been reared in the very garden of the Lord — nurtured on the praying hearts of some of God's dearest children; yet resisting all light and all persuasion, they became devils incarnate! Some are so presumptuous, and so misjudge, as to suppose that for His honor's sake God will not suffer the children of so pious parents to go to hell. The greatest possible mistake! The truth is that when sinners resist so much light the honor of God demands that He should withhold His Spirit, and let them alone, and ere long, often most suddenly, He turns them into hell. Since God has called, but they refused, therefore in dread retribution, He says, "Now ye may call, and I will not answer. Ye may make many prayers and I will not hear."

On the same principle, many instances occur in which those congregations which have enjoyed the most enlightening instruction, have been at length given up of God to become the most hardened and desolate of men.

Some of you have heard of or read the sermons of Pres. Davies. You know them to be among the most excellent sermons ever preached. I read them in my early life with the deepest interest. For a long time I felt a great desire to learn the history of that congregation and church to whom he preached. At last I fell in with a man who knew their history most intimately. There is no place, said he, in all the land, where so deep darkness reigns, and reigns with such fearful sway as there. The church on that once consecrated spot has but one surviving male member.

As usual, where many are greatly blessed, others too are greatly cursed, and sometimes, for an awful warning to the latter class, God lets the swelling waves of moral desolation roll over a place, and almost utterly extinguish the light of the candlestick which shone on so many eyes in vain.

Another illustration may be seen in the astonishing blindness of many who embrace all forms of error and religious delusion. I can recollect several whom I knew in my early childhood. They were brought up under the prayers and instructions of very pious parents and teachers. Yet they were the first to embrace Mormonism. Others seemed to be foremost in yielding

a ready assent to Universalism. Others have embraced Davisism, running after every foolish and absurd thing, discarding all they used to believe, as if they would have their revenge on those blessed truths for the unwelcome restraints and annoyances which themselves had experienced from such enemies. It seemed to be a delight to them to explode all they had ever believed. Why? Let their history only be known and you will see why. They were visited with judicial blindness. Christ comes to them as to the ancient Jews, that they which see might be made blind. Can there be a more terrific doom!

Go and visit those places which have been blessed with great revivals. You will find that those who have been blessed with the greatest light, but have rejected it, are fearfully blinded and hardened. You will find Universalism and all the other ridiculous forms of error springing right up where the brightest light has shone, and where the greatest revivals have prevailed. Right here, among that very people where God has done so much to enlighten men's minds, there, among those who resisted that light, you will find more errors, and errors more pernicious springing up than anywhere else. There you will find men ready to swallow down greedily the most ridiculous and disgusting forms of error.

When men have been deeply convicted of sin and have resisted their convictions, they will almost inevitably fall into the most profound moral darkness. They will get entirely bewildered; will seem to lose their delicate perception of nice moral distinctions, and readily call good, evil; and evil, good. In this state of mind they are ready to embrace all forms of fatal and delusive error. Nothing is too gross and revolting for them to receive and love. How often have I been surprised to hear what men would say who had run this career — things which it would seem impossible for any man in his senses to believe. Indeed you cannot account for their believing such things, except on the supposition that God has given them up to judicial blindness. This blindness is far greater in their case than ever occurs among those who have never been so highly instructed. The violence done to their moral nature is more terrible, and consequently the shock it receives is the greater. In this state of fearful blindness, all means for their salvation are nearly or quite hopeless. Others under the same means may be enlightened and saved; but they will be only the more benighted, by how much the clearer and stronger the light you pour upon their sightless moral eye-balls.

Their hearts seem to be set upon resisting the light, and their reaction against it will be the greater according as the action to be resisted is the more annoying. They “hate the light, and will not come to it lest their deeds should be reproved.”

Ye who have been in revivals and have watched the subsequent course of those who have passed through them unblessed, can bear your testimony to what I am saying. You have seen many cases which seemed most strange and unaccountable, only on the supposition that “God has sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” Not long since I had a long conversation with a man who had been carried away with *Davisism*. To my astonishment he told me, in substance, that in his belief Davis was far ahead of Jesus Christ. He thinks it an honor to Christ that Davis speaks well of Him, as if the name of Christ needed to be honored, or could be, by the commendation of such a man as Davis! The man of whom I speak has been greatly enlightened; he has been wont to hold up his light for other men to walk by; but now, alas! how has his light been turned to darkness! Who that knew him once could believe what their eyes now see of him and their ears hear?

Again, who does not know that where churches have become formal, they have soon been given up to strong delusion. For example, the Papal church. When they refused to conform in heart to the truth they held, into what ridiculous and gross delusions did they fall! Down, down, they went with rapid pace into the grossest darkness.

On the same principle many of the most enlightened sinners become infidels. Rejecting what light they have, God gives them over to judicial blindness, and they are then ripe for the grossest delusions. Commonly you will find the most bitter infidels among those who have known most of the gospel — who have been most pressed with its claims, and whose minds have consequently become most sore and restive under its galling demands. They have done most violence to their moral natures, and God has righteously given them over to the most deep and damning delusions.

## REMARKS

**1.** Those who have been so much enlightened as to see and admit the truth, have reached a point where it is most perilous to stop. This is the last place at which man should think of stopping. It is nothing less than utter madness to stop there. If you were to hear the cry of fire in the dead of night, and even suppose it to be probably a false alarm, yet you would naturally look out and see, and if you found all well you would rest again. But if you should find that verily your house is all on fire — if this truth should flash on your mind, and you could not but admit it, what should we think of you if you should sit down and invite sleep again? Think of you! Of course, that you are mad or deranged — or it not, that you are infinitely wicked! What? let your house burn down upon your wife and children, and make no effort to save either of them! And are you not mad that you should do this?

Now apply this illustration. You know the gospel; you admit its truth. You start up and find, in fact, that you are upon the brink of an eternal hell. You see the deep pit opening beneath your feet, and the flames rolling up just ready to seize upon you — and yet you can lie down and sleep! Can anything be so perilous as this? You know that this hell is kindled to burn forever! You know that the destruction of the sinner there is “*without remedy*.” You know that no other loss can begin to compare with the loss of the soul. Your own soul is in most certain and dreadful peril, and yet you can remain inactive, as if all this were only a false alarm! O, was there ever such infatuation? Better that you had never known the gospel, than that having known it, you should turn away from its proffered salvation. Infinitely less guilty and less dangerous for you it were, that you should never have seen a Bible — never have heard a sermon, never have been made the subject of one prayer.

**2.** Many seem to bless themselves for the light they enjoy, and give themselves great credit for knowing and admitting the gospel in theory. “O,” say they, “we are not infidels, not we! We know all about the gospel.” But do you *obey it*? “O no, we are in no haste about obeying it. We shall have a convenient season yet.” So you resist the light God has given you! Your knowledge of the gospel is, so far, a curse to you and not



a blessing. You are treasuring up fearful wrath against the day of wrath, and can do nothing else than this so long as you withhold your heart from its claims.

**3.** We see whence come the multitude of errors that overspread the land. Their number and grossness are just what might be expected where God has so greatly blessed the people as He has in our churches. In all cases this will be found to be the course; great light abused, has resulted in gross delusion. Men have resisted God's claims and grieved away His Spirit; and now the Spirit withdraws; Satan comes in with seven other spirits more wicked; he takes full possession, and the last state is worse than the first. All forms of fanaticism revive; spiritual blindness ensues; the men who would not come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd may now have darkness to their hearts' content; they have loved it and God says, *let them have it!* and on, on, they go down the dark road to hell.

**4.** Those who are judicially blinded will usually give this indication of the fact — *they will never take warning!* You may utter the most solemn admonitions in their ears, and seek to press the truth upon their conscience; you labor in vain! They will not believe you unless you tell them lies! If you speak to them the truth, they will not believe. Speak to them lies, and prophecy deceits, and they will hail you as a friend and a brother. But speak only the truth, and you can gain no access to their hearts. You can carry them whither you please with error; but you cannot lead them into truth. You cannot reach them with warnings, for they will not take the alarm.

How remarkable that when the gospel preacher sounds the note of warning, the tender conscience will feel its utmost power, and perhaps be even extremely alarmed; while those to whom it really belongs will not suffer it to touch themselves. They leave it to pass by them as the idle wind which men regard not.

Such give the strongest proof that they are judicially blinded.

**5.** It is always to be expected that individuals, families or communities who enjoy great light, but will not yield their hearts to it, will turn out badly. You might select from such a community the most horrible instances of depravity. Such families will furnish cases at which the

Christian would stand aghast. These are, under God's government, only the natural results of having and abusing great light.

**6.** The revivals of the last thirty years have resulted in the judicial blindness of multitudes of modern Scribes and Pharisees. It is to be feared that many ministers even have fallen into a most alarming state of declension, as the result of failing to act up to the light God gave them. Many churches too have gone backward with a fearful and perpetual backsliding. They should have pressed onward and upward; but they did not embrace all the truth which God revealed to them; they shrunk from bearing the cross; they held parley with the spirit of the world; and a dreadful blindness has come over them. Although in many churches there are many pious members, yet in not a few it would seem that the majority are given up to believe a lie, and to lapse into a most horrible state of carnality and declension. In fact they are often opposed to any effort to promote revivals of religion! What can this mean? What does it indicate? After having experienced such great blessings from revivals, why do they now oppose revivals? Why is this? Go back and trace the history of those who were only nominally in them, and you will get the answer. They never loved revivals. They had more light in those revivals than they chose to admit or obey; hence their eyes were blinded and their hearts hardened. They do not want to be annoyed again with such appeals to their consciences. They dread to be brought again into such burning contact with convicting truth. Consider these things, and you will see reason enough for all the facts now present in the history of the churches.

**7.** When Christ comes among a people, some are blinded rather than enlightened by His coming. This is probably a universal fact. I have often known the blindness of persons increase precisely as the work of God increased. As light progressed, and truth beamed and blazed with increasing power, their hearts grew hard and their eyes dark. When it seemed impossible that they should resist, then they seemed only the more opposed, and the more embittered against the truth.

For a long time this seemed a great wonder to me, but now I understand it. The reason of it is most apparent. Men who do not love the truth will resist it till they have paralyzed the power of truth upon their will; till they have grieved the Spirit of God away, and nearly put out the moral

eyes of the soul; then they can believe any lie and deny any truth. Then they are ready for any deeds of darkness, or for any depths of absurdity.

**8.** In looking over the history of this place, I have said to myself — Now I shall not be disappointed to see enemies to the truth rising up among us, growing more and more benighted in mind and besotted in error till they become darkened and deluded beyond any other people on the earth. What have we seen elsewhere in the history of the church? Just what our Savior would have us expect — “For judgment am I come into this world, that they which see not, might see, and that they which see might be made blind.”

Contemplating the state of things here, my mind has been greatly impressed with the fear that we should get into a state in which God’s honor would demand that He should blot us out and leave us to moral ruin. We may say — “We have Abraham to our father” — yet it may avail us as little as it did the Jews. We may have said it too long already, and may have relied upon it too much. None the less reason for our relation to father Abraham is there to fear that God will give us up. On the contrary, just in proportion as we have been favored with light may we expect that God will send on us judicial blindness. We may think we are doing well; but God will surely carry out the changeless principles of His moral government just as He always has done in all ages and in all other places.

In my more personal conversations with this people, I am struck to find so many who are greatly in the dark. Instead of advancing in knowledge, and becoming more and more enlightened, they are only the more darkened and confused; they say things now which they would not have said years ago. How often has it happened that persons have begun to doubt, and finally to yield up opinions which they once held strongly, progressing continually forward towards giving up the truth they once knew. Now take warning, beloved; see if it be true that you really embrace in your heart the truth you profess to believe. If ever in all my life my soul was filled with trembling, it was when this question came home to my mind — Does my heart really embrace the truth which I believe, or is it merely received in my intelligence? O there was a searching power in this question, and I could not help feeling it. I found myself continually on my knees, crying out — “Lord, I never knew this before. Did I ever believe

this before? Surely this seems to me like a new gospel.” So much more thoroughly did I now see the marrow and fatness of the gospel, that it seemed as if all my former faith in it had been only as a dream, and not a reality. When God was making such revelations as kept my very being all on fire, then the question — Is not all my faith in the gospel a merely intellectual belief? pressed upon me with unwonted power. Then I cried out — “Lord, don’t enlighten me and yet suffer my heart to draw back, for if Thou dost, I shall certainly go down by the shortest road to destruction.”

Brethren, do you believe with all your heart what you profess to believe? Some say — “I believe the doctrine of sanctification.” If you do, you should embrace it with all your hearts. Failing to embrace it heartily, you resist the truth; and then the result will naturally be that God will leave you to darkness, and you will find a short path to error, delusion and damnation. If you will not receive into your heart the truth you know, you cannot rationally hope that you have a particle of real religion. “He that doeth truth cometh to the light” — for he loves all that is real light, and bids it most welcome to his soul. Do you suppose you can be a Christian and yet refuse to obey known truth? Nay, verily; a disobedient Christian can no more be, than an obedient, dutiful sinner. When you see a truth which you yet refuse to obey, in the very nature of the case you abjure your religion. You are at once on the ground of God’s enemies. You are saying to God — “I am not Thy servant.” There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that men can be religious and yet not obey known truth. Nothing is more plainly taught in the Bible than this, that if you “keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, you are guilty of all.” You really evince a spirit of disobedience to God and of disregard to His law; and this is just what God regards as sin. It is in the very nature of the case impossible that a man should be allowed to say before God — “Lord, I will obey this precept, and this; but I will not obey that, and that.” There cannot be the least particle of virtue, piety, or obedience in this. So long therefore as there is one promise which you know, but do not embrace, you cannot heartily embrace any. So long as there is one threatening known, but not regarded, you do not really regard any.

I am afraid there is a great delusion in the church on this point. Many think they have considerable religion, while they say frankly — “I know I am

living in a great deal of sin.” They flatter themselves that they are all pretty good Christians, because they are not the greatest sinners. Some degree of known disobedience they think to be quite admissible in Christian character. Must not such persons be utterly fallen from all real obedience? Are their hearts at all with God? Nay, verily.

Let the question be asked — Do you believe that you ought to live in entire obedience to all the known will of God? Yes. Most will say — we believe that. Do you believe that through gospel grace you *may* do so? No doubt of it. Well, do you practice accordingly? O no, we never professed to practice on this doctrine. Let others make their high professions; for our part we choose not to make any such professions. Perhaps you even find fault with those who do make such professions, and think yourselves quite as good Christians as they. Perhaps you misjudge them and perhaps they may not be either prudent or humble; but no matter; if all the world should profess the highest experience, and should then apologize before your very eyes, your guilt could be none the less if you have seen your duty and your privilege, and have resisted this light from God to your soul. You must keep up with the light God gives you, or you are ruined. There can be no exception to this righteous law — no failure in its swift and terrible execution.

Then let every hearer ask himself — Do I embrace and obey all known truth? Do I reverence every precept and apply by faith every promise?

But you say — “I don’t pretend to be sanctified.” I answer, you did profess to be sanctified when you came out from the world and separated yourself from the ungodly. You do profess to take the Holy Ghost for your Sanctifier every time you renew your church covenant. You solemnly declare that you renounce the world and all sin, and take the Lord Jehovah to be your God and portion. If this be not the truth, what did you profess? To be living in sin? To be serving the devil in part and Christ in part? No, you said no such thing. If you were honest, you could not possibly have meant any such thing. The church when she opened her arms to receive you assumed that you came, as the whole-hearted servants and followers of Jesus Christ. And now are you eager to back out from your covenant-responsibilities upon the claim that you never professed to renounce all sin? What does this mean? Are you aware that in this matter you have to

deal with God, and not with man only? Did you not know that He who walks among the golden candlesticks searches the hearts and tries the reins? Will you forget that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?

# JESUS, A SAVIOR FROM SINNING

*“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” — Matthew 1:21.*

In discussing fundamentally the subject presented in the text, it is pertinent to remark,

## I. THAT SALVATION FROM SIN IS THE GREAT WANT OF HUMANITY

On this point there can be no mistake. Whatever else may be controverted or denied, this cannot be. Universal observation combines with universal consciousness to attest that this is a stubborn fact — salvation from sin is the great want of our sinning race. Nothing is more true than that as a race, *men are sinners*. All men know each other to be sinners, and of course what all know to be true of each one, and what each one knows to be true of all, must be a matter of universal knowledge.

I said, whatever else is true or is not true, this is true; that men need salvation from sin. The reason of this need is that they *are sinners* and as sinners, they are utterly lost to happiness, unless they can be saved from their sins. No man can be honest and yet deny this. This one truth is forever settled and known by all men.

By being saved from sin I do not mean pardon; for every man knows that pardon, without salvation from sinning, would not really save; for if a man were pardoned, but were still given up to the working of his sinful passions and selfish spirit, he would make for himself a hell even in heaven; nay more, it is undoubtedly true that heaven would be the severest form of hell to the unsaved in heart. There can be no heaven without holiness, and the change from sin to such holiness as fits for heaven is exceedingly great. A world of selfish beings thrown together anywhere would be unutterably miserable.

## II. THE FACTS ALREADY ADDUCED ARE ALWAYS ASSUMED IN THE BIBLE

The Bible throughout assumes these facts, as if everybody knew them. It assumes that all men need to be saved from sin and have sense enough to know their need. Consequently it brings forward a plan by which through Jesus Christ they may be saved from sin. This is the great burden of the message sent to us from God in His revealed word.

Our text speaks of Jesus Christ. The angel said to Joseph; Mary “shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.”

The Bible represents Jesus as having undertaken this work. It represents His name as being prophetic of the work He came to do. He is a *Savior*. His work is denoted in His very name. So the Bible uniformly represents Him, as the following instances will show.

It is said that “in Him shall all fullness dwell.” “He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him.” “Who is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” “Who is able to keep us from falling,” and “to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”

The Bible also represents Him as being perfectly willing to do this work, as coming for the very purpose of doing it; as making this His errand and business in the world. He is ready to undertake this work for all who will meet the conditions. The Bible represents Him as *waiting* to enter upon it and anxious to effect it in the case of all sinners and of every individual sinner. “Behold,” says He, “I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me.” He thus presents Himself to be accepted by each and every sinner, “If *any* man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him.” And this is only one of a large class of passages which represent Jesus as waiting to accomplish this work of salvation in the sinner. He waits to be *allowed* to come in. He knocks, and knocks; but then does not force the door; He waits till it be opened in the proper way, and His entrance is invited.



Yet does the Bible most fully represent Him as being *anxious* to gain admittance — as “waiting at the door of the sinner till His head is wet with the dew and His locks with drops of the night.”

O He would show us that He has the greatest desire conceivable to save us from all our sins. His heart is oppressed with sorrow and grief because sinners will not consent, and because He must therefore give them over to final ruin. Hear Him cry — “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned with Me, my repentings are kindled together. O, that there were such an heart in them, and that they would consider their latter end!” In fact the Bible is full of the most earnest and affecting testimonies of this sort.

Moreover, the Bible represents Jesus Christ as taking the greatest pains to secure the consent of mankind to His terms and proposals of salvation. For this end He places before them the humiliation to which He has voluntarily subjected Himself — the sufferings He has endured, and His waiting attitude now to do for them all they can possibly need to have done for themselves. O could He only make them *believe* all this, and appreciate it all as the fruit of infinite compassion for their souls!

The Bible also represents Christ as hearing and granting all the petitions of really praying souls. Christ Himself says — “everyone that asketh receiveth.” He does not merely say — he *shall receive*; but *he receiveth*. It is asserted as a fact — a universal fact — from which there can be no exception.

To vary the figure, He says, the door is opened to everyone that knocks. None can fail of gaining admittance who really knocks. Christ does not say that everyone who supposes himself to ask, receives; or who supposes himself to knock, shall find the door opened to Him; but everyone who *really* asks, receives. This is all He can be understood to mean.

### III. WHY IS IT THAT SO MANY MEN ARE NOT SAVED AT ALL?

It is a fact beyond dispute that some who hear and know the gospel, have no part or lot in its blessings. *Why is this?*

**(1.)** Many do not care to be saved from their sins. This is not the kind of salvation which they would have. If they could be saved *in* their sins, they would like that full well. But they have no desire to be saved *from* their sins. The punishment they would gladly avoid if they conveniently could; but the presence of sin and its daily practice is no source of grief or trouble to them.

**(2.)** Some have a sort of desire, but yet are not willing to be saved from sin. They have seen so much of the hatefulfulness of sin as to wish to be saved from it; just as many drunkards wish to be saved from their cups, but you cannot for their life get them to sign a temperance pledge. This is often the case with sinners. They mistake their desires, for a willingness; but they are not really willing. They often pretend they are willing, but if you push them you will find they are not. They will draw back and will not go straight forward in the gospel path of faith in Christ Jesus and of self-renunciation.

**(3.)** Many mistake entirely the nature of this salvation, and hence fail of embracing and securing its blessings. They are looking for salvation from punishment and from hell. Hence the thing they have their eye upon is not a pure heart, but a *hope*. They want to be rid of their fears. They would fain have a salvation, but not this, which consists in deliverance from their sins. They would fain have a Savior, but not Jesus, for He saves men from their sins. They cannot get Him to do the thing they want done; for He will save none from hell who will not be first saved from sin. Hence many fail because they are trying to make Jesus Christ serve with their sins. Their effort is to induce Jesus to take them *in their sins*, and make them — *in this state*, His people, and give them heaven. Their essential mistake is that they seek salvation from punishment and not from sin.

**(4.)** Others are so self-righteous that they really depend on their outward morality for salvation, and of course they cannot take Christ as their

Savior. It is astonishing to see how many such are found even among those who hear the gospel preached in its purity. They reason in their own hearts — “If this or that professor is saved, I shall be, too; for I am as good as he is. My life is as fair and unblemished as the life of any professed Christians within my knowledge.” They are blessing themselves continually that they are no worse than some Christians are. No wonder that such persons never come to Christ to be saved from their sins.

**(5.)** Many are not expecting to be saved without being in some way interested in Christ; but they seek this interest by means of their religious duties or works, and not by simple faith. Their works are after all works of law; and what should be especially noted, they are works of law, put either in the place Christ should occupy, or done as a means of securing the blessings which are to come from Christ. Hence they are exceedingly strict and precise in their observance of the Sabbath, and of all the external duties of religion, and by this means they hope to get the salvation of the gospel. They know indeed that their hearts are not filled with the love of God. They know that theirs is not a religion of heart-rest, of joy in the Holy Ghost, and deep peace of conscience. They find in themselves none of that which lifts them above the world. Most strict are they in their outward life, but without a particle of true religion. They forget that religion belongs to the heart, and that all their duties are nothing but self-righteousness. A man might keep every one of God’s commandments in the letter, from the day of his birth to the day of his death, and yet know no more of the real gospel of Christ than a heathen does. All his observance of law might not give him even the first idea of salvation by faith in Christ. I have often thought of what Paul said to the Christians at Rome on this point; “What shall we say then? That 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. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.” The Gentiles who had no law or righteousness of their own, attained readily to the righteousness which is by faith. But Israel who was following hard after a mode of righteousness, failed of receiving the gospel. Why this failure? The apostle gives us the clue to the answer: “They sought it not by faith, but as it were

by works of law.” Their self-righteousness prevented their getting a correct estimation of the gospel. The gospel did not take hold of them; it could gain no access to their souls.

But the Gentiles who had no law and no self-righteousness to stand in their way, readily apprehended the gospel.

Now many persons brought up in pious families and under gospel light are in a state similar to ancient Israel. They have too much good morality and self-righteousness to come to Jesus just as if they had none at all; and yet all this time they know that their own hearts are a moral desolation.

**(6.)** Many are endeavoring to get faith by works. They see their need of faith, and they think to get faith not by simply *believing*, but by setting about a series of works. When they have practiced works long enough, they seem to suppose that faith will be wrought out as a product of their working.

Now this is strange indeed! As if they could perform duty without faith, and as if their duties, performed without faith, would be so acceptable to God that He would give them faith as their reward for duties wrought out in the spirit of unbelief! As if God had never said — “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin!” How marvelous that men should think to get faith by mocking God, and by sinning against God! How is it possible that men with our Bible in their hands should hope to get salvation without faith, or faith *by works* and *without believing*? Yet so it is. Instead of resting right down upon the divine promises *by simple faith*, they go to work to get faith by works of righteousness! Nothing can be more plain than that such persons misapprehend the gospel scheme of salvation *by grace alone*, through faith in a crucified Savior.

## IV. WHY IS IT THAT SO MANY ARE SAVED ONLY IN PART?

It is a fact too obvious to be denied or doubted that many Christians stumble and fall in their Christian course. They show that they have not thoroughly taken hold of this Jesus who saved His people from their sins. *Why is this failure of real salvation?*

(1.) Some apprehend their necessities only in part. They have only a partial view of their real need of such a Savior from sin as Christ is. They are so far blind to their necessities that they do not lay hold of Christ with an active, earnest faith. They almost assume that they are already saved, and thus entirely misconceive their own real case.

(2.) Others apprehend Christ only in part, having very imperfect notions of His offices and character. It would seem that the great mass of professed Christians are looking to Christ to forgive their sins and secure their pardon; but this is all. They look for no sanctifying influence or agency from Jesus Christ. In place of this they resort to a notion of Christ's imputed righteousness. It is remarkable that so many Christians have settled down in this notion of an *imputed* rather than *imparted* righteousness; on the notion that Christ, instead of imparting, imputes righteousness to His people; instead of begetting in them personal holiness, makes over to them the credit of His own holiness, while they are yet unsanctified; instead of making them holy in fact, only *accounts them holy in law*, while they are really sinful. This is a most strange and singular doctrine indeed. I am well aware it is not singular in the sense of being uncommon or out of fashion; but it surely is most strange in view of either Bible teachings, or the essential nature of things. Its advocates must read our text thus — not “He shall save His people from their sins” — but, shall save them from *the punishment of* their sins. Salvation from punishment is to them the essential thing in the gospel. They do not, to be sure, expect men to be saved without holiness; but they suppose that death secures deliverance from sin; and then to finish the work, Jesus imputes to them His own righteousness. This they deem all-sufficient as both fitness and title to heaven.

Said a Presbyterian minister of high standing in his church — “I never heard of such a thing as this — that *Christ is the sanctification of the soul!*” Horrible! Horrible!! This, a leading man in the Presbyterian church, and yet has not heard that Christ is a Sanctifier of His people — seems never to have heard that Jesus “saves His people from their sins!”

This class of Christians have some notion that there is a Holy Ghost who will have some agency in sanctifying His people just at death, or just after death — somehow, and somewhere near the eventful point of death, but

just how or when is certainly not made very definite in their teachings. How it is done in cases where death supervenes suddenly, or where disease arrests all sane action of the mind, I believe is not distinctly stated. Yet death is relied on as the great sanctifier! The Christian in the prospect of death is encouraged and animated with the hope that his deliverance from sin is just at hand! All this is said as confidently and solemnly as if the Bible had said, not of the child Jesus, but of death, — “Death’s name shall be called Jesus — for death shall save you from your sins;” or as if God had never said — “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

O how great and how prevalent is this difficulty — men apprehend Christ only in part, and seem incapable of apprehending Him in all His precious relations!

**(3.)** *Many who have known something of the gospel live on their resolutions, and not on Christ.* They are not perhaps aware of this fact; but if they ever come to depend on Christ, they will see that they have been trying to brace themselves up on the strength of their own resolutions.

**(4.)** Many depend on faith without any resolution. Theirs is a puny, sickly faith, void of energy or activity. Now both these last mentioned classes are utterly mistaken; both those who depend on resolutions without faith, and those who trust in faith without resolutions. Both equally miss the very thing which the gospel requires, and which alone can ensure success — namely, *resolving and executing in the promised strength of Jesus Christ.*

Again, many who know something about the necessity of having a pure heart, are yet seeking comfort without purity. They give themselves up to pray for comfort and happiness, while all the time they are inflicting self-torture by the indulgence of sin. They act as if they supposed that by His own arbitrary act God could make them happy and fill their souls with blessedness, while yet their hearts are full of sin; than which, no more rank delusion or essential absurdity was ever broached by mortals.

Yet again, some want to be delivered from sin because they want the personal comfort of being sanctified. Inasmuch as their desires extend not

at all beyond themselves, and are hence purely selfish, there is good reason why they get so little of that blessing which they so selfishly seek.

Many satisfy themselves with the hope of a future salvation only. They are satisfied with the hope of its coming at length, and can forego the present possession without any painful solitudes. It is enough for them that they shall ultimately go to heaven, and they seem not to be straitened with the intense desire of entering into the deep rest of the gospel at once. When persons begin to be pressed strongly with the desire for present and full salvation, there is hope for them that deliverance is near. When like the prodigal son, they begin to be in want; then they become painfully conscious that there is a mighty famine in the land where they are, and that starvation stares them in the face; so that when their thoughts revert to the bread in plenty, in their father's house, there is a deep yearning of desire and a stirring up of purpose—then there begins to be hope in their case. But many content themselves with the hope of future salvation, and have no strong conceptions of the power of Jesus to secure for them a present salvation. Thus they slide along, and never know half the present power, the present value and present blessedness of gospel salvation.

Many draw back through fear of the present consequences of being pure from sin. They see, or think they see the trials to which it may subject them, and they shrink before these trials — as if the blessing of a pure heart must cost too much!

Many think their sins are forgiven, and seem to satisfy themselves with the hope that they are justified before God. They know they live in sin, but they strangely imbibe the impression that they are accepted of God, are His real children, and have a well-founded hope of eternal life. Of this class, one thing must be certain; they have not one particle of religion. If they can content themselves and bless their souls that they are justified, and then live along without a devoted life and without a penitent, grateful heart, drawn to God evermore by a sense of His pardoning grace, they have not the first particle of real religion. For how can this state of mind consist with real love to God? How can there be real love to God in the soul, which yet shall not “constrain” the soul to love God and do His will?

Multitudes who have professed religion have lost their path, have got out of the way; are thrown off their track, and are now wandering like boys in

the woods; going round and round forever in a circle perhaps when they think they are steering a straight line and in the right direction. Whoever has been really lost in the woods so as to lose utterly all his points of compass and to have his head completely turned, will understand the situation of multitudes of professed Christians. They once knew what it was to believe, and rejoice in hope — to live under the smiles of God's countenance; but they have sinned; they have got out of the way; for days and weeks, they are lost in the wilderness of sin. Dark clouds and dense fogs alternate around their path, and they feel sadly desolate. They seem to be as much at a loss what to do, as if they had never known the way of life. A darkness that can almost be felt gathers around and seem to press its thick gloom hard upon them on every side. I recollect to have seen the remark in some of the old writers, that "it is one of the hardest things in religion for a backslider to return to God." At first I thought this a strange remark, and said to myself — "How can this be?" But subsequent observation and reflection showed me that there is much truth in it, and I have seen many striking manifestations of its truth. So doubtless have you. You have seen professed Christians get out of the way; begin to struggle and flounder; plunge into the mire, and only get in the deeper for all their struggles to get out. They even begin to doubt whether they were ever converted, and perhaps even whether anybody else is, not even excepting those who are most esteemed for piety. They may next question whether there is any such thing as conversion, or whether the Bible be true. They find no God to pray to, and when they attempt to pray, it is as if they were speaking into the vacant air. When Christians get away from God they often go farther into doubts and skepticism than they did before they were converted at all. Some dreadful cases of this sort are a warning — a portentous warning against the perils of backsliding.

But it often happens that those who go not nearly so far as this, and who never doubt the truth of the Bible, yet get away so far that they lose their way and do not know at all how to get back. This leads me to say that when these persons become anxious and perplexed, one reason why they fail of finding their path is, they seek it *without their guide*. They think they must get back on to the right track before they can have Christ to help them. They think they are seeking the track in order to find Christ there. Like a man lost in the wilderness, who is trying to get out



somewhere, *so that he can get a guide*, he pitches into a slough on this side, and into a thorn bush on that side, and never thinks to ask himself — How can I hope to get out of this dreadful swamp, in this pitchy darkness too — without a guide? So the Christian sets himself to work self-righteously with all his might, to get relief. Like the lost traveler, he runs; he shouts at the very top of his voice and makes the deep glens of the forest echo with his cries; he rushes into thickets and brambles, and plunges into sloughs of deep mire, and wears out his strength in vain: alas, it does not seem to occur to him to ask — How can I ever extricate myself from this dreadful condition without my guide? See him; his heart struggles intensely; he cries, “O that I knew where I might find Him!” All is discouragement. What is the matter? The trouble is — *he has no guide*. Where is his guide? Where is his Jesus? Has Jesus lost sight of His dear child? O no; He is following hard and close after him; crying in his ears — “Lo, this is the way, walk ye in it.” He draws near; He offers to the lost wanderer His own hand to help and to guide. Alas, that the poor and the guilty wanderer will rely on his own wisdom to find the way himself, and on his strength to get out of his deep Slough of Despond; and will not cast himself wholly and at once on the offered help of his present Savior!

How many times have I seen people in this state, pressed with trouble, till they actually give up all for lost, and then bethink themselves of one more last resort — just to leave themselves simply in the hands of Jesus: then salvation comes! They return to the first simple thing of the gospel — let go of self-dependency and cast themselves on Christ — or rather — drop in the sinkings of their self-despair — drop into Christ alone and there find help! Then they see the pole star of hope, peering through the darkness of their despair.

In all this I am speaking of things that I know; for I can well recollect being in this state of mind myself. I was striving to get the salvation of the gospel without Jesus. I had not forgotten that there was a Jesus, but I was conscious of not enjoying His presence and His aid; and the deep inquiry in my heart was, Where shall I find Him? While thus sitting and deeply musing with myself to know why I did not get hold of the gospel, those words of Isaiah came to me — “I will lead the blind by a way which they know not.” I saw at a glance that my trouble was-a want of my guide. I had spent many days and hours trying to get hold of salvation. This

passage came home to me as if sent on purpose to meet my case. “Now,” said I, “the remedy has come. I have been trying to get out of my entanglements without my guide.” Here is the explanation. “I have been blind, and I have not taken hold of His hand who says, ‘I will lead the blind by a way which they know not.’ O let me now take hold of Christ, just where I am, here in this deep and dark wilderness, and all will be well. He is on my right hand and I need not fear.”

Again, many do not lay hold of Christ because they totally misapprehend the way, and are trying to do something else first. Instead of committing their whole souls to Christ, they are trying to save themselves. Hence they run hither and thither — every where else but to Christ alone. They do not seem to understand that Jesus is really the Savior from sin, and that they have only to commit themselves to Him at once, just as they are. They seem to have lost the idea that Jesus must be received for just what He is — *a Savior from sin*; and that they must renounce themselves and receive Him — saying — I never shall keep myself — I renounce forever the expectation of doing anything without laying hold on Thee; — Lord Jesus, hold me up; the work is Thine; I depend on Thee to do it, and on Thee alone will I rest henceforth and forever.

What Christian does not know by his own experience what it is to be thrown into circumstances of great trial, in which the soul is fully brought to say — “Lord, I can not hold myself up at all; I must sink without Thee; Lord, save, or I perish!”

## REMARKS

- 1.** Many have hope who are not really saved in any proper sense of the word. They are neither saved from sin now, nor will they be saved from hell hereafter.
- 2.** No one has reason to hope for heaven any further than he is really saved from sin.
- 3.** They who possess the religion of the gospel and yet are not sanctified, virtually bring up an evil report against the gospel. They say, “I am a Christian, but I know that I am not saved from sin. I embrace a gospel

which professes to save from sin, you see in me how much its professions are worth." What must be the influence of such a testimony?

- 4.** When a Christian commits himself to Jesus to save from sin, it is well for him to use this argument in prayer; "Lord, it will dishonor Thee if Thou dost not save me from all sin. I have trusted in Thee; I do now take hold of Thy promises; let them be fulfilled in my case, and let all men seeing what Thy grace has done for me, know Thy salvation."
- 5.** Some seem not to have in view Christ's honor, but their own. They think they shall disgrace themselves if they do not overcome temptation; but they do not feel that the greatest evil of all is that they will thus dishonor Christ.
- 6.** If any man will believe, he shall see no other difficulty. No obstacle can possibly be in his way to shut off the power of the gospel from his soul, when once he has embraced the sinner's Savior by a living faith.
- 7.** The great difficulty now is for the Savior to persuade men to believe, and to cast themselves on Him by a perpetual self-renunciation and a perpetual dependence. Let me ask you, my hearers, how many of you can testify that this is the case with yourselves: that in your own individual case, Jesus has to your certain knowledge been laboring to present Himself before you in such inviting forms as should inspire faith in Himself; but He has labored almost, or perhaps altogether in vain.
- 8.** Half-way believers are the greatest stumbling-blocks in religion. They profess to embrace Christ, and to be religious, and yet fail of having grace enough to overcome sin. O! if they would only embrace Jesus, so as to be full of His Spirit, how greatly would they honor their Lord! As it is, how earthly-minded, sensual, and devilish do they become! No wonder they are ashamed to say that Jesus is a Savior from sin. How can they bear such testimony without reading themselves out of the pale of the heirs of heaven?

# GOD'S ANGER AGAINST THE WICKED

*“God is angry with the wicked every day” — Psalm 7:11.*

In speaking from this text I design to show briefly,

- I. WHO ARE WICKED IN THE SCRIPTURE SENSE OF THIS TERM;**
- II. THAT GOD IS ANGRY WITH THEM;**
- III. THE NATURE OF THIS ANGER;**
- IV. THE REASONS FOR IT;**
- V. ITS DEGREE;**
- VI. ITS DURATION;**
- VII. THE TERRIBLE CONDITION OF SINNERS UNDER IT.**

I. The Bible divides all the human race into two classes only; the righteous and the wicked. Those are righteous who have true faith in Christ, whose spirit is consecrated to God, who live a heavenly life on earth, and who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Their original selfishness is subdued and slain, and they live a new life through the ever present grace of Christ Jesus.

Right over against them in character are the wicked, who have not been renewed in heart — who live in selfishness, under the dominion of appetite in some of its forms, and it matters not in which out of all possible forms, it may be; but self is the great and only ultimate end of their life; these are in the scriptural sense, the wicked.

## II. GOD IS ANGRY WITH THE WICKED

Our text explicitly affirms this. The same truth is affirmed and implied in numerous other passages. Let the sinner remember that this is the

testimony of God Himself. Who should better know the feelings of God towards sinners than God Himself does? Who on this point can gainsay what God affirms?

But this truth is also taught by reason. Every man in the exercise of his reason knows it ought to be true. If God were not opposed to the wicked, He would be wicked Himself for not opposing them. What would you think of a judge who did not hate and oppose law-breakers? Would you think him an honest man if he did not take sides against transgressors? Everybody knows that this is the dictate of reason and of common sense. Sinners know this, and always assume it in their practical judgments. They know that God is angry with them, and ought to be — though they may not realize it. Sinners know many things which they do not realize. For instance, you who are in sin know that you must die; but you have more reason to be assured that God is angry with you than you have to be sure that you must die; for it is not necessarily so certain that you will die as it is that God is angry with you for your sin. God may possibly translate you from this world to another without your death — as He has some others; but there never was and never can be any exception to the universal law of His anger against all the wicked. You know this therefore with an absolute certainty which precludes all possibility of rations doubt.

Sinners do know this, and I have said, and always assume it in their practical judgments. Else why are they afraid to die — why afraid to meet God face to face in the world of retribution? Would they have this fear if they did not know that God is angry with them for their sin? It would be gratuitous therefore to *prove* this truth to the sinner; he already knows it — knows it not only as a thing that *is*, but as what *ought* to be.

### III. THE NATURE OF THIS ANGER DEMANDS OUR ATTENTION

On this point it is important to notice negatively,

**1.** It is *not a malicious anger*. God is never malicious; never has a disposition to do any wrong in any way — to any being. He is infinitely far from such feelings, and from any such developments of anger.

2. His anger is not *passion* in the sense in which men are wont to exhibit passion in anger. You may often have seen men whose sensibility is lashed into fury under an excitement of anger; their very souls seem to be boiling with fermentation, so intense is their excitement. Reason for the time is displaced, and passion reigns. Now God is never angry in such a way. His anger against the wicked involves no such excitement of passion.

3. God's anger can not be in any sense a *selfish anger*; for God is not selfish in the least degree, but infinitely the reverse of it. Of course His anger against the wicked must be entirely devoid of selfishness.

In our attempts to conceive of the mental faculties of the divine mind, we are under a sort of necessity of reasoning analogically from our own minds. Revelation has told us that we are "made in the image of God." Of course the mind of God is the antetype from which ours was cast. The great constituent elements of mind we must suppose are therefore alike in both the infinite and the finite. As we have intellect, sensibility, and will, so has God.

From our own minds moreover we infer not only what the faculties of the divine mind are, but also the laws under which they act. We know that in the presence of certain objects we naturally feel strong opposition. Those objects are so related to our sensibility that anger and indignation are the natural result. We could not act according to the fixed laws of our own minds if we did not utterly disapprove wrong-doing, and if our disapproval of it moreover did not awaken some real *sensibility* in the form of displeasure and indignation against the wrong-doer.

Some suppose that these results of the excited sensibility against wrong would not develop themselves if our hearts were right. This is a great mistake. The nearer right our hearts are, the more certainly shall we disapprove wrong, the more intensely shall we feel opposed to it, and the greater will be our displeasure against the wrong-doer. Hence we must not only suppose that God is angry in the sense of a will opposed to sin, but in the further sense of a sensibility enkindled against it. This must be the case if God is truly a moral agent.

4. God is not angry merely against the sin abstracted from the sinner, but against the sinner himself. Some persons have labored hard to set up this

ridiculous and absurd abstraction, and would fain make it appear that God is angry at the sin yet not at the sinner. He hates the theft, but loves the thief. He abhors adultery, but is pleased with the adulterer. Now this is supreme non-sense. The sin has not moral character apart from the sinner. The act is nothing apart from the actor. The very thing that God hates and disapproves is not the mere event — the thing done in distinction from the doer; but it is the *doer himself*. It grieves and displeases Him that a rational moral agent, under His government, should array himself against his own God and Father, against all that is right and just in the universe. This is the thing that offends God. The sinner himself is the direct and the only object of His anger.

So the Bible shows. God is angry with the wicked — not with the abstract sin. If the wicked turn not, God will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow and made it ready; not to shoot the *sin* however, but the *sinner* — the wicked man who has done the abominable thing. This is the only doctrine of either the Bible or of common sense on this subject.

**5.** The anger of God against the wicked implies all that properly belongs to anger when it exists with good reason. We know by our own experience that when we are angry with good reason, we have strong opposition of will and also strong feelings of displeasure and disapprobation against the wrong-doers. Hence we may infer that the same is true of God under the same circumstances.

## IV. THE REASONS OF GOD'S ANGER

Against the wicked next demand our attention. His anger is never excited without good reasons. Causeless anger is always sinful. "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment." God never Himself violates His own laws — founded as they are in infinite right and justice. Hence God's anger always has good reasons.

Good reasons exist for His anger, and He is angry for those reasons. It is not uncommon for persons to be angry, under circumstances too, which are good reasons for anger, but still they are not angry for those good reasons, but for other reasons which are not good. For example, every sinner has good reasons for being angry with every other sinner for his

wickedness against God. But sinners are not angry against other sinners for those reasons. Although these reasons actually exist, yet when angry at sinners, it is not for these good reasons, but for some selfish reasons which are not good. This is a common case. You see persons angry, and if you reprove them for their anger as sinful, they seek to justify themselves by affirming that they are angry with the man for his sins — for his wrongdoing against God. Now this is indeed a good and sufficient reason for anger, and the justification would be a good one if the anger were really excited by this cause. But often, although this reason exists, and is pleaded by the man as his excuse for anger, yet it is not excuse, for in fact he is not angry for this cause, but has some selfish reason for his anger. Not so with God. God is angry with the wicked not irrespective of his sins, but for his sins.

**1.** Wicked men are entirely unreasonable. Their conduct is at war with all reason and with all right. God has given them intelligence and conscience; but they act in opposition to both. God has given them a pure and good law, yet this they recklessly violate. Hence their conduct is in every point of view utterly unreasonable.

Now we all know that by a fixed law of our being nothing can be a greater temptation to anger than to see persons act unreasonably. This is one of the greatest trials that can occur, and one of the strongest incentives to anger. So when God looks at the unreasonable conduct of sinners He feels the strongest indignation and displeasure. If they were not rational beings endowed with reason, no anger would be awakened and called forth; but since God knows them to be endowed with reason and to be capable of true and noble-hearted obedience, He cannot fail of being displeased with their transgression.

**2.** The course of the wicked is utterly ruinous. No thanks to the sinner if his influence does not ruin the whole world. By the very laws of mind, the sin of any one man tends to influence other men to sin, and they spread far and wide the dreadful contagion of his example. It may truly be said that the sinner does the worst thing possible to him to ruin the universe. He sets the example of rebellion against the supreme government of all worlds. And what influence can be more potent than that of example? What worse thing therefore can the sinner do to destroy all good than he is doing by his



sin? No thanks to him if every man who sees his sin does not imitate it to his own ruin, and throw the power of his own example broad-cast over all his associates. No thanks to any sinner if his own influence for ruin does not run like fire on the prairies over all the world, and then over every other world of moral beings in the universe of God.

Think of the father of a family, living in his sins and exerting his great influence over his household to make them all as wicked as himself. Who can estimate the power of his influence over his wife and his children? Does he pray with them and seek to lead them to God? No; his example is prayerless. It proclaims every day to his family — “You have no occasion at all to pray. You see I can live without prayer.” Does he read the Bible to them or with them? No; his constant example before them sets the Bible at naught, and continually suggests that they will be as well off without reading the Bible as with. His whole influence therefore is ruinous to the souls of his family. No thanks to him if they do not all go down to hell along with himself. If they do not scream around him with yells of mingled imprecation and despair, cursing him as the guilty author of their ruin, he will have other agencies to thank besides his own. Surely he has done what he well could do to secure results so dreadful as these. Has not God good reasons to be angry with him? Why not? Would not you feel that you have good reasons to be angry with a man who should come into your family to destroy its peace — to seduce your wife and daughters, and to entice your sons into some pathway of crime and ruin? Certainly you would. Now do not all families belong to God in a far higher sense than any mans’ family belong to him? Why then has not God as good reasons for anger against a wicked father as you could have against a villain who should plot and seek to effect the mischief and ruin of your family? Is it wonderful to you that God should be angry with every wicked father? Just consider what that father is doing by his bare example — even supposing that his words are well-guarded and not particularly liable to objection. Who does not know that example is the very highest and strongest moral power? It does not need the help of teaching to make its power felt for terrible mischief. The prayerless husband and father! The devil could not do worse — nay, more, not so bad, for the devil never had mercy offered him — never stood related as this wicked father does, to offered pardon and to the glorious

gospel. If then God would have good reason to be angry at the devil, much more has He for anger against this wicked father.

The same substantially is true of other classes of sinners. It is essential to their very course as sinners, that they are in rebellion against God, and are doing the very worst thing in the universe by drawing other moral beings into sin.

Again, God is so good and sinners are so wicked, He can not help being angry at them. If He were not angry at the wicked, He would be as much worse than they as He is wiser than they. Since in His wisdom and knowledge He knows more fully than they do, the great evil of sin; by so much the more is He under obligation to be displeased with sin and angry at the sinner. We sometimes hear men say, "God is too good to be angry at sinners." What do men mean by this language? Do they mean that God is too good to be opposed to all evil — too good to be displeased with all evil-doers? This were indeed a strange goodness! God too good to hate sin — too good to oppose sinners! What sort of goodness can this be?

I have sometimes heard men say that if God should be angry with sinners, He would be as bad as the devil himself. Now this is not only horrible language on the score of its blasphemy; but it is monstrous absurdity on the score of its logic. The amount of its logic is that God would be Himself wicked if He should be displeased at wickedness. So wrong it must be to hate the wrong-doer!! Pray who is it that holds such doctrine? Is it not possible that they feel some interest in sustaining wrong-doers even against God Himself.

Really there is no force, no plausibility even, in this language about the wrong of God's being angry at sinners, except what arises from misconceiving and misrepresenting the true idea of the divine anger in this case. If God's anger were in itself sinful — as is the case often with man's anger — then of course, nothing more can be said in its vindication. But since His anger is never sinful, never selfish, never malicious, never unholy or wrong in any degree whatever, nothing can be more false, nothing more sophistical, nothing more ungenerous and vile and Satanic than to imply that it is. But this is just what men do when they say that for God to be angry at sinners is to be Himself wicked.

The true view of this case is not by any means abstruse or difficult of apprehension. Who does not know that good men are by virtue of their goodness opposed to wicked men? Surely all wicked men know this well enough. Else why the fear they have of good and law-abiding men? Why do all horse-thieves and counterfeiters keep dark from good men — dread their presence — commonly feel a strong dislike to them and always dread their influence as hostile to their own wicked schemes?

So wicked men feel towards God. They know that His goodness places Him in hostile array against themselves. This fact seems to be implied in the Psalmist's expostulation — "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually." God is always good; how can you be proud of your wickedness? God is too good and too constantly good to afford you any scope for sin — any ground of hope for peace with Him in your iniquity.

## V. THE DEGREE OF GOD'S ANGER AGAINST SIN SHOULD BE NEXT CONSIDERED

It is plain that the degree of God's anger against the wicked ought to be equal to the degree of their wickedness, and must be if God is what He should be. The times of heathen ignorance and darkness "God winked at" — the degree of their guilt being less by as much as their light is less than that of such cities as Chorazin and Bethsaida. God does not hold them innocent *absolutely*, but relatively they might almost be called innocent, compared with the great guilt of sinners in gospel lands. Against those who sin amid the clearest light, His anger must burn most intensely; for example, against sinners in this place and congregation. You may be outwardly a decent and moral man, respected and beloved by your friends; but if you are a selfish, impenitent sinner the pure and holy God loathes and abhors you. He sees more real guilt in you than in ten thousand of those dark-minded heathen who are bowing down to idol gods, and whose crimes you read of with loathing and disgust. Think of it. God may be more angry against you for your great wickedness than against a nation of idolaters whose ignorance He winks at, while He measures your light and consequent guilt in the balances of His own eternal justice. O are you living

here amid the blazing sun-light of truth — knowing your duty every day and every day refusing to do it; do you not know that in the eye of God you are one of the wickedest beings out of hell, or in hell either, and that God's hatred against your sin is equal to your great guilt? But you say perhaps, Am I not moral and honest? Suppose you are moral. *For whose sake* are you moral, and for what reason? Is it not for your reputation's sake only? The devil might be as moral for such a purpose as you are. Mark, it is not for God's sake, not for Christ's sake, that you are a moral man, but because you love yourself. You might be just as moral if there were no God, or if you were an atheist. Of course if so, you are saying in your heart let there be no fear of God before my eyes — no love of God in my heart. Let me live and have my own way as if there were no God. And all this you do not under the darkness of heathenism, but amid the broadest sun-light of heaven's truth blazing all around you. Do you still ask, What have I done? You have arrayed yourself against God, rejected the gospel of His Son, and done despite to the Spirit of His grace. What heathen has ever done this, or anything that could compare with this in guilt? The vilest heathen people that ever wallowed in the filth of their own abominations are pure compared with you. Do you start back and rebel against this view of your case? Then let us ask again, By what rule are we to estimate guilt? You pass along the street and you see the lower animals doing what you would be horrified to see human beings do, but you never think of them as *guilty*. You see those dogs try to tear each other to pieces; you will try perhaps to part them, but you will not think of feeling moral indignation or moral displeasure against them; and why? Because you instinctively judge of their guilt by their light, and by their capacity of governing themselves by light and reason. On nearly the same principle you might see the heathen reeking in their abominations, quarreling, and practicing the most loathsome forms of vice and selfishness — but their guilt is only a glimmering taper compared with yours, and therefore you can not but estimate their guilt as by so much less than your own as their light is less! Your reason demands that you should estimate guilt on this principle, and you know that you can not rightly estimate it on any other. For the very same reason you must conclude that God estimates guilt on the same principles, and that His anger against sin is in proportion to the sinners' guilt, estimated in view of the light he enjoys and sins against. The degree of God's anger against the wicked is not

measured by their outward conduct, but by their real guilt as seen by Him whose eye is on the heart.

## VI. AS TO THE DURATION OF GOD'S ANGER AGAINST THE WICKED,

It manifestly must continue as long as the wickedness itself continues. As long as wicked men continue wicked, so long must God be angry at them every day. If they turn not, there can be no abatement, no cessation of His anger. This is so plain that everybody must know it.

## VII. THE TERRIBLE CONDITION OF THE SINNER AGAINST WHOM GOD IS ANGRY

This dreadful truth that God is angry with the wicked every day, sinners know, but do not realize. Yet it were well for you who are sinners to apprehend and estimate this just as it is.

Look then at the attributes of God. Who and what is God? Is He not a Being whose wrath against you is to be dreaded? You often feel that it is a terrible thing to incur the displeasure of some men. Children are often exceedingly afraid of the anger of their parents. Any child has reason to feel that it is a terrible state of things, when he has done wrong and knows it must come to the knowledge of his father and his mother, and must arouse their keenest displeasure against himself — this is terrible, and no wonder a child should dread it. How much more has the sinner reason to fear and tremble when by his sin he has made the Almighty God his enemy! Think of his state; think of the case of the sinner's exposing himself to the indignation of the great and dreadful God! Look at God's natural attributes. Who can measure the extent of His power? Who or what can resist His will? He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and the nations before Him are only as the small dust of the balance. When His wrath is kindled, who can stand before it, or stay its dreadful fury?

Think also of His Omniscience. He knows all you have done. Every act has passed underneath His eye; and not every external act, merely, but

what is far more dreadful to you, every motive lying back of every act — all the most hidden workings of your heart. O, if you were only dealing with some one whom you could deceive, how would you set yourself at work to plan some deep scheme of deception; but all in vain here, for God knows it all. If it were a case between yourself and some human tribunal you might cover up many things; you might perjure yourself, or might smuggle away the dreaded witnesses; but before God, no such measures can avail you for one moment. The whole truth will come out, dread its disclosure as much as you may. The darkness and the light are both alike to Him, and nothing can be hidden from His eye.

Again, not only does God know everything you have done, and not only is He abundantly able to punish you, but He is as much disposed as He is able, or omniscient. You will find He has no disposition to overlook your guilt. He is so good that He never can let sin unrepented of pass unnoticed and unpunished. It would be an infinite wrong to the universe if He should! If He were to do it, He would at once cease to be a good and holy God!

O, sinner, do you ever think of God's perfect holiness — the infinite purity of His heart! Do you ever think how intensely strong must be His opposition to your sin — to those sins of yours which are so bad even in your own view that you cannot bear to have many of your fellow men know them? How do you suppose your guilty soul appears in the eye of the pure and holy God?

You often hear of God's mercy. You hope for some good to yourself, perhaps, from this attribute of His nature. Ah, if you had not spurned it, and trampled it under your feet! If you had not slighted and abused its manifestations to you, it might befriend you in your day of need; but ah, how can you meet insulted mercy! What can you say for yourself in defense for having sinned against the richest mercy the world ever saw? Can you hope that God's injured mercy will befriend you? Nay, verily; God has not one attribute which is not armed against you. Such is His nature, and such is His character that you have nothing to hope, but everything to fear. His dreadful anger against you must be expressed. He may withhold its expression for a season to give the utmost scope for efforts to reclaim and save you; but when these efforts shall have failed,

then will not justice take her course? Will not insulted Majesty utter her awful voice? Will not the infinite God arise in His awful purity, and proclaim — “I hate all wickedness, My anger burns against the sinner to the lowest hell”? Will not Jehovah take measures to make His true position towards sinners known?

## REMARKS

**1.** God is much more opposed to sinners than Satan is. Doubtless this must be so, for Satan has no special reason for being opposed to sinners. They are doing his work very much as he would have them. We have no evidence that Satan is displeased with their course. But God is displeased with them, and for the best of reasons.

Men sometimes say — “If God is angry with the wicked He is worse than Satan.” They seem to think that Satan is a liberal, generous-hearted being. They are rather disposed to commend him as on the whole very charitable and noble-hearted. They may think that Satan is bad enough, but they can not be reconciled to it that God should be so hard on sinners.

Now the facts are that God is too good to be otherwise than angry with sinners. The devil is so bad himself that he finds no difficulty in being well enough pleased with their vileness. It does not offend him. Hence from His very nature God must hate the sinner infinitely more than Satan does.

**2.** If God were not angry with sinners, He would not be worthy of confidence. What would you think of a civil governor who should manifest no indignation against transgressors of the law? You would say of course that he had not the good of the community at heart, and you could have no confidence in him.

**3.** God’s anger with sinners is not inconsistent with His happiness. Why should it be, if it is not inconsistent with His holiness? If there were anything wrong about it, then it would indeed destroy all His happiness; but if it be intrinsically right, then it not only can not destroy His happiness, but He could not be happy without anger against the wicked. His happiness must be conditioned upon His acting and feeling in accordance with the reality of things. Hence, if God did not hate sin and

did not manifest His hatred in all proper ways, He could not respect Himself. He could not retire within the great deep of His own nature, and enjoy eternal bliss in the consciousness of infinite rectitude.

**4.** God's opposition to sinners is His glory. It is all-glorious to God to manifest His anger towards wicked men and devils. Is not this the fact with all good rulers? Do they not seize every opportunity to manifest their opposition to the wicked, and is not this their real glory? Do we not account it their glory to be zealous and efficient in detecting crime? Most certainly. They can have no other real glory. But suppose a ruler should sympathize with murderers, thieves, robbers. We should execrate his very name!

**5.** Saints love God for His opposition to sinners, not excepting even His opposition to their *own sins*. They could not have confidence in Him if He did not oppose their own sins, and it is not in their hearts to ask Him to favor even their own iniquities. No, where they come near Him, and see how He is opposed to their own sins, and to them on account of them, they honor Him and adore Him the more. They do not want any being in the universe to connive at their own sins, or to take any other stand towards themselves as sinners, than that of opposition.

**6.** This text is to be understood as it reads. Its language is to be taken in its obvious sense. Some have supposed that God is not really angry with sinners, but uses this language in accommodation to our understandings.

This is an unwarrantable latitude of interpretation. Suppose we should apply the same principle to what is said of God's love. When we read, "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son," suppose we say, this cannot mean real love, such as we feel for each other — no, nothing like this; the language is only used by way of accommodation, and really has no particular sense whatever. This sort of interpretation would destroy the Bible, or any other book ever written. The only sound view of this matter is that God speaks as sensible men do — to be understood by the reader and hearer, and of course uses language in its most obvious sense. If He says He is angry against the wicked, we must suppose that He really is.



It is indeed true that we are to qualify the language as I have already shown by what we absolutely know of His real character, and therefore hence infer that this language cannot imply malicious anger, or selfish anger, or any forms of anger inconsistent with infinite benevolence. But having made the necessary qualifications, there are no more to be made, and the cardinal idea of anger still remains — *a fixed eternal displeasure and opposition against all sinners because of their great guilt.*

**7.** God's anger against the sinner does not exclude love — real, compassionate love. Not however the love of complacency, but the love of well-wishing and good-willing; not the love of him as a *sinner*, but the love for him as a sentient being who might be infinitely happy in obedience to his God. This is undoubtedly the true view to be taken of God's attitude towards sinners. What parent does not know what this is? You have felt the kindlings of indignation against the wickedness of your child, but blended with this you have also felt all the compassionate tenderness of a parent's heart.

The sinner sometimes says — “It can not be that God is angry with me, for He watches over me day by day; He feeds me from His table, and regales me with His bounties.” Ah sinner, you may be greatly mistaken in this matter. Don't deceive yourself. God is slow to anger indeed: that is, He is slow to *give expression* to His anger, and Himself assigns the reason, — because He is long-suffering towards sinners, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” But take care that you do not misconceive His real feelings towards you. Beware lest you misinterpret His great forbearance. He waits, I know; but the storm of vengeance is gathering. How soon He may come forth out of His place and unlock suddenly all the whirlwinds of His vengeance! Ah sinner, this once done, they will sleep no more!

**8.** It is plain that sinners do not realize God's anger, though they know it. If they do both know and realize it, they manifest a degree of hardihood in iniquity which is dreadful. But the fact is, they keep the thought of God's anger from their minds. They are reckless about it, and treat it as they do death. Sinners know they must die, but they do not realize this fact. They do not love to sit down and commune with death — thinking how soon it may come, how certainly it will come — how the grave-worms will gnaw

the flesh from their cheek-bones, and consume those eyes now bright and sparkling. These young ladies don't love to commune with such thoughts as these, and realize how soon these scenes will be realities.

So you don't love to think of God's anger against sin; of His reasons for His anger, and of His great provocations. You probably don't like to hear me preach about it, and yet I preach as mildly as I can. You can't bear to hear the subject brought forward and pressed upon your attention. Tell me, are you in the habit of sitting down and considering this subject attentively? If you were to do so, you could not contemn God and treat Him as if you had no care for Him.

**9.** Are you aware sinner, that you have made God your enemy, and have you thought how terrible a thing this is? Do you consider how impotent you are to withstand God? If you were in any measure dependent on any one of your fellow men you would not like to make him your enemy. The student in this college is careful not to make the faculty, or any one of them his enemy. The child has the same solicitude in regard to his parent. Now consider what you are doing towards God — that God who holds your breath in His hands — your very life in His power. Let Him only withdraw His hand and you sink to hell by your own gravity. On a slippery steep you stand, and the billows of damnation roll below! O sinner, are you aware that when you lie down at night with your weapons of rebellion against God in your very hands, His blazing eye is on you — are you well aware of this?

You may recollect the case of a Mr. H. once a student here. For a considerable time he had been rebellious against the truth of God as presented here to his mind, and this spirit of rebellion rose gradually to a higher and yet higher pitch. It seemed to have made about as much head as he could well bear, and in this state he retired to bed, and extinguished his light. All at once his room seemed full of dazzling splendor — he gazed around — there stood before him a glorious form — with eyes of unearthly and most searching power; gradually all else disappeared save one eye which shone with indescribable brilliancy and seemed to search him through and through. The impression made on his mind was awful. O, said he, I could not have lived under it many minutes if I had not yielded and bowed in submission to the will of God.

Sinner, have you ever considered that God's searching eye is on *you*? Do you think of it whenever you lie down at night? If you should live so long and should lie down again on your bed, think of it then. Write it down on a little card and hang it where it will most often catch your eye — "*Thou, God, seest me.*" Do this; and then realize that God's eye is penetrating your very heart. O that searching, awful eye! You close your eyes to sleep — still God's eye is on you. It closes not for the darkness of night. Do you say, "I shall sleep as usual — I am not the sinner who will be kept awake through fear of God's wrath — Why should I be afraid of God? What have I to fear? I know indeed that God says 'Give Me thine heart,' but I have no thought of doing it. I have disobeyed Him many years and see no flaming wrath yet. I expect He will feed me still and fill my cup with every form of blessings."

O sinner, for these very reasons have you the more cause to dread His burning wrath! You have abused His mercy well nigh to the last moment of endurance. O how soon will His wrath break forth against thee, and no arm in all the universe can stay its whelming floods of ruin! And if you don't believe it, its coming will be all the more sure, speedy and awful!

# **THE FINNEY SERMON COLLECTION**

## **VOLUME II**

# GOD NOT PLEASED WITH THE DEATH OF THE WICKED

*“Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”*  
— *Ezekiel 33:11*

In discussing these words it will be important to consider,

- I. WHAT THE DEATH SPOKEN OF IS NOT.**
- II. WHAT IT IS.**
- III. WHY GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN IT.**
- IV. WHY HE DOES NOT PREVENT IT.**
- V. THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY TO ESCAPE IT.**

## I. WHAT THE DEATH SPOKEN OF IS NOT

- 1.** Manifestly this death cannot be merely the death of the body; for all will die this death, whether they turn to God or not; and whether they live a spiritual life or not. The righteous are as really and as much exposed to natural death as the wicked. But the death spoken of in the text is one which may be escaped by turning from one’s wicked ways to obedience.
- 2.** The death spoken of cannot be spiritual, or a state of sinfulness; for God represents them as being already in this state. They are now in sinful ways from which He entreats them to turn. But the death spoken of is prospective. God does not ask, *Why are ye dead?* but *Why will ye die?*

## II. WHAT IT IS

Positively, the death spoken of must be the opposite of the life here referred to. This life cannot be natural life, for all, both saint and sinner, are

conceived of as being alike in natural life. Of course, the life must be salvation — eternal life — that blessedness which saints enjoy in the favor and love of God, begun here, prolonged forever hereafter. Now, if such be the life alluded to, the death, being in contrast with it, must be eternal death; the misery experienced by all God's enemies. As the life referred to here is not a mere state of existence, but a state of positive blessedness, so the death placed over against it, cannot be annihilation — the natural opposite of mere existence — but must be misery — the natural opposite of blessedness.

These remarks must suffice on this point, it being one on which no rational doubt can exist.

### III. WHY HAS GOD NO PLEASURE IN THE SINNER'S DEATH?

A few days since you may recollect I preached a funeral sermon, to show that the death of saints is precious in God's sight. Their death is to Him an event of deep interest. But the sinner's death is not so. Here is death in which God has no pleasure. He gives us His own solemn word, nay more, His oath, that He takes no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked. We are now to consider why.

**1.** The death of saints in which God takes a special interest is only the death of the body; but the death of the wicked is the death of both soul and body together. Both together are involved in misery and ruin. By this I do not mean that either is annihilated. The body we know is not annihilated at death; its constituent elements only change their chemical relations; but do not by any means cease to exist. There is no more reason to suppose the soul experiences annihilation, than that the body does. Indeed there is no reason whatever for supposing that annihilation ever can be the lot of either soul or body. I was amazed to hear some of the Adventists maintain that the threatened death of the wicked is nothing but annihilation, for nothing could be more obvious than that this position of theirs utterly lacked all foundation either in scripture or reason.

**2.** God has no pleasure in the sinner's death because He is a moral being, and it is contrary to the nature of moral beings to delight in suffering for its own sake. To all moral beings happiness is intrinsically good, and unhappiness is intrinsically evil, and must be from the very constitution of moral beings. Hence unhappiness can never be a source of pleasure, in itself considered. The view of it as endured by others cannot be deemed a good by any moral being, for its own sake, and considered simply as misery, for the reason that it is what it is — misery, and not happiness — the very constitution of a moral being demanding that happiness shall be held as the only good, and misery as intrinsically evil. Even Satan with all his malignity against God can never enjoy the sight any more than the endurance of misery, for its own sake. How much more must this be true of God! Selfishness may wickedly trample down the rights and happiness of others; but yet good to itself, and not misery to others, is its direct object. The consequent misery to others will in its time re-act upon selfish beings with terrible vengeance, harrowing up their souls with the bitterest torture. It is in the very nature of selfishness and sin to accumulate the resources for its own torment, just as benevolence accumulates the means of its own blessedness; and the reason in both cases lies fixed in the changeless nature of moral beings. The selfish cannot enjoy evil-doing let them try ever so much, for it is not in their nature as moral beings to enjoy misery. If it were, they might make a heaven of hell itself. But as it is, their selfish attempts to wrest away others' good will cause misery first to others, and next, ultimately and eternally, to themselves. Sin must be its own tormentor. Neither the sight nor the infliction of misery can ever in itself beget happiness. The nature of all moral beings forbids it.

**3.** God cannot have pleasure in the sinner's death because His *character* forbids it. God is not only by nature a moral agent, but He is in character a *good* moral agent — a being of infinite benevolence. Hence He cannot delight in misery anywhere, for its own sake, and in view of its own nature. The sight of misery endured is always distressing to a benevolent being, in itself considered. He can acquiesce in it and tolerate its infliction only when circumstances make it necessary as a means for a greater good. In such a case, He might truly say, I have no pleasure in their suffering.

So with God in regard to the sinner's death. Since He is purely and perfectly benevolent, it is contrary to His character that He should find

pleasure in the misery of His creatures. Love desires evermore the happiness of all beings, and is from its very nature disposed to secure the highest possible degree of it. God pities the self-ruined sinner; never rejoices in his dreadful doom, for its own sake.

**4.** It must be that God regards the death of the sinner viewed in itself as a great evil. In its own nature it is an evil of the very greatest magnitude. No finite mind can begin to conceive how great and dreadful this evil is. It needs the sweep of an infinite mind to measure its length and breadth, its depth and its height. None other than the mind of a God can grasp its limitless dimensions, or measure its boundless magnitude. To His mind therefore, the death of the sinner must appear an immensely great evil.

**5.** God can have no pleasure in the death of sinners because it is a state in which He can wisely show them no more favor. Their relations to His government become such that He is constrained to debar them from all mercy and from all good. Unmingled retribution must now take its course. Mercy has had its day; simple justice must henceforth have unimpeded exercise. So long as the wicked were in this world of probation, God took pleasure in showing them all the favors He wisely could, for it is always in His heart to bless the guiltiest as far as He consistently can; and He seeks to constrain the sinner by His mercies to turn from his sins. But when the sinner has murdered all his probation-time and used up all his mercies upon his lusts, he passes away to another state unknown to Mercy. There he can have not one drop of water to cool his tongue. There his prayers to Father Abraham will be utterly unavailing. On all these points, the account given us by Jesus Christ Himself of the rich man and Lazarus is most full and explicit. Whatever else this account teaches or does not teach, one thing is made plain by it; namely, that God finds it necessary to refuse the least favor to sinners in hell. “Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things” — thou hast had them all, and there are no more to be given. Not so much as one drop of water is left for the lost sinner in hell. He begs for this smallest favor, but begs in vain. How dreadful this fact! The lost sinner is in such relations to God that God is compelled to restrain Himself from giving him one drop of water. Even infinite benevolence cannot give so small a favor as this.



Now it is plain that a God of love can have no pleasure in being brought into such a position as this. He took the greatest pleasure in bestowing good upon even the sinner, so long as He wisely could. It was His happiness to send His rain on the just and on the unjust; but when the dreaded hour at last came, and God as the great Executive Magistrate of the universe was compelled to cut down the guilty sinner and show His own eternal abhorrence of sin, then He could no longer show the sinner the least mercy. This removing the sinner beyond the range of mercy is a thing in which, considered by itself, God can have no pleasure. The same is true of all benevolent beings.

It is remarkable to see how earnestly God repels the slander upon Him of taking pleasure in the sinner's death. The Jews in Ezekiel's time went so far as to use the proverb — "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The Most High solemnly rebukes His people for this slander; protests His own innocence of the implied charge, and finally closes with the explicit averment — "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." (Ezekiel 18:2, 32) So also in our text, He takes His solemn oath, and since He could swear by no greater, He swears by Himself. "As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Therefore let no sinner seek to throw the blame of his own ruin off from himself and upon his Maker. No slander could be more groundless and more foul.

**6.** Another reason still is that when sinners have outlived their probation and are cut off in their sins, their depravity will be thenceforth unrestrained. How shocking it must be to the pure and holy God to see His creatures giving themselves up to utter and unrestrained depravity — to see them giving boundless scope to the most odious and horrible rebellion. The book of Revelation speaks of the wicked, under God's punitive judgments, as "gnawing their tongues for pain, and blaspheming the God of heaven because of their pains and of their sores, and yet repenting not of their deeds." Their condition amid the dread realities of hell will not reform them; nay, so far from this, it will only drive them to desperation, and in the utter desperateness of their depraved hearts, they will break out in most horrid blasphemies. O how will sinners damn themselves to a deeper and still deeper damnation! What an unutterable state of depravity will hell be when sin takes its ample, unimpeded course,

and has a whole eternity in which to range and ripen, and develop its horrid spirit and terrible tendencies! No wonder that God can take no pleasure in such a world as that.

In that world the sufferings of the wicked will be unmitigated. Here, although their depravity is great, nay, even total, yet so many restraints are upon them that many of them appear quite respectably among their fellow beings. They are induced to conform outwardly to the rules of good society. Consequently in this world they enjoy many comforts, and ordinarily they have an ample supply for their physical wants. The common pleasures of society, of earthly friendships and relationships, fall to their lot. Consequently they are by no means so miserable as they might be. Indeed they are often wont to think themselves quite happy. And they do doubtless have a sort of feverish enjoyment, poor enough at best, as the portion of the human soul, yet vastly unlike that dreadful state in which every source of enjoyment shall be utterly cut off. *There* shall be gnawing desire but no gratification; pressing want, but no supply, no employment but groans and sighs and such developments of their depravity as bring their own torturing punishment with them. If the Bible had said nothing about their case we might yet know that they must be purely and utterly miserable; for what source of happiness can remain to them in all the realms of nature, or in all the universe of God? Here they manage to get some good because God is sparing them to give them space to repent, and is trying them if so be He may subdue their hearts by His love; but when they have abused all this good till God can bestow it no longer, what shall remain then? When death shall have smitten their last pleasure, where are they!

#### IV. WHY DOES NOT GOD PREVENT THE DEATH OF THE WICKED?

If He takes no pleasure in it, why should He suffer it to be?

You are aware that men have often inferred from God's benevolence that He will not suffer the wicked to be lost. But who has any right to infer this? How does it appear that benevolence cannot inflict a lesser evil for the sake of preventing a greater? Who can prove it unwise for God to

create beings and suffer them to continue their existence, although they may sin — yes, may sin, despite of any power which God can wisely use to prevent it? That is — for the question resolves itself into this — who can prove that on the whole more evil than good must result from the existence of a sinning race of moral agents? Who can show that it may not be indefinitely better to have such a race with all the attendant results than not to have created them, or having created them, to establish a government so different from the present as would have prevented it?

But if a God of infinite wisdom and love might give existence to a race who could and should sin, then surely it is no marvel that He should punish them. Indeed the only marvel is that He should ever do otherwise than punish — should ever pardon. Pardon, not punishment, is the strange thing. Revelation apart, who could ever infer rationally that God would pardon one sinner? From what data could man infer it? The wisest sinners that ever have lived have made the inference that God could save none. They have seen that God is a Moral Governor, and hence cannot be pleased with sinners. Hence they inferred, and most reasonably too, that He can save none. How could they have made any other rational inference without the aid of revelation?

**2.** God does not prevent the death of the wicked for the good reason that *He cannot wisely do it*. Some are shocked at this remark; but why should they be; for what God Himself says on this subject most surely implies that He cannot wisely prevent the sinner's death. He solemnly avers that He has no pleasure in it, and plainly implies that it is in itself an unpleasant and undesirable thing. If so, then He would prevent it if He wisely could. He says to sinners — “Turn ye, for why will ye die?” implying that He is grieved that they should die, and also that their own turning is the only means of preventing so dreadful a doom. No language could imply more plainly that He cannot and will not do Himself what He commands and exhorts them to do.

To the same purport He says again — “What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” Does not this forcibly imply that God could not do more to secure holiness and save from hell than He actually had done? Now it should be well considered that what God could not do wisely to save sinners, He could not do at all without sinning.

There is no middle course between acting wisely and sinning. For God to act otherwise than with wisdom must be wrong.

**3.** God could not have prevented their destruction by refusing to create them. Many ask, Why did God create men if He knew they would sin? The answer is, He could not forbear to create without Himself sinning. He saw it would be wise to create moral agents, who would sin, and some of whom would be lost; and how could He act other than wisely without forever condemning Himself for wrong-doing? If God has ever in any instance acted unwisely, it has not been in His case as sometimes in ours — through ignorance. No; there never can be in His case this vindication for acting unwisely. If God in any case does more or less than infinite wisdom dictates, He cannot but know it, and cannot but regard it as sin.

Now therefore if wisdom dictated the creation of the beings who would become wicked, God could not forbear to create, without personal sin, nay, could not forbear without absolute self-ruin! Do we think it a small matter that God should sin? Then we have not yet begun to take right views of the subject. For God to sin would be to lose His own self-respect — destroy His own peace and blessedness — unfit Himself either to enjoy His own character and works, or to govern His universe.

**4.** God could not wisely have done more than He has done for the sinner's salvation. He has all along done all that Infinite Wisdom has demanded. To have done more or other at any moment would have been sin. And who does not see that it must be a far less evil for God to suffer moral agents to sin than to take Himself any course which is sinful? If either God or His creatures must be ruined by sin, let it be the sinner and not God. It is infinitely better that God should suffer the sinner to ruin himself than suffer Himself to be ruined. By so much the more is this true because the ruin of God by His own sinning would inevitably involve the ruin of the whole universe, a calamity the magnitude of which defies all our comprehension.

We should never lose sight of the great truth that God always acts considerately and wisely. If He creates moral agents who become sinners, He does it wisely, following evermore the dictates of His intelligence and of His benevolence. It is plain that God could not wisely abridge the liberty of moral agents, nor indeed could He save them even if He should,

for the very idea of the salvation of a moral agent implies his own voluntary turning from sin. None but moral beings can have salvation from sin and from hell; the existence of moral beings involves a moral government over them, and over them *as moral beings*, which is the same thing as to say, that they must have the liberty of free voluntary action. If therefore God would have a moral government, He must let it have scope, and meet the results be they what they may. I do not mean that He must preclude Himself from throwing in moral influences to affect their action; but I do mean that their liberty of moral action must not be abridged. His interposing influences must evermore be of a moral and not of a physical or compulsory nature.

I have said that God acts wisely, and cannot act otherwise. I mean this in its fullest extent. It is always true. At every hour and moment of each sinner's existence God could truly say — What could I have done more for thee that I have not done? The sinner may misapprehend the case, and may suppose that God might do, or might have done more; but God makes no mistakes; God never misapprehends the real facts of the case.

**5.** God cannot save men without their concurrence; in the nature of the case they could not be holy without their own concurrence; how then could they be happy without it? Being constituted moral agents, and made subjects of moral government, it must be in every point of view impossible to save them unless they will turn from their sins. God's government must remain moral, and hence He can do nothing inconsistent with its moral nature. If then God works upon the sinner by means of His providence and His Spirit, to the utmost extent He wisely can, and all in vain, there remains nothing more which as a Moral Governor He can do to save him.

**6.** Another reason why God does not prevent the death of the wicked is that He regards it as a less evil than to interpose in any way possible to Himself, to save them. If they would turn under such influences as He can wisely use, He would rejoice; but He is already going to the utmost limit of His discretion, and how can He go farther? Sooner than go farther, He would let ten thousand worlds go to ruin. Who can find fault with Him for this? Who can blame the all-wise God for following the dictates of His own wisdom? If He should in any single particular deviate from His own sense of propriety and from His own judgment of what is best for the

universe, how dreadful the consequences! Perhaps we are not wont to consider that there are bounds beyond which God cannot go, and beyond which He never does go. These bounds are always ascertained by Infinite Wisdom. They have their foundation in the nature of moral agents, and in the exigencies of God's vast government. Who but God Himself can decide how long He can safely bear with a lingering, self-hardening sinner — and how far He can wisely go in the strivings of His Spirit, and in the favoring arrangements of His providences?

This view of the case is not only in accordance with the Bible, but it is inferred irresistibly from the known attributes of God. Some of you may ask — How does it appear that God does as much as He can do for the good of each sinner? I answer — we all know that God is a good and not a wicked being. He is moreover a moral agent, possessing attributes of mind and of heart, of which our own are a copy, for we are made in the image of God. Of course when we speak of God as a good being, we may, nay, we *must* reason by analogy drawn from other good beings. If we are good men, we shall of course seek to prevent all possible evil and produce all possible good. This is necessarily implied in our being good men.

Now what is implied in God's being good? That He consecrates Himself to the good of being. Goodness in God implies that He is all awake to prevent all the mischief He wisely can, and secure all the good He wisely can. He knows intuitively that if He is a moral agent as we are; if He has a conscience as we have; if He has moreover a good heart, He will evermore do all He wisely can both to prevent evil and produce good.

**7.** Yet another reason is that although the evil of the sinner's death is great, yet He can make a good use of it. He can overrule it for important good to others and to various interests in His kingdom. The sufferings of the wicked may be in themselves a very great evil; yet God can bring those sufferings into such relations to His government, and can make them so useful in their influence on other beings, that the good results become in His mind a sort of compensation for the evil, so that on the whole He may see it wise to admit sin with all its results, rather than exclude it by any means possible to Himself.

## V. WE MAY NOW SEE THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE WAY IN WHICH THE SINNER'S DEATH CAN BE AVOIDED

Is for the sinner himself to turn from his evil way and live. The sinner need not look for God to change the policy of His government. He need not expect God to pardon sin without the sinner's repentance and the sinner's faith in Christ. He need not wait for some other name than that of Jesus given among men, whereby they may be saved, or for any other mode in which the sinner may avail himself of that name. God's government being what it is, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ are natural and necessary means of the sinner's salvation. He might as well ask Jehovah to come down from His throne, as ask Him to do anything more or anything different from what He is doing to save sinners. The sinner, therefore, who would be saved, must meet Jehovah's own revealed conditions.

### REMARKS

**1.** The goodness of God is really no encouragement to those who continue in sin. Hear the rebuke given by the Psalmist — “Why boastest thou thyself in mischief. O mighty man! The goodness of God endureth continually.” Why should you be proud of mischief? Know thou that God is good; and a good God is terrible to the wicked.

I am often amazed to hear persons talk as if the goodness of God afforded some security to those who live in sin. Some of you may be resting on this assumption. But how is this? If the goodness of God has hitherto prevented His using such means as have actually saved you from sin, how can you know but it may likewise prevent His saving you from hell? God has been good all along; but you are yet in sin. If His goodness has not stopped your sinning, how can you hope it will prevent your suffering? If His goodness has not availed to secure your conversion under the most favorable circumstances which even infinite love could arrange, how can you hope it will save you without your being converted? How can you venture on the assumption that God will recede from His ground, and since

you will not come to His terms, He will come to yours? Suppose you that goodness and wisdom will ever do this?

It may be that you have not duly estimated the fact that God is immutable — always good, and always having the same sort of goodness. If then His goodness has not prevented your sinning, and your suffering too, in this world; if all the efforts which goodness has been continually putting forth have hitherto failed, how can you infer that the same goodness may not fail hereafter? Especially when He assures you that now is the accepted time, and now His day of salvation? If His goodness cannot arrest you in your course of sin, in the most favoring hour, how can you hope it will arrest you from going straight down to hell? What can you find either in the Bible or out of the Bible to warrant such an inference as that of your salvation from the goodness of God?

One thing you may certainly know to be fact. God has been always as good as He is now, or as He ever will be. Yet He has created this world; it has fallen into sin; He has visited it with many and sore judgments and much suffering for its sins; has declared that He will send every sinner to hell who will not turn from his evil ways, and has done all He wisely could to make you believe it. And now, can you rationally infer from God's goodness, that you as a sinner have no hell to fear? Ah, no, sinner no. You are moving on fast through the only period of your existence in which salvation is possible; you cannot arrest your progress towards the grave; you can never change the course of God's government towards sinners. God is too good to suffer any sinner to triumph over justice, or to subvert His own throne.

**2.** The goodness of God is not the security of the impenitent sinner's salvation, but the guarantee of his damnation. Sinners know this. They are not afraid of God because they think Him wicked, but because they think Him good, and dread the consequences of His goodness. What sinner ever feared injustice from God? Not one. Their fear is that God will deal with them as they deserve. Not without reason is it that they fear His goodness and His justice. These are the very qualities in His character which they have to fear; just as they fear good men and the best men most, not because they are bad men, but because they are good men.



**3.** The death of the wicked is not inconsistent with God's happiness. I have heard persons say that they never could be happy even in heaven, if they knew that any of their own friends or relatives were in hell; and they seem to wonder how God can be happy while He knows that sinners are in hell. The reason why God will not be unhappy is that He will have the eternal consciousness of having Himself done right, and of not being in any sense or degree to blame for the death of the wicked. When the smoke of their torments shall go up forever and ever, His consciousness will forever affirm — no blood of theirs is on My raiment. With this consciousness God need not be unhappy in the sinner's eternal death.

**4.** God will have the eternal consciousness of having laid Himself out to the utmost to save sinners. He knows that He has gone to the very verge of propriety, just as far as He wisely could, at every successive step in their course through a life of sin to their eternal death. What a satisfaction that must be to such a mind as His to be able to say — “What could I have done more to My vineyard that I have not done” in it? It is no fault of Mine that when I looked for it to bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes, fit only for burning.

In this view of the case it is easy to see that God will be content with having done the best thing He could do. Conscious of this, He will be satisfied, and will have no occasion to wish that He had been more than infinite, or to regret in any respect that He has not done more or better than He has.

He will be well satisfied on the whole with all the results of all He has done. He will indeed see that the misery of the wicked is, as viewed in itself, a great and almost an infinite evil; but when all the results are considered, He will be satisfied. For, it should be considered, God had foreseen all these results. They do not break upon Him by surprise. He did not commence a plan with which He should be in its development, dissatisfied. He foresaw all the evils incidental to His plan — all the sin and all the suffering consequent upon sinning. In full view of all, He asked Himself — Shall I be satisfied with these results? He did not go forward without making up His mind that this course was, on the whole, altogether wise and good. Hence the evils which are to be developed in the sinner's death *are not new to Him*. They do not break forth suddenly upon Him so

as to embarrass His movements and turn Him aside from His course. By no means. Right onward move His eternal counsels, as certain as His own existence. What infinite wisdom has devised, infinite power will execute. God never can lack the necessary firmness to do the very best thing in the best way.

These results, therefore, do not interfere at all with the happiness of God. The death of the sinner may be in itself a very great evil, and yet God sees that on the whole — taking all results into view, He has the best of reasons to be satisfied with His own plan, and with all that He has Himself done in its execution. He will be satisfied with the results as a whole, although there may be things connected with it which are in themselves to be regretted.

Again, the death of the wicked will not be inconsistent with the happiness of heaven. Persons have often said, that they could not be happy in heaven, if they knew the wicked were in hell. Some of you may have thought so; but why? Are you a great deal better than God? Are you more benevolent or more wise than God is? Suppose you stand on the shore and you see a ship in the offing beating hard against a dreadful storm, and laden with precious human lives. You see their signals of distress; ah, you can even hear their shrieks and cries for help, and in your inmost soul you feel that you would save them all if you could. No doubt you would. God has the power to do it, but yet He lets the noble ship strike the breakers! You would have saved them; but are you therefore better than God? No; the reason why your course differs from God's course in the matter is, that you are not so good and not so wise as He. If you were as benevolent as He, you would act as He does.

But with your short vision of results, it would fill you with great anguish to see a ship's crew and passengers all dash upon the dreadful rocks and go to the bottom. Yet God can look calmly on, and trace the whole course of the dreadful calamity, satisfied that all shall be well in the end.

When saints reach heaven they will have more confidence in God than many people have now. They will see more than they do now, and will have indefinitely more confidence in the wisdom of what they cannot see. It will then appear plain to them that they have the same reason for being happy in all the results of moral government that God has. They will begin

to see these results as they have never done before. With enlarged views they will see most clearly that God has done right, perfectly and infinitely right. O how their minds will be eternally solemnized by a view of hell! What a spectacle! What could make more solemn impressions of the fearfulness of sin, and of the firmness that prevails forever in the counsels of Jehovah! I have sometimes been greatly edified by seeing how Christians have borne the loss of friends dying in their sins. For a long time I could not understand this, and was greatly stumbled to conceive how Christians could be reconciled to such a trial. Is it stupidity, said I to myself, or is it unbelief? Subsequent reflection however, and observation, showed that it was neither. I saw how they might be happy in God, confiding in His wisdom and love. I no more suppose that heaven would be unhappy because of their vision of hell, than I suppose a virtuous community would be in seeing a man punished who was bent upon their ruin. Suppose there were in this community a man full of all mischief, a child of the devil, reckless of law and right, periling and even taking life, whenever excited passion maddened him to the deed; suppose this man seized, convicted, and shut up in the state's prison, or even suppose him to be hung: you see it and you say — this is in itself a great evil, but in view of all the results, you would say, *Amen*. Better that the guilty wretch should suffer as he deserves, than that society should be broken up — other lives be destroyed, and an evil vastly greater than one man's death be done.

Now if in this world you may be brought to acquiesce in condign punishment brought upon the guilty, how much more so in the future world! There we shall see that their case is hopeless — that nothing more could be done wisely to save them — that they forced their way down to hell in full view of Calvary, despite of the tenderest entreaties and the most affecting invitations; then we shall see that nothing remained but for God to shut them up in the state's prison of the universe!

Persons sometimes say — O if my relatives, my husband or my children must go to hell, I never can be reconciled with God's doings, *never*, NEVER! I never can be happy in heaven myself and see them in hell! What! Do you say to God — You may send anybody else's children to hell if you please, *but spare mine!* All this will have passed away if you ever reach heaven. There God's friends are my friends, and God's enemies

are my enemies. I have only one question to ask there: Is he a friend of God, or is he an enemy? All these distinctions about self and self's friends, or self's children, will then have vanished forever away. Does that pious mother think now that she could not be happy to see her own son sent to hell? Once in heaven, or even once fitted for heaven, your soul will rest calmly in God, sinking down sweetly into His will, and rejoicing that He never does and never can do otherwise than right.

But we must revert to the exhortation in our text. God says to each sinner, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Many sinners in this house have continued long in sin, expecting God to do something more than He has yet done, and indeed enough to save them; but *will He?* Do you *know* that He will? How do you know that He will? All this time while you have been waiting for Him, He has been waiting for you. He has come to you by all His servants, rising up early and sending them, saying, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" This you will observe assumes that you are bent on your own death, and that you act as if you thought yourselves to have good reasons for choosing death. Your God asks to know what those reasons are. He tells you most solemnly that you need not die because He wants to have you, or because He has any pleasure at all in your death; nor because any one else — unless it be Satan — wants to have you die. No; if you have reasons they must be your own, and God asks you what they are. Now go home and ask yourself what they are. Press home to your own heart this question — put to you by your Maker — *Why will ye die?* Take your pen and write the reasons down, for you may have occasion enough to review them in the coming years and ages of your existence. Then write them down. I should like to know what they are, and it might be of use to yourself to study them more attentively than you have been wont to do. You will do well to write them all out fully, so that your own mind can measure them and weigh them and estimate soberly their real value. Won't you do this; do it seriously, in the stillness and solitude of your own chamber; write them all down; get upon your knees and spread them out before God. Say, Lord, Thou hast put this question to me — Why wilt thou die?" Here is the answer. Lord, it is because Thou hast no mercy on sinners. It is because Thou hast done nothing to save me. Because I can't help going on in my sins. Because I can't repent and can't believe. \* \* \* But stop, sinner, read this over again

before God. Is there a word of truth in all you have written? Will it stand the test of even your own conscience? Will it bear to come before your Maker? Can it be of any use to you to “deny the Lord that bought you,” and “make God a liar” to His very face — in contempt of His own solemn oath?

# EVIL THINKING

*Charity thinketh no evil. 1 Corinthians 13:5*

The context in which these words stand is doubtless familiar to many of you; but it may not be amiss for me to read it. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And 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. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

You observe that I have selected for my text but one of the many attributes of charity; — namely, that she “thinketh no evil.”

In considering this attribute more extensively, I propose,

- I. TO INQUIRE WHAT IT IS TO THINK EVIL IN THE SENSE OF THE TEXT;**
- II. TO SHOW THAT IN THIS SENSE CHARITY THINKETH NO EVIL;**
- III. TO GIVE SOME OF THE EVIDENCES OF EVIL THINKING;**
- IV. TO ADDUCE SOME EVIDENCES OF THAT CHARITABLE STATE OF MIND WHICH THINKETH NO EVIL.**

**1.** Thinking evil in the sense of the text includes thinking *unjustly*. Forming unjust opinions of others, and giving indulgence to feelings in correspondence with our unjust opinions is certainly evil thinking.

2. So is thinking *enviously*. When envy governs our opinions of others, we are guilty of evil thinking.

So of *suspicious* thinking. It is another modification of thinking evil. When we are suspicious of others' motives, we think evil of them.

The same is true of all *malicious* thinking. Thoughts of malice are of course evil.

Nor can we say less of *vengeful* thoughts. They are evil and only evil, continually. Unkind and ill-natured thoughts partake of the same general character. None can doubt that all such thoughts are intrinsically evil, and not good.

Again, *dwelling* upon others' faults, real or imputed, is evil-thinking. Even if those faults are real, it is not wise to dwell upon them, certainly not unless we can answer the ends of benevolence by so doing. If we can devise means to correct them, so much thinking as may be necessary for this purpose may be good; but thinking of others' faults for any other than a good object is certain to work evil.

What then shall we say of brooding over those assumed faults of others which are not real but only imputed? Perhaps they owe all their apparent evil to the tinge they get from your morbid imagination, or your jealous heart. In such a case what can be worse than the fermentation of such a mind as yours? It not only wrongs others, but terribly corrodes your own mind. There can be no peace to him who indulges such evil-thinking.

Thinking over personal injuries, whether real or imaginary, is evil. In such a world as this it will often happen that men are really wronged. But even then why should they double and treble the evil resulting to themselves by dwelling upon it, poring over it, talking about it till they get every sensibility of their being on fire? What is the use? None at all. He only spoils his own peace, and the peace of as many others as he can bring under his poisonous influence. Such thinking is surely a great evil.

Worse still if the supposed injury is only imaginary. Then wrong is done to the assumed authors, besides all the mischief to the self-tormenting sufferer who perhaps is himself the only cause of all the evil, resulting first to himself, next to his friends, and last but not least, to the man wrongfully

accused of the imaginary injustice. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! Is not all thinking which kindles up such fires, “evil?”

## II. CHARITY THINKETH NO EVIL

The word here rendered charity means *love*. This is its legitimate meaning, and in other passages in the Bible it is usually rendered love. It refers especially to love as the action of a renewed heart — to holy love, and not to any form of the social or domestic instincts. Of this holy love, it is said that it “thinketh no evil.” This is popular and not strictly metaphysical language; for in strict phraseology, charity does not *think* at all; nothing can think except a *mind*. The meaning therefore is that *a charitable mind* thinketh no evil. This is plain, and very true.

It is not however implied that charitable men are blind to facts, or that they are incapable of thinking of things *as they are*. God’s mind is all love — supremely under the control of benevolence; and yet He sees evil none the less; thinks of it and estimates its real nature none the less accurately. So of the human mind under the control of love.

Again, charitable minds may misjudge, but cannot really think or do any evil, subjectively considered. In a charitable state they cannot consent to say or do anything wrong. For example, charity cannot be subjectively unjust. It can never *intend* injustice. It will always form its judgments honestly, according to its best light. It may form opinions objectively wrong, that is, wrong as to fact — wrong in themselves considered; yet even in forming these it will be subjectively right because under the control of love. For the same reason charity cannot be envious or suspicious. There will be the greatest simplicity in such a mind. Conscious of its own uprightness, it will not be looking out for hypocrisy in others. It is remarkable how simple-hearted the charitable mind will always be; so truthful, so upright; it has no thought of suspecting others, for it seems a stranger to the idea of wrong. But the uncharitable mind is the reverse of this. It is an old adage — “Set a rogue to catch a rogue.” He seems to have the art of suspecting, and knows a world of things about the ways and works and signs of the rogue that no honest man should be expected to know.



When you see a man very suspicious, you may usually suspect him. If he is a hypocrite he will suspect others of being hypocrites, for he is very familiar with that state of mind. If he is a liar, a thief or a counterfeiter, it will be easy for him to suspect others of some equally scandalous form of vice.

But on the other hand, the charitable mind is eminently simple-hearted and unsuspecting.

Again, charity cannot be *revengeful*. It naturally abhors revengeful thoughts. Suppose the charitable man has been injured: — what then? Shall he study revenge? No. He “suffereth long and is kind.” It is in his nature to be not revengeful, but kind. Who does not know this? He is inclined to put the best possible construction upon the acts and the motives of others. You do not find him brooding over all the apparent wrong he sees, and magnifying it in his imagination. For example, think of the conduct of parents who really love their children. You do not see them dwell exclusively upon their children’s faults, to the entire neglect of their excellencies. Love never does that. Nor can candor and honesty do it. What should you think of a man who should get a telescope of sufficient power to reveal to him one black spot on the sun’s disc, and who then gazes at this till it fills his whole vision, and the whole face of the sun seems only black and dark as midnight? You would think him no better than crazy. His mind labors under a hallucination, and does not by any means see things as they are. So of men who gaze at their neighbors’ faults till their own minds become so green as to give a greenish hue to everything they see. The mind seems in some peculiar circumstances to have a wonderful power of unconsciously imparting its own moral complexion to the character it contemplates. Hence a very charitable mind often puts upon the conduct of others a more charitable construction than strict truth will sustain; and much more often on the other hand does an uncharitable mind impart its own dark and foul type to the character which it pretends to delineate.

That is always an ill-natured state of mind which loves to dwell upon others’ faults where no interests of benevolence demand it. Think of a husband who is forever poring over the faults of his wife and has no heart to notice her excellencies. He has only evil and not good to say of her, and the more of evil he finds to think of and talk about, the more his mind is

fed and feasted. Is not he a monster? Do you believe that he has the heart of *a man* within him? Of one thing you may be very sure; he has none of that charity which “thinketh no evil.” The charitable husband would be grieved to notice her faults, and certainly would never speak of them unless compelled by the sternest necessity.

The same principle is often developed in the hearing of sermons. Some men notice only the faults they can find; and if a sermon has ninety-nine good qualities and but one of a questionable character, the latter is the only thing thought of, and no pains are spared to discuss and display its demerits. Of course such hearers are only cursed, never benefited, by hearing sermons; no sermon can ever be good enough to bless their souls. They will lose all the good by watching for anticipated and desired evil. Of course you would not say that such hearers are in a charitable state of mind.

A charitable man cannot dwell upon injuries received. It grieves him to think of them, and he will of choice banish them entirely from his mind unless some important interests or rights are so involved as to demand his attention to them. He finds more pleasure in dwelling upon the good received than upon the evil.

### III. SOME EVIDENCES OF EVIL THINKING NEXT DEMAND OUR ATTENTION

Some things under this head have already been anticipated. Hence I shall be the more brief now.

Evil speaking of course evinces a state of evil thinking; for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

Evil treatment makes the same development. Some men don’t like to speak out all they think, but they can not easily prevent its working itself out in their actions. Their looks and their whole demeanor will show it. Perhaps they refuse to exchange the common tokens of civility, and will not even shake hands — their state of mind is so uncharitable.

A disposition to find fault with others is an evidence of evil thinking. How remarkable that some men say almost nothing else but in the way of fault-finding. If they attempt to speak or pray, fault-finding is uppermost. If they speak in a church meeting, you can anticipate the strain of their remarks — always some form of fault-finding. It seems as if the man was forever brooding over the faults of his brethren. He sees no bright spots ever in any brother or in any church. His temper is morose and crabbed; he is a natural-born Arab; his hand is against every man and every mans' hand against him. You may always know that his bosom is the prey of perpetual evil thinking.

A disposition to complain of the ill-treatment received from others is another evidence. Fall into conversation with him where you will, he is complaining of having been injured. Somebody has injured him, and it engrosses his mind to the exclusion of almost everything else. This man is given to evil thinking.

Another evidence of evil thinking is a disposition to complain of being neglected. Some persons have a world of trouble on this score — alas, they are always overlooked; nobody cares as much for them as in their humble opinion they deserve. This state of mind becomes a source of great uneasiness. It proves that they are given to evil thinking.

Others show their evil thinking by a disposition to question the purity of other's motives. You see some people who can scarcely ever believe that their neighbors and acquaintance are really what they profess to be. It seems most natural to them to assume that everybody besides themselves is dishonest. It may happen that all *appears* right in their neighbor's conduct. "Well," in such a case they will say — "that will do — *if* — IF he is honest in it." Now you may know without an *if* that such men are evil thinkers. Their very souls are putrid with jealousy and suspicion. They cannot even put a good construction upon what appears unexceptionable.

The same is true substantially of those who are always disposed to question the piety of others. A man may do some things which are entirely wrong, and yet his general character may be so good that you have no sufficient reason to question his piety. In such a case let charity prevail.

You sometimes see the evidence of evil thinking in a slowness to credit professions of repentance and sincerity. Sometimes there may be good reasons for being slow in this matter. I speak of cases where the backwardness is not really warranted by anything in the individual's character, or in the present circumstances.

Evidence of evil thinking is seen sometimes in a readiness to question the truthfulness of others. On this point it should be considered that men may state what is really false, and yet be in heart entirely truthful. They may misapprehend the real state of the facts, may truthfully state the case as they understand it. I have heard during my life thousands of men state things which I knew to be false; yet I did not for this reason feel authorized to say they lied. To assume that they lie is uncharitable — so long as it may be the case that they misapprehend the facts. Memory is sometimes at fault, and sometimes the man may be in real fault for lack of care to inform himself of the certainty of what he affirms; but charity forbids us to put any man down a liar till we are well assured that he affirms for truth what he *knows to be false*.

The disposition to impute lying to a man on the slightest occasion should be reprobated as in the highest degree uncharitable. Often the mere fact of a man's stating what is not true affords scarcely the shadow of evidence that he lies. We must not believe the man lies unless the circumstances utterly forbid the charitable conclusion.

A readiness to hear evil is another indication of a state of mind which thinks evil. Sometimes persons will not allow themselves to originate evil reports, but will take them up, believe and circulate them without scruple. It is remarkable that the Bible places these two classes — the originator and the receiver of evil reports — on the same footing, for it promises an abiding place in God's holy will to him "that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor *taketh up a reproach* against his neighbor." Whoever therefore takes up a reproach against his neighbor, saying, "Aha, aha, so would we have it" — may be known as one that "thinketh evil."

Moreover, when men manifest a readiness not only to hear but to believe evil reports of others, you may know they are evil thinkers.

An *unhappy state of mind* is often an evidence, for it is a development of thinking evil. From the very laws of mind, such persons are always unhappy. You never see persons of evil thinking habits whose countenances shine with the joy of their hearts. Show me an uncharitable man, and I will show you an unhappy man.

Men who are discontented with their present position are wholly given to evil thinking. Mark those men who cannot bear the neighborhood they live in; those students here who are forever uneasy, rasped, vexed, discontented — who want to get away, and are forever restive for some change; mark them I say; for if you could know the bottom of their hearts, you would find evil thinking there. They are brooding over the dark features of others' character and conduct, and practically forget that there are many good things in almost all men and all situations. Uncharitableness breeds misery and discontent.

A general want of confidence in others betrays a heart of evil thinking. You see some who seem to have lost confidence in everybody. The Psalmist once said in his haste "all men are liars." If you read that psalm and mark his state of mind you will see that he seemed not to know whom to trust. He didn't believe anybody is pious. He has no confidence in any man. The trouble lies — at least in part — with himself; his heart is thinking evil continually.

Another evidence is the absence of pain in view of any exhibition of uncharitableness. For example, if you hear persons speak uncharitably and it does not give you pain, you have great reason to suspect yourself of an uncharitable mind. If your own mind were deeply imbued with love, you could not fail of being shocked whenever you hear uncharitable speaking.

An indisposition to pray for others is yet another evidence. I do not now allude to cases where Christians have no ill feelings at all towards others, and yet for reasons to themselves unknown seem to gain no access to God in prayer for them; but I allude to cases in which men have such a state of uncomfortable feeling towards certain persons that they feel no spirit to pray for them. Such a sign is ominous.

Finally, evil thinkers may be known by their not rejoicing at the prosperity of others, and not mourning in their adversity. Whoever finds

this to be the case with himself may know that he has an uncharitable mind.

#### IV. THE EVIDENCES OF A CHARITABLE STATE OF MIND, WHICH THINKETH NO EVIL, ARE THE VERY OPPOSITE OF THOSE WHICH I HAVE JUST BEEN ADDUCING

Where men do not speak evil of others, but speak well, where their treatment of others is benevolent and kind; where instead of fault-finding, you see a disposition to vindicate, apologize for, and commend; where there is no apparent love of dwelling upon others' faults, but a delight in dwelling upon their virtues; in all such cases you see evidences of a charitable spirit.

The charitable man is not morose, but cheerful; wishes no man evil but every man well; if ill-treated, does not complain, nor is disposed to dwell upon it; don't know as he has any enemies, certainly does not *feel* as if he had; for although he may know the fact as Christ did in his own case, yet like Christ it is in his heart to say — "Father, forgive for they know not what they do." He loves to overlook injuries, and is by no means disposed to dwell upon them.

Some men always think they are persecuted and wronged — suppose everybody is their enemy; while others seem never to dream of any such thing. You hear them remark — such a man thinks ill of me, but he is misinformed; he doesn't mean any wrong. You have seen such persons; their state of mind is so sweet that they don't seem to think anybody can do them any harm. In a charitable state of mind, it is very natural that they should take this view. They manifest no disposition to regard themselves as neglected by others. A pastor who visits his people occasionally, has often a good opportunity to notice the great difference which obtains among persons in this respect. I call on one family, and in the course of our conversations I observe, "It is a long time since I have seen your family at your own home." "Yes," the reply is, "I thought my pastor had neglected me. I began to think he never would visit us again."

I call on another family; I remark to them that it seems a long time since I have seen them; but they have not a word to say about being neglected; no they say — “We know you have a great deal to do — so much to do that we could not expect you to turn aside from your urgent and more important duties, to see us; we are all exceedingly glad to see you — but really we never could blame you if you should not call upon us.”

Sometimes such a family will go much farther in excusing me than I can in excusing myself, so that I have often felt ashamed and condemned by their apologies for me. Now all this is natural for a charitable mind; but if the mind is in an uncharitable state, everything is horribly distorted.

Again, those whose minds are charitable have no disposition to question the purity of others’ motives. They love to put the best admissible construction upon every man’s conduct. Herein is fulfilled that truthful and beautiful sentiment — “Charity shall cover a multitude of sins.”

## REMARKS

- 1.** Many think evil who do not speak it. Often such persons take great credit to themselves for not speaking evil, when really they are thinking a great deal of evil. The reason they do not speak evil is not because their hearts are full of love and good will; but perhaps because they have not a good opportunity, or because some motives of policy restrain them. It is a great mistake to be proud of such virtue.
- 2.** Many forget that charity *thinketh* no evil. It seems to escape their minds that the law of love reaches to the heart and to the most secret thoughts.
- 3.** Evil thinkers are for the time being impenitent. Theirs is not a religious state of mind. This is most manifest, for nothing can be religious which is not charitable. The uncharitable man, remaining such, can have nothing really good about him.
- 4.** This state of mind is exceedingly deceptive. The uncharitable man dwells so much and so intensely upon the faults of others, and gets so much excited by his own thinking and talking on the subject, that he makes himself think that he ought to be uncharitable. Oh, he has been so egregiously wronged; he would forfeit all self-respect if he did not resent it

and manifest his indignation. Those fearful wrongs done himself — how they fill the whole field of his vision, and seem to be the greatest wrongs that ever fell to the hard lot of any mortal. And can it be wrong for him to dwell upon them and condemn their author?

**5.** Those who sympathize with each other in this state of mind can see neither their own nor each other's faults. All being alike in an uncharitable state of mind, they are unfit to judge correctly of the moral quality of their own, or of each others' moral exercises. The same causes which blind the uncharitable man to his own sins, blind him also to the sins of his neighbor, provided those sins sustain and vindicate his own. Hence where a church falls into an uncharitable state of mind, there is the less hope of any remedy originating from themselves. Hand joins in hand, and heart sustains heart in defense of uncharitableness. Their moral state becomes dark indeed, and the prospect of any improvement is gloomy.

**6.** The manifestations of this state of evil thinking are often odious and shocking. Sometimes men make these manifestations without being themselves aware of it. I recollect the case of a minister who once spent some time at our house. After he had gone, one of the children said, "Don't you think Mr. \_\_\_\_, has a bad spirit?" "Why do you ask that question?" "Because he is finding fault with everybody." If ever I see him again, I mean to tell him what impression his conversation made on my children. I have warned him against this practice of evil-speaking, and I cannot acquit my conscience without rebuking him again.

It is astonishing that a man can be so blind as not to see such things in himself. But there are men who will manifest a spirit which will shock even a child, and yet be quite unconscious of being in a bad state of mind.

**7.** Our own blindness and self-conceit make us think ourselves abused when we are not. Hence a man may regard the treatment he received from others as wholly wrong, when it is really occasioned by his own position and circumstances. If this man is honest and candid, and should come to see things as they are, he would cry out — "I certainly have deserved a thousand times more than I have received. I once thought myself wronged, but I have changed my views. I now see that the wrong was chiefly and perhaps wholly on my side." I have known cases of this sort. Men are sometimes so blind to their faults, that they cannot bear to have others say



of them what is most just. It is hence common for men to attribute to others a bad spirit, when if they saw things as they are, they would see that themselves are chiefly in fault.

**8.** Just apprehensions of ourselves would often remove the temptation to think hard of others. When you come to estimate yourself rightly, you no longer wonder that men should think evil of you. So I have found it in my own case. Hence, when men feel themselves tried, they would do well to say — Is there not a cause? This is always wise; for it may be that a candid self-scrutiny will put the whole matter in a new light before our own minds. It certainly can do no harm for us to ask — Now really, am I not full as bad as others think me to be? In very many cases you will find by honest searching of yourself, that *there* lies the cause!

When persons find themselves tempted to take a wrong view of a matter, instead of brooding over the wrong, they should ask — What does God intend by this in His providence? Lord, search me — let him say — Lord search me, try me, and know my thoughts, and let me see whether these people are not Thy rod. As Shimei cursed David, and David said — “Let him curse; the Lord hath bidden him”; so we should look upon those who speak evil of us, when we are ourselves conscious of having occasioned it. In such a case what have we to do that we should retaliate? God has designed it for our good, and it becomes us to receive it from His hand. Let us then inquire — May there not be some truth in these charges or these insinuations? Is it not for some good reason that the Lord has permitted the tongue of evil men to run loose against me? What is the lesson which God in His providence would teach me by these things?

Right over against this is the other course — “I do well to resist and repel; somebody has spoken evil of me, and I am a grievously abused man.” Now shall I take this course under reproach? No. I would as soon take arsenic. Shall I cry out — “Oh, I have been abused — My God, take my part, for I am greatly abused”? No; let me rather say — O, my God, what wouldst Thou teach me? Wouldst Thou have me pray for my enemy? Then let me do it. If a man has smitten out my right eye, let me first inquire what God means by permitting such an event. And moreover, let me also inquire, not only what provocations they actually have, but what they may *think* they have. How often have I wished that I could see myself through other

people's eyes! I should love to place myself in their position, and ask how things look from their stand-point of observation. Perhaps they are so situated as to know only the evil things of my character and conduct. It was so even of Jesus Christ. Those who knew Him only through the wicked Scribes and Pharisees would of course hear no good of Him, and much evil — not indeed, in His case, evil that He had ever done, but evil that they alleged against Him.

**9.** Evil thinkers are self-tormentors. This has been intimated before. A man who is continually brooding over the real or supposed faults of others, the injuries he has received, and the evil that others have done, is in any other than a desirable state of mind. He renders himself completely wretched, and from the very nature of mind can not be otherwise. We see some men in almost every community who seem to be always unhappy, discontented. They are complainers, murmurers, fault-finders, and are a source of vexation to themselves, greatly to be pitied, and greatly to be blamed.

**10.** Again, evil thinkers are a curse to their families. If either fathers or mothers allow themselves to think evil, they almost of course become censorious and fill the minds of their children and all over whom they have influence with prejudices against others. They so often speak of the faults, real or supposed, of their neighbors, and oftentimes, of their nearest friends that they create the impression in their family that these persons are not to be trusted. Consequently the minds of the family become filled with evil thoughts, evil-surmisings and suspicions which work like poison itself through the moral heart and constitution of the whole family. It is remarkable to witness the state of religion in a great many families, owing manifestly, at least in a great degree, to the fact that some influential member of the family, perhaps the father or the mother, is in the habit of indulging evil thoughts, and of manifesting these thoughts either in conversation or in conduct to the family. A man can in scarcely any way be a greater and more sure curse to his family than by such a course as this. See that man who is a father. He seldom speaks in such a way to his family as to give them confidence and charity towards any of his neighbors. He brings home little else to their ears than the evil reports of the neighborhood in respect to everybody about him. His family soon

become a band of evil thinkers and evil speakers, and slander is the order of the day.

**11.** An evil thinker is a curse to the church of which he is a member. He does much to undermine Christian confidence, create prejudices and alienate feelings. He is a root of bitterness, springing up and troubling the church. He is suspicious of his minister, has little confidence in his brethren. He broods over their faults, without seeing or commending their virtues. He finds fault. He makes his minister and his brother an offender for a word, and overlooks what is excellent and of good report. The sooner a church can get rid of such a member, the better for them.

**12.** An evil thinker is a great stumbling-block to the world. What can be a greater stumbling-block to the world, than for a professor of religion to overlook all the virtues, and retail all the failings, real or supposed, of his brethren. How greatly do ungodly men feel themselves strengthened in their opposition to the church when they get the countenance and support of such a man as this.

Again, a charitable mind insures peace and quietness of spirit. An individual who thinketh no evil, but who “hopeth all things and endureth all things,” has that peace and quietness of mind to which all other persons are strangers.

Again, we see how to account for the discontent and unhappiness of a great many persons in the church and out of the church. You mark one of these discontented spirits when and where you will, and will find that they are evil thinkers, that they are ready to say, or have said in their hearts — “All men are liars.”

Again, how important it is to control the thoughts aright; important to our peace, important to our own usefulness, important to our own salvation, important to the peace and usefulness and salvation of all around us. A great many people seem to lose sight of the great importance to themselves and others of obeying this precept of the apostle, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on *these* things.”

# THE DEATH OF SAINTS PRECIOUS

*“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” Psalm 116:15*

The sentiment of the text is clearly expressed, leaving us in no doubt as to what it is. God looks upon the death of His saints as an event of peculiar interest.

In discussing this subject I shall

- I. STATE SEVERAL REASONS WHY THE DEATH OF HIS SAINTS IS PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT.**
- II. SHOW THAT THE DEATH OF SAINTS SHOULD BE PRECIOUS TO US.**
- III. STATE SOME REASONS WHY THIS IS OFTEN NOT THE CASE, AND WHY WE FAIL OF VIEWING THIS EVENT AS GOD DOES.**

**1.** God deems the death of His saints precious because their happiness is very dear to Him. When they die, they enter at once into eternal rest. Death is to them the gate way to perfect blessedness. Of course, He who deeply rejoices in their happiness cannot fail to sympathize with them most intensely in this eventful period of their existence. If God takes the interest in the welfare of His saints that parents do in the welfare of their children, He cannot be otherwise than greatly interested in their death.

**2.** God deems their death precious because He can now receive them home from all their wanderings. Unless He had been at pains to subdue their temper and cleanse them from all their sins, they could not bear to dwell with Him, and of course He could not dwell with them. His labors therefore have been not only faithful and kind, but wise and indispensable. And who needs be told that it has cost Him much painstaking, and great watchfulness to prepare them so that He could receive them again to Himself? How diligent and often how long-protracted is the process of discipline by which He trains them to let loose their grasp on earthly and

sensual, and selfish pleasures, and set their hearts supremely on the living God! If an earthly parent had a prodigal son, of wayward temper and estranged affections — one who should be in no condition to return home and enjoy its society; but the father, aware of the case, should with great care and pains and with much wisdom and love pursue a train of measures to restore him to the spirit of a son, and should at length succeed; then would not the day of his return home be one of special rejoicing? Ye who are parents can appreciate this; and I therefore ask you if that day which should restore to your embrace such a son — a son who had thus wandered, but had been also thus reclaimed, would not be most precious in your eyes? O, that day would be long remembered in your house! Deeply would its remembrance be enshrined in your hearts! Why should it not be at least equally so with God when His children come home at last to Himself?

**4.** In a very important sense, when God receives His children home, He receives the reward of all His labors in their behalf. We are apt to speak only of *our* reward, when we allude to the joys of saints in heaven; why should we not also think and speak of God's? Has not He deserved a reward for all His cares and sacrifices and labors? And is it not fit that He should receive it? Is it not reasonable that He should rejoice in His own reward, and furthermore, that we should also rejoice with Him?

If the parent, in the case I just now supposed, should prepare his son to return home by a wise and careful discipline, that son would naturally think much of his return and of the reward it would secure to himself. But be assured, that father and that mother would think of it not less than their son does. It is the day of *their* reward, not less than of his. O, how a parent's great love would gush forth! Hear him say — "Now I am rewarded — now I am more than repaid for all my tears and all my toils!" O, this is a gratification, such as none but a parent can appreciate. Those who love their children can understand this, and you need a parent's love in order to understand it as it is. Parents regard their children as a great treasure, and so does God regard His. He often calls them "His treasure," "His inheritance." In a thousand ways He shows how much He loves His children, and how He rejoices over them with joy unspeakable, as if they were His greatest treasure. We need not assume that His love of them is measured by their intrinsic value; no, but rather by the depth of His own

benevolent heart. He loves them the more because they are fit subjects for His compassion, and because His great compassion has been so drawn out in their behalf. Do not parents love most tenderly those poor unfortunate children who have most strongly enlisted their compassion; nay, sometimes those guilty children, who have most exercised their patience, wisdom and love in reclaiming them to filial virtue? So God rejoices over His children, brought home from all their wanderings, as one who rejoices over great spoil. Can we not appreciate in some measure how great this joy must be? Is it not said that there is joy over one reclaimed more than over the ninety and nine who went not astray?

**5.** God accounts their death precious, because He really enjoys their joy better than they do themselves. We are wont to think only of the joy of the departed saint; but suppose ye that God has no sympathy with such joy as theirs? When they come home, and He sees how happy they are, does not He enjoy their happiness with most intense satisfaction? You know how a parent in similar circumstances would weep for very joy in sympathy with dearly loved children; how much more shall God rejoice in the happiness of those whom He so greatly loves! And the holy angels too; did you never conceive how they receive the glorified saint — with what intense and hearty welcome — with what a gush of new and heavenly delight? Yea, all heaven is filled with new joy when another glorified saint is added to their number. The glorified saints already there, know how to sympathize most fully. We can in some measure conceive how unutterable their emotions will be.

Let it now be considered that the infinite Father casts His eye over this whole scene. With the most intense sympathy He looks down upon the joyous surprise of the newly-arrived saint — upon the joyous sympathy of every holy angel, and upon the thrill of rapturous welcome that vibrates through every glorified saint around the throne. Is it strange then that the death of His saints is most precious in His eyes?

**6.** Again, their death must be precious to God because He has so long sympathized with them in all their trials, pains, and sorrows. Whatever has touched them has touched the apple of His eye. Hence, when He sees their trials come to a perpetual end; that their last pang has ceased forever, their last sorrow died away to return no more at all, think you not that this

event is most precious in His eyes? He has watched all their labors and sorrows with a parent's most tender interest; He has seen them mourning, broken down with grief and penitence; agonizing in their warfare against sin and temptation; when therefore, He shall see all these trials terminate, to be renewed no more — their physical pains and trials cease — all their wants supplied forever, and the state of want passed forever away; when He sees all this, think you not that He rejoices in it with great joy? No doubt He does. There can scarcely be a more erroneous view of God's character than that which denies to Him the attribute of sympathy and joy in the happiness of His creatures.

**7.** God has the more joy in their death because He never takes them away from earth without providing against the evil consequences which might otherwise result. He always takes care that their death shall not on the whole be any loss, but rather a gain to His church on earth. Hence His joy is not abated by any actual damage done on the whole by their being taken out of the world.

**8.** God is greatly glorified in their death. Who could witness such a death as that of our dear sister whose funeral we have this day attended, without giving glory to God for His blessed gospel — glory to God for His abounding grace? And not this case of death only; how many cases have we seen here in which the triumphs of grace have been illustrious? Their exit from earth did not seem to be death; no, it was rather the entrance of a freed, triumphant spirit into a glorious eternity! With what a spirit of calm and fearless triumph they leaned upon the arm of a present Jesus and passed away as in a cloud of glory from our sight! And do not such deaths greatly glorify God?

**9.** The death of the righteous is also greatly useful to the living. Often it is one of the most precious instrumentalities which God can employ. What does God ever do which more deeply impresses survivors than this? Let it not then be thought strange that God should deem such an event most precious.

## II. THE DEATH OF SAINTS SHOULD BE PRECIOUS IN OUR SIGHTS

**1.** Because it is so in the sight of God. A daughter whose father was dying, said to her mother — I opened my Bible to read, in my sorrow, and I fell upon this text — “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” I then thought — surely if my father’s death is precious in God’s sight, why should it not be in mine? Now this was simple and truthful. Why not? Does not God take the *right* views of things? Can we suppose that His views and feelings are not so correct as ours? Can we demand that He should come over to our views and conform Himself to our notions, and not we to His?

He deems the death of His saints precious; shall we deem it calamitous, grievous, and evil? Why shall we not assume that God sees all events and this one of death in particular, in a far more just light than we do, so that we ought to conform our views to His, and not seem to insist that He ought to conform His to ours? Is not His view more broad and deep and in every way more perfect than ours?

**2.** It is most obvious that we ought to sympathize with God, both in our opinions and in our feelings. If He regards the death of the righteous as being precious because it is joyous to them, glorious to Himself — because it places them beyond the reach of care and trouble, it is plain that every one of these considerations ought to have no less and no different influence on our minds.

**3.** Really the entrance of a soul into eternal glory is an event which ought to be regarded as precious in our sight. Before my conversion, and indeed for some little time afterwards, I had had no just conception of the right view to be taken of the death of a saint. But in process of time I had opportunity to witness a most triumphant death. Then I saw its nature and its bearings as I never had before. I could not mourn. Nay, so far was I from mourning over such a death, that I literally held my hands over my mouth to keep myself from shouting. The whole scene seemed to me like celebrating the triumph of a soul ushered into the glorious presence of Jehovah, and not like the gloom of bidding farewell to a friend bound to some unknown clime. You may well suppose that my emotions rose



almost beyond control. Many of you perhaps know what it is to have your emotions rise and swell till they seem to be irrepressible. Mine were so when I first came to realize what the death of the righteous really is. Be assured, *that* death was “*precious*” to me. It seemed like a precious feast to my soul. So much did I enjoy these views, that I said to my father — then recently converted — “If you were to die today, it seems to me I could not mourn, but should rather rejoice in view of the glory upon which your ransomed spirit would enter.”

### III. LET US INQUIRE, WHY IT IS THAT WE SOMETIMES DO NOT CONSIDER THE DEATH OF SAINTS AS PRECIOUS

To prevent any misunderstanding, let me say here that in a certain sense it cannot be regarded as unlawful to grieve over the loss of friends. Christ Himself wept over the grave of Lazarus; surely we too may give scope to our natural sensibilities which cannot but suffer when ties so dear are rent asunder. Christ knew that His disciples would grieve at His death; hence He sought to comfort them; but even this comfort did not assume that it was morally wrong for them to feel afflicted at parting with such a friend. Christians learn by their experience that the outward man may be deeply afflicted, while yet the inward man enjoys great consolation. The sensibilities bleed under the wound; but yet the joy of the Lord is such a strength to the soul that many of its tears are tears of submissive, trustful joy.

But let us now pass on to say,

**1.** That we often fail to regard the death of saints as precious, because of our own selfishness. The selfishness of surviving friends is so great that they do not look at the great glory and great gain of the departed saint. So much are they absorbed in their own loss, that they seem incapable of looking away to the glory of that dear child of God who has been permitted at last to go home. Of course this must be a very short-sighted view of things. How can we justify it to our minds that we should think only of our own interests, and not of the interests of our dear friends? Why should not their happiness be as dear to us as our own?

**2.** Sometimes, through unbelief, we do not really appreciate the fact that our deceased friends have gone to eternal glory. I mean that we do not take home this fact to our hearts as a reality. We do not sincerely doubt it; we are ready to prove it against any avowed skeptic; and yet how much we may need one to prove it *to our hearts!* Nothing is more common than for the mind to hold opinions which yet have not attained their due sway over the sensibilities and the heart. The evidence has commanded the assent of the intelligence, but the mind has not so embraced it, so incorporated it among acknowledged realities, and so learned to act upon it, that it exerts its legitimate influence *as truth* upon our entire being.

In accordance with this peculiar attitude of mind, mourning friends often act as if they did not believe what the Bible says of the blessedness and glory of the saints in heaven. They may talk of what the Bible teaches on this subject; may theorize upon it, but after all may fail to *believe* it so that it has the power of a reality upon their hearts. In fact they do not *trust* their friends with God — do not give their Savior credit for faithfulness in having carefully taken His own loved children to His own bosom in the upper mansions.

**3.** There is often much unbelief as to its being the wisest and best thing possible for our friends to be taken away just as they in fact are. This is one reason why we do not esteem the death of saints precious. I know it is generally admitted that God has done the best possible thing; but though they may admit this in theory, they yet may not believe it in heart. It is no small matter in such cases to admit fully and believe heartily that infinite love sought the very best result; that infinite wisdom devised the best means to secure it; and that infinite power could not lack the resources to do the best thing in the best way. To take hold of these truths in their broad extent and precious application, soothes the turmoil of the afflicted soul, and makes the death of a saint seem truly precious. But many fail of this because they do not thoroughly confide in the wisdom and love of God.

**4.** Often there is much unbelief in regard to the provisions God has made to prevent evil to the church by the death of His servants. We lose sight of the fact that God has been careful to make provision, so that no harm shall accrue to His church. We seem to suppose that the church depends for

wise guardianship chiefly upon ourselves, and hence we feel greatly distressed that God should remove important instrumentalities for her prosperity. O, if we only saw that the all-wise God is Zion's best friend, we might quell many of our sad disquietudes. Then no fear lest Zion should suffer, need abate our joy in the precious death of the saints.

**5.** Sometimes our darkness of mind in regard to the reasons God may have for His conduct, gives us trouble. We do not consider that we ought to have confidence in God's wisdom and love, without seeing His reasons, and that our faith in Him ought to take the place of perceived reasons. When our ignorance makes us tremble for the ark of God, let our faith counteract our ignorance, and say continually — "Is not my Father at the helm?" We ought to have sufficient confidence in God to believe that He has not removed a saint from earth one day too soon — has not done it without having made all needful provision to supply his place and press forward the labors in which he was engaged.

**6.** We are often in an unrealizing state of mind in regard to the real happiness of the saints in heaven. We may indeed know enough to constrain us to say — "All is well; I could not wish it were otherwise; I can not have any misgivings in this case about the wisdom or the love of God in this death." Yet we may be quite unable to rise to enter into God's views and feelings, so as to feel it precious to have His saints die. We are in a strait; we feel greatly perplexed and troubled; — I can scarcely express it; — we are benumbed and confounded. It was so with me at the death of my wife. Although I could say I would not have it otherwise, yet it was some days before I could get over the numbness which the dreadful shock of her death gave me. But ere long I came into a state in which I could rejoice in her blessedness. Indeed I think I never had a more perfect sympathy with her in all my life than I had then. It seemed to me that I could understand the state of mind of a saint gone home to Jesus. I could see its elements; and could appreciate in some good measure the amazing depth of their joys and of their peace.

When I stood by the sick-bed of this dear sister, now just gone from us, I remembered how she had often said, "I grow stronger and stronger." And I also recollect one occasion when she said in substance — "I can not conceive how I can think of earthly scenes even when I have reached

heaven, and not feel anxiety about them.” I told her, faith sufficed for all; she would trust God, and all would be peace. Such a smile came over her countenance as bespoke the presence, already, of the peace of heaven.

When I came to see her die, I could not but think of the blessed words of the text — “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” There she lay, in her last conflict with pain and the ills of mortality. God was just about to receive her to Himself, and to wipe away all her tears forever. O how plain to me then that the death of the saints is most precious!

**7.** Often we do not allow ourselves to sympathize with God, and enter fully into His views and feelings. If we would only realize how God must regard such an event, we could see why it should be precious in His sight, and consequently why it should be so in ours.

**8.** Another reason is, we have loved our deceased friends for our own sake. I think this is very often the case. For a few days after my wife died, my sorrows seemed to increase upon me, until it seemed to me that I should go deranged. I had no refuge, and could get no relief only in flying to God as my helper. He seemed to say — Have you not loved your wife for your own sake, and with a selfish affection? If you have loved her only for My sake, you will be willing to let her come and dwell with Me. If you have loved her for the churches’ sake, you have no occasion to mourn; I will take care of the church; its interests shall not suffer by the death of your wife.

This showed me my great folly and made me ashamed of my immoderate grief and my selfish regard to my own comfort and happiness. I said to myself — Shall I be thinking of my loss and not of her much greater gain? Besides, God has taken nothing from me that was really mine. My wife was not mine; she belonged to God and not to me; or if in a certain sense she belonged to me, yet she belonged in a far higher sense to God, and shall I grieve because God has taken away what was so properly His own? Can I mourn that she has gone to heaven?

But the loss experienced by the children: shall I not mourn for them? Yet what is their loss compared with her gain? And will not God take care of

the children? Does not God care for these children more than I do? Yes, doubtless He does. These considerations did me immense good.

**9.** We sometimes fail to see that the death of saints is precious, because we are really unsubmitive. We do not bow to the will of God as revealed in His providences. Often persons are found complaining of what God does in His providences. In such a state of mind, no wonder persons do not see that the death of saints is precious.

Again, some have very low and imperfect views of what death is to a saint. They reverse the Bible order of things. Whereas God says, the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth, they reverse it, and make the day of one's death almost wholly grievous. They have very low conceptions of what heaven is, even though they may really believe in theory what the Bible reveals on this subject.

Again, many are prone to conceive of their Christian friends as gone to the grave, and scarcely think of them as being anywhere else save in the cold ground. Now so long as we take this view of their case, it can not appear precious. An event which should really commit our dear friends to the cold prison of a tomb, and to "corruption and worms," can not be rationally regarded as joyous. But we ought to know better than to think of them as laid in the ground. *They* are not in the grave, it is only their *wasted flesh*, which they have done using — which is too poor to be used longer — *that* is laid in the ground. Why should we mourn the burial of their wasted and worn-out bodies? We might as well gather up their old clothes and bury them with many tears and lamentations because we shall see them no more. No; our dear friends are not in the grave. They have gone to be with Jesus; "absent from the body, but present with the Lord." We are ourselves much more properly in the grave than they.

## REMARKS

**1.** It is very useful for us to follow the departed saint to the world above. I am sensible that I have greatly failed in this respect. Since my frequent loss of dear friends has drawn me to think of this, it has been greatly blessed to me. Since I came here to reside, you know I have buried my father, my mother, and a sister; a little daughter; my son-in-law — and my dear wife.

These repeated deaths have made me familiar with the thoughts of heaven, and with all that appertains to death as the passage thither. My experience has thoroughly taught me the value of such influences, drawing the mind away from earth and constraining it to hold communion with the eternal world. This deep communion with heaven and heavenly things disrobes death of all terror, and makes it look in every aspect of it, glorious. It has been so in my own case. During my sickness more than a year ago, when for some days I was brought to look upon death as probably near at hand, I found that death in all its aspects was not only not dreadful, but was even altogether desirable. If I thought of leaving my friends, I knew God would take care of them. The pangs of dying were no longer terrible. The thought of being dead was wholly pleasant. There was nothing to fear; everything to desire. Not one aspect of death, or anything connected with it gave me a single pang. How it will be with me when I shall come to die, I can not say; but in that sickness, I was able to appreciate how it might seem to look right into the scenes of dying and entering the eternal world. Then I could close my eyes and seem to lose myself — fully aware that not improbably my next consciousness might be in the eternal state.

**2.** It is very profitable for us to refuse to pity ourselves and dwell on our own loss. From the time I have alluded to, when the Lord showed me how I ought to rejoice in the perfect blessedness of my departed wife, I refused to pity myself. I said — “Let me rather rejoice that God has saved one whom I so much loved, and has removed her at once and forever away from all pain and sorrow.” Shall I not rejoice that she has gone and taken possession of heaven itself? Why not? Could I wish for her greater blessedness than this?

**3.** If our faith in the gospel be consistent and intelligent, it will lead us to look upon such events as this without murmuring, and without ever counting such events as on the whole sad and painful. Yet let me say, this state of profoundest resignation and this regarding the death of the saints as truly precious, is not inconsistent with human tears and human sighs. Even in repentance there is joy. So when saints die, though we mourn, yet in the depths of our souls we may have the joy of heaven. We may sympathize strongly with our earthly relatives and friends, and yet have the joy of heaven in our souls. Jesus Himself knew how to sympathize with afflicted, bereaved friends, and we may well thank Him for giving us

this precious fact on scripture record, for our consolation down through all time. O how many hearts have been comforted by the sweet record of those sympathizing tears at the grave of Lazarus! Our sympathies may be far less deep and pure than His; yet it is good even for us to learn how to sympathize with afflicted friends. I have found it to be so. Within a few years I have lost friends in every form of relationship; parent, child, sister and wife; and now I find it a luxury to mingle my tears with those who are in any similar affliction. It seems to renew the bonds that bind us together as social beings, and to renew them, moreover, under circumstances well-adapted to make them more tender and hallowed than ever before.

Finally, if the death of saints is precious to God, let it be also to us. If God is pleased and happy in this event, shall we not sympathize with Him? What better thing could God have done for them than He has done? And now shall we not sympathize with Him, and rejoice also with Him, and bless His name for His great mercies to our friends? Surely not to do so is nearly equivalent to refusing to thank God for heaven! Shall we be so ungrateful as to overlook the great gift of a blessed immortality? Shall we act as if God ought to let us live here forever; or ought to keep our friends here as long as we ourselves live; or ought to have provided some better mode of transit from earth to heaven than death? Let us beware how we take exceptions, even impliedly, to God's dealings!

# THE FOUNDATION, CONDITIONS, AND RELATIONS OF FAITH

*“And he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness.”  
— Genesis 15:6.*

“What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Romans 4:1-5

The passage in Genesis 15, refers to Abraham — to the promises God had made to him — to his faith in those promises, and to the Lord’s acceptance of that faith. These topics are first brought to our view in Genesis 12, again in Gen. 17, and thenceforward frequently in the course of Abraham’s history. The case was highly instructive, and St. Paul could not fail to see its important bearings. Hence the free use he makes of it as an illustration, both of what faith, and of its results.

In treating this subject, it is important,

- I. TO NOTICE THE FOUNDATION OF ABRAHAM’S FAITH.**
- II. SOME OF ITS CONDITIONS.**
- III. ITS GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS.**
- IV. ITS NATURAL RELATIONS AND RESULTS.**



## I. THE FOUNDATION OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH WAS NOT ANYTHING WHATEVER *IN HIMSELF*

It was not the fact, either real or supposed, that he had been himself converted. There is no intimation that he ever so much as thought whether he had been converted or not. His faith seems to have been exercised irrespective of any opinions or thoughts on this question.

Nor did his faith rest on the assumption that he was himself in a right state of mind. He did not, so far as we can see, assume this, and thereupon ground his confidence that God would do for himself what He had promised.

Nor did his faith rest in the confidence he might have had in his own integrity of character. There is not the least intimation of this.

But positively, his faith rested on God's *veracity*. It does not appear that Abraham took into view anything else whatever as a ground of his faith, except the simple veracity of God. He simply relied on what God had said, because it was God who said it. God met him and told him certain things; he believed them, although they were apparently impossible. It was enough for him that God had said so. He rested in God as a being of veracity.

## II. CONDITIONS OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH

It is a very common thing for the conditions of faith to be confounded with faith itself. This is a fundamental mistake. For example, the rational recognition of God's natural and moral attributes is a condition of faith, but is not by any means faith itself. Unless a man sees and knows that God possesses the moral attributes ascribed to Him, he can see no ground for rational confidence in Him. How could Abraham have had confidence in God, if he had not believed in his natural and moral attributes? He must have believed this; else he could not rationally believe that God would and could fulfill His promises.

It is especially to be noted that Abraham must have had confidence in God's *moral attributes*, as a condition of faith. He must have believed that God is good; for of necessity this attribute of the divine character must be intellectually apprehended before the mind can rationally believe that God will certainly fulfill His promises. Hence the distinction between the conditions of faith and faith itself is really fundamental. One might intellectually apprehend these attributes as clearly as an angel in heaven does, and yet not have gospel faith.

Another condition of faith is the *promise of God*. It could have been no virtue in Abraham to believe that God would grant him a son, or give his posterity Canaan, if God had never promised to do so. God first revealed His covenant with Abraham, and connected with it precious promises; then a condition was fulfilled for faith on Abraham's part — *then*, but not before. In the same way the covenant of grace, clearly apprehended, as revealed of God, is a condition of saving faith now. When God in any way reveals the substance of this covenant — whether through dim types and prophecies as before Christ came, or in the broad blaze of gospel day as when He actually came, then the way is opened for the intelligent and acceptable exercise of gospel faith. No doubt Adam and Eve received sufficient revelation from God to lay a foundation for their faith. Eve obviously understood from the promise given in Genesis 3:15 that salvation from the power of Satan was to come through her posterity; for at the birth of Cain, the first born, she seems to have supposed that this was the promised seed. In this particular she was indeed mistaken; but not in her faith that God would bring salvation through her remote posterity. It is plain that both Adam and Eve received and believed at this time the revelations of divine mercy. The Lord was exceedingly kind towards them in His mode of convicting them of their first and great sin. How beautiful and how gracious that He should Himself clothe them to hide the shame of their nakedness! How significant too that this clothing should be of skins — of skins, which almost beyond question were taken from animals now for the first time slain for sacrifice! It seems most fitting that here for the first time the idea of sacrifice should be developed, and the race be taught in the person of Adam and Eve that “without the shedding of blood, there could be no remission for sin.” A most expressive and beautiful type! What could more forcibly express displeasure against sin — grace towards

the real sinner — and the substitution of an innocent victim in place of the guilty, as a ground for the grace shown the latter!

The covenant of grace to Abraham, God revealed yet more fully, thus expanding more distinctly His purposes of loving-kindness towards a sinning race, and making yet more distinct and definite this ground of saving faith.

### III. THE GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS OF SAVING FAITH. WHAT RELATIONS DID ABRAHAM'S FAITH SUSTAIN TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD?

Scripture answers by saying — “He counted it to him for righteousness.” It was set down — passed to his account, as righteousness — as if it were perfect obedience. Business men will understand this phrase, so current in their pecuniary transactions. A credit passed to a man's account — a receipt in full — accounted as full payment of his debt. The obvious meaning seems to be that God accepted Abraham's faith instead of that perfect obedience which had been before required. All men having fallen into sin, and hence come under condemnation, God passes to their credit the righteousness of Christ, as if Christ had passed to their credit in the bank of heaven enough to cancel all their debt.

It should never be forgotten that the ultimate ground of the sinner's justification is God's great and pure love. In love alone, the whole scheme had its origin.

Another condition of this governmental justification is that the sinner believes. The simple belief of this record, the heart yielding itself up to the control of the truth believed — this is the condition on which the full blessings of Christ's work are conferred.

In the case of Abraham, faith gave him, as indeed it does all believers, the full benefit of all the work comprised in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. All that Christ has done for the sinner becomes his on condition of his embracing it by faith. This is the *only* condition. Abraham

was to believe the promise before Christ actually came; all believers since Christ's death are to believe on Christ as actually come; in each case the condition is substantially the same; it is believing what God has said, and taking hold of His promise to rely upon it as truth.

The term righteousness, as used in this connection, denotes justification. This is its proper meaning. Abraham's faith, therefore, is accepted of him in the place of perfect obedience as the ground of his pardon. Thus pardoned, he can be treated as if he had not sinned. He had sinned, indeed, but under the economy of grace, he is treated governmentally as if he had not sinned. Governmentally, he is regarded as perfect. By this I do not mean that the law did not regard him as a sinner, for it did so regard him, and could not do otherwise. It could not blot from its tablets the record of his past sins, but it could, so to speak, pass to his credit the faith he had exercised, which is accounted to him for righteousness. On this ground the Law-giver can treat him not as sinful, but as righteous.

Yet here let it not be lost sight of, that, *providentially*, he may be and is still treated as a sinner. Under the providential, disciplinary government of God, he is regarded as a sinner — as yet imperfect, and needing discipline to improve his character and train him for heaven. Hence, while *governmentally* he is regarded as righteous and not doomed to hell, yet *providentially*, it is not forgotten that he has sinned, and that he still needs discipline to evolve and perfect the spirit and the habits of holiness.

## IV. ITS NATURAL RELATIONS AND RESULTS

**1.** It is naturally connected with *obedience*. It stands related to obedience by its very nature. Faith is confidence in God's veracity. This naturally leads the soul to obey all God's requirements.

Cases sometimes occur in which we may get from our own observation, very striking and just views of the nature of faith, psychologically considered. You may sometimes see persons give themselves up to another so completely as to believe everything they say, and be entirely controlled by their influence. I was much struck with this in the course of the Second Advent discussions. Some then seemed most manifestly to have unbounded confidence in all Mr. Miller said and believed. Often they

manifested a similar confidence in their sub-leaders. For example, I heard a man say — a man who I have reason to fear is a wicked man — “That woman will do just what I tell her to do, and I can make her believe anything I say.” This was said in her presence, and I had but too much reason to think that it was literally true.

During the progress of these scenes, I felt constrained to say to one lady — “I am afraid you will go to destruction; you have given yourself up to be led anywhere, and I do greatly fear this will not end short of plunging you in absolute ruin. You believe the most utter nonsense as strongly and firmly as if God Himself had met you and told you to believe it.”

This case may serve to illustrate the natural results of faith. Let one man commit himself to another as a leader and teacher, and the latter can lead him anywhere and anyhow he pleases. Let a soldier commit himself thus to his general; he can then be led right into the very jaws of death. So let confidence be cherished in another; its natural result will be to bring the confiding mind under the complete dominion of the mind confided in.

Such was the natural influence of Abraham’s faith. We see him hanging upon what God said, just like a child upon its parent. If anything happened to try him, we see him coming forth from the trial in the utmost simplicity of character. How beautiful and how noble to see him stand firm as a rock while the storms of temptation dash around his feet! So it is with real faith always. Abraham’s faith had in it nothing peculiar in character or in results. It was simple faith — nothing more.

**2. Faith naturally results in joy and peace.** The things believed are such that the mind cannot but feel the highest joy and the most quiet repose. If you really understand and believe what God says, why not feel at rest? What more need He say to inspire confidence in Himself? Who does not know that confidence in One believed to be able to save to the uttermost must assuredly inspire the rest of sweet repose — the joy of unalloyed confidence and trust? Verily, God has said everything we need to have said to make us feel that His promised protection is round about us as the mountains are round about Jerusalem. Has He not told us that His everlasting arms are underneath us evermore? And can we ever sink, sustained by such supports? Who does not know that simply to believe in all this, naturally results in peace, quietness, and assurance forever? Who

does not see that these results flow as naturally as any other results flow from their appropriate cause? Who can believe this good news, and not be greatly glad? Is not that joy both intense and abiding which springs from peace, deep and broad as a river, and from a righteousness which flows and rolls its mountain waves as the sea?

**3.** *This faith overcomes the world.* By this I mean that it overcomes the influence of the world upon the mind.

Let a man believe what is said of the future state; he will then deem it a small thing to be judged of man's judgment. But Oh! to stand right in the eye of the Great and final Judge — this will be his supreme concern. Let him only be assured of this, and all within is peace and joy. Let him only apprehend God's universal providence and put his trust in this all-present and all-controlling Deity; then all is peace and joy. Whether sick or well, it is all the same; nothing disturbs his peace; for he knows that under God's hand all things shall work together for his good. No matter whether he has much or little of earthly supply; he knows that he has just so much as is good for him, for the amount is wisely and kindly measured out to him by One who both knows and loves. He may enjoy honor, or dishonor; may have much learning, or none; all is well, if he knows that God has appointed all just as it is, and if he can thoroughly trust in all to be perfectly right. Be the circumstances what they may, he knows that what is infinitely wise and good is taking place and always will be. Now he has only to believe this, and it is all the same to him whether he have little, or much, or none at all of this world's good things. If he will only believe with unfaltering faith that all is wise and well, he has a key in his own bosom with which he can unlock all treasures.

Here is a professor of religion, under God's glorious government, fretting about a pin! Alas! what is the matter? He has lost a single pin! This is not the worst thing — he has lost his *faith!* I saw him one day in great trouble and anxiety of mind. It was a few days after his conversion, and then he seemed a bright and joyful convert; but he lost his way and fell into temptation. Alas! go and ask him now what is the matter. "I have lost my Jesus!" It is well that he knows it. Many do not seem to know it when the fact is most obvious to everybody else. Listen to the Psalmist, and mark the beauty and pertinence of his words. He sinks into the deep mire of the

Slough of Despond; yet opening his eyes somewhat to his condition, he cries out — “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.” He would excite his own soul to believe God, and hence he begins to arraign and catechise himself for his causeless unbelief. O, my soul, Why art thou cast down? Believe thou in God! Believe what? Believe *in God*. Believe that thou shalt still praise Him.

**4.** *Faith naturally overcomes the flesh.* If a man have faith, why shall he go about to gratify his appetites? Shall he make their gratification his chief good? Nay, verily. He will understand that the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink. If you see a man given up to the indulgence of his appetites, you see an unbeliever. You see one who does not apprehend the great things of the eternal world as living and all-controlling realities. He is under the dominion of his flesh. But faith breaks up this dominion, and asserts its own in its stead. What has faith to do with sensuality? What communion is there between light and darkness? What concord between Christ and Belial? Just the same as between faith and sensuality. Faith overcomes Satan. One who believes God knows that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Without faith, you are Satan’s dupe, Satan’s slave, Satan’s drudge; but faith in Jesus emancipates the soul from the dominion of his lies.

## REMARKS

- 1.** The faith of Abraham was purely a mental act. The apostle speaks of it curiously. “If Abraham were justified by works, he would have whereof to glory;” but now he has nothing of which to glory, and therefore he is not justified by works. Plainly he was not justified at all by works in the Jewish sense. It was not on the ground of certain external doings, but on the ground of his mental faith, that he was justified. The purely mental act of faith was the condition, itself antecedent to all external manifestations, and the condition of them. This faith is accounted to him for righteousness.
- 2.** Some confound the condition of faith with faith itself. Some just knowledge of God is doubtless an indispensable condition to the exercise

of faith; but this knowledge — this intellectual apprehension of God, is not to be confounded with faith itself.

**3.** Some look to something within themselves as the ground of faith. Consequently they attend continually to their own mental states, instead of looking up to God. They are evermore looking within at their state of feeling for evidence upon which they are to believe. Believe what? Not believe in themselves, but believe in God. Under the pretense of self-examination, they are forever playing the fool with themselves, and looking down, as they suppose, into the depths of their hearts, to find evidence on which to believe. God announces to them a truth, and says, Believe. They reply — I can believe that, if I can only get the evidence that I am in a right state of mind. But what is a right state of mind? A state of *faith*. Believing is the right exercise; nothing else is right. The great piety of Abraham, when brought out in the Bible, is simple belief — trust; this constitutes a right state of mind. He believed what God said, not on the ground of having certain right emotions and feelings, but because it was God who had said it. What if Abraham had said — O, I could believe all God has said, if I only had the evidence — of *what*? Do you want evidence that God is true? No, but I want evidence that I am in a right state of mind. Abraham was not such a fool as to back out of God's light into the darkness of his own mind, and draw a vail of thick darkness over and all round about him. No, it was enough for him that God had spoken, and that God was true.

It would really seem as if God was unable to say anything to Abraham which he would not believe. God almost seemed to tell him lies, to try his faith; but yet Abraham would believe. The Lord told him he should have a son; but still he went on in His providence as if He never meant to fulfill His promise. After Isaac was born and grown, He told Abraham to take him far away to a specified mountain, and there kill him! O, what a scene was that! Yet Abraham believed God. He knew that God could even raise his Isaac from the dead; hence, why should he fear to obey God, even when He gave such a command? If this man of God were among us in our prayer-meetings, would he do as some now do — be looking continually after his feelings? No; he would simply believe God.

Yet mark how sorely God tried him. “Take now,” said He, “thy son, thine only son Isaac,” (how every word sinks to the bottom of a parent's heart!)



take him away from his loved home, and from his fond mother — forever! Set off on this dreadful expedition tomorrow. One night intervened. Did the tried father sleep quietly as ever that night? If he did, it must have been the rest of faith. In the morning he rose, said not a word to Sarah; he could not have her sympathy, for (probably) he could not trust her faith against her maternal feelings. His own faith stood apparently, unflinching. The simplicity of his faith was the glory of his piety.

Yet Abraham had but few things to believe. If those full revelations made to us had been made to him, what a mighty, triumphant life he must have lived! In what a sunset of glory he must have died! Only a single ray fell from heaven upon his eye, yet his eye caught this one ray, and his heart believed. On that ray he kept his eye fixed continually. Oh, if he were to live now and among us, what would he think of our faith? What could he think of us, always prating over our unbelief as if we had not faith enough to keep us above the fear of hell!

**4.** What many Christians say is greatly calculated to stumble young converts. They seem not to have gone a step beyond babyhood. They are no more able to stand alone than a mere child, though counting the years of their Christian life, they ought for the time, to be men of adult age and of adult strength.

When a young convert sets out in the Christian life with a flood of emotions and these soon subside, it happens not seldom that he falls into deep trouble. Like a raw hand aboard ship, he shows but too soon that he is no sailor. A storm comes on, the mountain waves dash high — such a wind he never knew before — his knees smite together, and he cries out “Alas! I am lost, I am lost!” So the timid convert feels when he thinks he has lost his Jesus. The fact is he has only lost his faith. And perhaps this sad loss has befallen him because he was misguided by much older Christians, who should have strengthened his faith rather than weaken it.

How plain it is that God meant to confirm our faith and teach us to keep it always strong and earnest. Else why did He give us such a history as this of Abraham? Look at this man of living faith! See him pushing his way along with only one dim ray of light, yet firm as a rock amid the waves; steadfast, though all around be dark as death. But Oh, what a zigzag course many now pursue! Faltering now, and now turning aside to shun the lions

in the way; feeling their path along as if they could not trust the Mighty One who has said, "This is the way; go forward, and fear not, for I am with thee." How many such Christians would it take to promote a revival? Ten thousand of them would not promote one! In fact, the more there are, the worse for the cause of God; the greater the difficulties in promoting revivals where their influence is felt. O how weak and sickly they are! They need to be fed with a spoon like an infant. You might as soon march an army of invalids against Gibraltar, as lead such Christians out to conflict by prayer and faith in promoting revivals on religion. I can afford and endure to see infancy and weakness in young converts; but O, when I see old Christians still shut up to the diet and leading-strings of infants, it is so afflictive, so disheartening! To see them go round and round forever in a circle after their feelings, their feelings. What an abomination that they don't learn to walk by faith! A perfect state of the physical system doesn't make a man think much about his health. It leaves him to mind his appropriate business and seek the proper enjoyments of life. If his digestion is good, he never thinks of his stomach. Why should he? Perhaps he never knows from any sensations felt that he has any stomach. But if his digestion is bad, then alas! the poor man has enough to do in thinking of his troubled stomach. So of the sickly Christian. You see him perpetually troubled about his feelings, his feelings, like the invalid who runs to the glass to see his tongue! O when will such Christians learn to have faith, and be strong in the mighty God of Jacob.

**5.** That is a most unhealthy religion which is forever dwelling on views and frames and feelings. How is it in heaven? Are they thinking of their feelings and frames? No; they are so absorbed in the great objects before them that they are unconscious of the lapse of time. Perhaps a thousand of our years may pass over them and leave no consciousness of its having been a moment. Is this extravagant? No. Have you not been sometimes so engrossed that you could not mark the lapse of time at all? We mark time by noticing the succession of events. Have you not been so much engrossed as not at all to notice this succession? I recollect the case of a young convert in the northern part of New York State, who on one occasion prayed all night. When he came to consciousness of time and began to think what time it was, he was astonished to find it morning!

It is said of William Tennant that he rode all day in thought so profound that he never knew till he reached the end of his journey, that he had been bleeding profusely at the nose. Now in such cases, their own state is not the subject of thought at all. Of course they are far indeed from studying and watching over their own feelings.

This latter is, as I have said, a most unhealthy state. He who is forever dwelling upon his own spiritual frames, instead of being absorbed in the objects of faith, is a poor, spiritual dyspeptic. This thinking of his own frames, is the very thing which destroys his religion.

Suppose I go to England and leave my wife at home. Far away from her, I set myself to examine my feelings to see if I love my wife. I turn my mind away from her, and fasten it upon my love. I make this love the only and the all absorbing subject of my thought. What will be the result? Who does not know that the affection of love is correlated to its object? In this case my affection is correlated to my wife, and can not spring up and develop itself, except in view of its object. Hence I must think of my wife, if I would make it possible for the affection of love to develop itself.

Contemplation of the object is the condition of all manifestation of the affections. Consequently by turning my mind wholly away from the object, and then demanding that love to that object should manifest itself, I demand a natural impossibility. Let me do this and I might pronounce myself a stark hypocrite, and be as well employed as many Christians are who withhold their contemplations from God and all the proper objects of faith, and exercise themselves in scanning and trying to judge of their feelings. O what misguided efforts are these!

# THE WICKED HEART SET TO DO EVIL

*“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”  
— Ecclesiastes 8:11*

This text manifestly assumes that the present is not a state of rewards and punishments, in which men are treated according to their character and conduct. This fact is not indeed affirmed, but it is assumed, as it is also everywhere throughout the Bible. Everybody knows that ours is not a state of present rewards and punishments; the experience and observation of every man testifies to this fact with convincing power. Hence it is entirely proper that the Bible should assume it as a known truth. Every man who reads his Bible must see that many things in it are assumed to be true, and that these are precisely those things which every man knows to be true, and which none could know more certainly if God had affirmed them on every page of the Bible. In the case of this truth, every man knows that he is not himself punished as he has deserved to be in the present life. Every man sees the same thing in the case of his neighbors. The Psalmist was so astounded by the manifest injustice of things in this world, as between the various lots of the righteous and of the wicked, that he was greatly stumbled, “until,” says he, “I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end,”

It is also assumed in this passage that all men have by nature a common heart. One general fact is asserted of them all, and in this way they are assumed to have a common character. “The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” So elsewhere. “God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” This is the common method in which God speaks of sinners in His word. He always assumes that by nature they have the same disposition.

The text also shows what the moral type of the sinner’s heart is; “fully set to do evil.” But we must here pause a moment to inquire what is meant in our passage by the term “heart.”

It is obvious that this term is used in the Bible in various shades of meaning; sometimes for the conscience, as in the passage which affirms, “if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart,” and may be expected the more to condemn us; some times the term is used for the intelligence; but here most evidently for the will, because this is the only faculty of the mind which can be said to be set — fixed — bent, determined upon a given course of voluntary action. The will is the faculty which fixes itself upon a chosen course; hence in our text, the will must be meant by the term heart; for otherwise no intelligible sense can be put upon the passage. But in what direction and to what object is the will of wicked men fully set? Answer, to do evil. So God’s word solemnly affirms.

But, let it be said in way of explanation, this does not imply that men do evil for the sake of the evil itself; it does not imply that sinning, considered as disobedience to God, is their direct object — no; the drunkard does not drink because it is wicked to drink, but he drinks notwithstanding it is wicked. He drinks for the present good it promises — not for the sake of sinning. So of the man who tells lies. His object is not to break God’s law — but to get some good to himself by lying; yet he tells the lie notwithstanding God’s prohibition. His heart may become fully set upon the practice of lying whenever it suits his convenience, and of the good he hopes thus to gain; and it is in vain that God labors by fearful prohibitions and penalties to dissuade him from his course. So of stealing, adultery, and other sins. We are not to suppose that men set their heart upon these sins out of love to pure wickedness; but they do wickedly for the sake of the good they hope to gain thereby. The licentious man would perhaps be glad if it were not wicked to gratify his passion; but wicked though it is, he sets his heart to do it. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit; why? Because they saw it was beautiful, and they were told it would make them wise; hence, for the good they hoped to gain, and despite of God’s prohibition, they took and ate. I know it is sometimes said that sinners love sin for its own sake, out of a pure love of sin as sin, simply because it is disobedience to God. With a natural relish, as wolves love flesh; but this is not true — certainly not in many cases; but the simple truth is, men do not set their hearts upon the sin for its own sake, but upon sinning for the sake of the good they hope to get from it.

Notice particularly now the language — “heart fully set to do evil.” One man is avaricious; he sets his heart upon getting rich, honestly, if he can, but rich anyway; to get money by fair means if possible, but be sure and get it. Another is ambitious. The love of reputation fills and fires his soul, and therefore, perhaps, he becomes very religious — if religion is popular, but altogether selfish, and none the less so for being so very religious.

Selfishness takes on a thousand forms and types; but each and all are sinful, for the whole mind should give itself up to serve God and to perform every duty as revealed to the reason. What did Eve do? Give herself up to gratify her propensity for knowledge, and for the good of self-indulgence. She consented to believe the lying spirit who told her it was “a tree to be desired to make one wise.” This she thought must be very important. It was also, apparently, good for food, and her appetite became greatly excited; the more she looked, the more excited she became, and now what should she do? God had forbidden her to touch it: shall she obey God, or obey her own excited appetite? Despite of God’s command, she ate it. Was that a sin? Many would think it a very small sin; but it was real rebellion against God, and He could not do otherwise than visit it with His terrific frown!

So everywhere, to yield to the demands of appetite and passion against God’s claims, is grievous sin. All men are bound to fear and obey God, however much self-denial and sacrifice it may cost.

I said that selfishness often assumes a religious type. In the outset the mind may be powerfully affected by some of the great and stirring truths of the gospel; but it presently comes to take an entirely selfish view, caring only to escape punishment, and make religion a matter of gain. It is wonderful to see how in such cases the mind utterly misapprehends the design of the gospel, quite losing sight of the great fact that it seeks to eradicate man’s selfishness, and draw out his heart into pure benevolence. Making this radical mistake, it conceives of the whole gospel system as a scheme for indulgences. You may see this exemplified in the view which some take of the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, which they suppose to be reckoned to them while they are living in sin. That is, they suppose that they secure entire exemption from the penalty of violating law, and even have the honors and rewards of full obedience while yet they

have all the self-indulgences of a life of sin. Horrible! Were ever Romish indulgences worse than this?

Examine such a case thoroughly and you will see that selfishness is at the bottom of all the religion there is in it. The man was worldly before and is devout now; but devout for the same reason that he was worldly. The selfish heart forms alike the basis of each system. The same ends are sought, and sought in the same spirit; the moral character remains unchanged. He prays perhaps; but if so, he asks God to do some great things for him, to promote his own selfish purposes. He has not the remotest idea of making such a committal of himself to God's interests, and having no interests other than God's to serve at all.

To illustrate this point, let us suppose that a parent should say to his children — "I will give you my property if you will work with me, and truly identify your interests with mine; and if you are not willing to do this, I shall disinherit you." Now some of the children may take a perfectly selfish view of this offer, and may say within themselves — Now I will do just enough for father to get his money; I will make him think that I am very zealous for his interests, and I will do just enough to secure the offered rewards; but why should I do any more?

Or suppose the case of a human government which offers rewards to offenders on condition of their returning to obedience. The real spirit of the offer goes the length of asking the sincere devotion of their hearts to the best good of the government. But they may take a wholly selfish view of the case, and determine to accept the proposal only just far enough to secure the rewards, and only for the sake of the rewards. The Ruler wants and expects the actual sympathy of their hearts — their real good-will; and this being given, would love to reward them most abundantly; but how can He be satisfied with them if they are altogether selfish?

Now a man may be as selfish in praying as in stealing, and even far more wicked; for he may more grievously mock God, and more impiously attempt to bribe the Almighty to subserve his own selfish purposes. As if he supposed he could make the Searcher of hearts his own tool; he may insolently try to induce Him to play into his own hands, thus may most grievously tempt Him to His face.

But the text affirms that the heart of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Perhaps some of you think otherwise; you don’t believe in such depravity. O, says that fond mother, I think my daughter is friendly to religion. Do you think she is converted? O no, not converted, but I think she is friendly; — she feels favorably towards religion. Does she meet the claims of God like a friend to His government and to His reputation? I can not say about that. Ask her to repent and what does she say? She will tell you she cannot.

How striking the fact that you may go through the ranks of society and you will meet almost everywhere with this position; — the sinner says — “I cannot repent — I cannot believe.” What is the matter? Where is the trouble? Go to that daughter, thought to be so friendly to religion; — she is so amiable and gentle that she can not bear to see any pain inflicted; — but mark; — present to her the claims of God and what does she say? I cannot; no I cannot obey God in one of His demands, I cannot repent of my sin she says. But what is it to repent, that this amiable lady, so friendly to religion withal, should be incapable of repenting? What is the matter: Is God so unreasonable in His demands that He imposes upon you things quite impossible for you to do? Or is it the case that you are so regardless of His feelings and so reckless of the truth that for the sake of self-justification, you will arraign Him on the charge of the most flagrant injustice, and falsely imply that the wrong is all on His side and none on yours? Is this a very amiable trait of character in you? Is this one of your proofs that the human heart is not fully set to do evil?

You cannot repent and love God! You find it quite impossible to make up your mind to serve and please God! What is the matter? Are there no sufficient reasons apparent to your mind why you should give up your heart to God? No reasons? Heaven, earth, and hell may all combine to pour upon you their reasons for fearing and loving God, and yet you cannot! Why? Because your heart is fully set within you to do evil rather than good. You are altogether committed to the pleasing of self. Jesus may plead with you — your friends may plead; heaven and hell may lift up their united voices to plead, and every motive that can press on the heart from reason, conscience, hope and fear, angels and devils, God and man, may pass in long and flashing array before your mind — but alas, your



heart is so fully set to do evil that no motive to change can move you. What is this cannot! Nothing less or more than a mighty will not!

That amiable lady insists that she is not much depraved. O no, not she. She will not steal! True, her selfishness takes on a most tender and delicate type. She has most gushing sensibilities; she cannot bear to see a kitten in distress; — but what does she care for God's rights? What for the rights of Jesus Christ? What does she care for God's feelings? What does she care for the feelings and sympathies of the crucified Son of God? Just nothing at all. What then are all her tender sensibilities worth? Doves and kittens have even more of this than she. Many tender ties has she, no doubt, but they are all under the control of a perfectly selfish heart

Mother Eve too was most amiable. Indeed she was a truly pious woman before she sinned — and Adam no doubt thought she could be trusted everywhere; — but mark how terribly she fell! So her daughters. Giving up their hearts to a refined selfishness, they repel God's most righteous claims, and they are fallen!

So go through all the ranks of society and you see the same thing. Go to the pirate ship, the captain armed to the teeth and the fire of hell in his eye; — ask him to receive an offered Savior and repent of his sins, and he gives the very same answer as that amiable daughter does — he cannot repent. His heart too is so fully set within him to do evil that he cannot get his own consent to turn from his sins to God.

O this horrible committal of the heart to do evil! It is the only reason why the Holy Ghost is needed to change the sinner's heart. But for this you would no more need the Holy Ghost than an angel of light does. O how fearfully strong is the sinner's heart against God! Just where the claims of God come in he seems to have almost an omnipotence of strength to oppose and resist! The motives of truth may roll mountain high and beat upon his iron heart, yet see how he braces up his nerves to withstand God! What can he not resist sooner that submit his will to God!

Another thing lies in this text, incidentally brought out, — assumed but not affirmed; — viz. that sinners are already under sentence. The text says, "Because sentence is not executed speedily," implying that sentence is already passed and only waits its appointed time for execution. You who

have attended courts of justice know that after trial and conviction next comes sentence. The culprit takes his seat in the criminal's bench. The judge arises — all is still as death; — he reviews the case, and comes shortly to the solemn conclusion; — you are convicted by this court of the crime alleged, and now you are to receive your sentence. Sentence is then pronounced.

After this solemn transaction, execution, is commonly deferred for a period longer or shorter according to circumstance. The object may be either to give the criminal opportunity to secure a pardon, or if there be no hope of this, at least to give him some days or weeks for serious reflection in which he may secure the peace of his soul with God. For such reasons, execution is usually delayed. But after sentence, the case is fully decided. No further doubt of guilt can interpose to affect the case; the possibility of pardon is the only remaining hope. The awful sentence seals his doom — unless it be possible that pardon may be had, That sentence — how it sinks into the heart of the guilty culprit! “you are now,” says the judge, “remanded to the place from whence you came; there to be kept in irons, under close confinement, until the day appointed; — then to be taken forth from your prison between the hours of ten and twelve as the case may be, and hung by the neck until you are dead. And may God have mercy on your soul!” The sentence has passed now — the court have done their work; it only remains for the sheriff to do his as the executioner of justice — and the fearful scene closes.

So the Bible represents the case of the sinner. He is under sentence, but his sentence is not executed speedily. Some respite is given. The arrangements of the divine government require no court, no jury; — the law itself says — “the soul that sinneth, it shall die;” “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them;” so that the mandate of the law involves the sentence of law on every sinner — a sentence from which there can be no escape and no reprise except by a pardon. What a position is this for the sinner!

But next consider another strange fact. Because sentence is not executed speedily; because there is some delay of execution; — because Mercy prevails to secure for the condemned culprit a few days' respite, so that punishment shall not tread close on the heels of crime, therefore “the heart

of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” How astounding! What a perversion and abuse of the gracious design of the King in granting a little respite from instant execution!

Let us see how it would look in the case of our friend or neighbor. He has committed a fearful crime, he is arrested, put on trial, convicted, sentenced, handed over to the sheriff to await the day and hour of his execution. The judge says — I defer the execution that you may have opportunity to secure a pardon from the Governor. I assure you the Governor is a most compassionate man — he loves to grant pardons; he has already pardoned thousands; if you will give up your spirit of rebellion he will most freely forgive you all; I beg of you therefore that you will do no such thing as attempt a justification; — don’t think of escaping death otherwise than by casting yourself upon his mercy; don’t flatter yourself upon his mercy; don’t flatter yourself that there can be any other refuge.

Now suppose this man begins — “ I have done nothing — just nothing at all. I am simply a martyr to truth and justice! At all events, I have done nothing very bad — nothing that any government ought to notice. I don’t believe I shall be sentenced — (the man is condemned already!) I shall live as long as the best of you. So he sets himself to making excuses. He goes to work as if he was preparing for a trial, and as if he expected to prove his innocence before the court. Nay, perhaps he even sets himself to oppose and curse the government, railing at its laws and at its officers, deeming nothing too bad to say of them, indulging himself in the most outrageous opposition, abusing the very men whose mercy has spared his forfeited life! How would all men be shocked to see such a case — to see a man who should so outrage all propriety as to give himself up to abuse the government whose righteous laws he had just broken and then whose clemency he had most flagrantly abused! Yet this text affirms first this to be the case of the sinner, and all observation sustains it. You have seen it acted over ten thousand times; you can look back and see it in your own case. You know it is all true — fearfully, terribly true.

If it were in some striking, awful manner revealed to you this night that your soul is damned, you would be thunder-struck. You do not believe the simple declaration of Jehovah as it stands recorded on the pages of the Bible. You are continually saying to yourself — I shall not be condemned

at last — I will venture along. I will dare to tempt His forbearance yet. I do not at all believe He will send me to hell. At least I will venture on a season longer and turn about by and by if I find it quite advisable — but at present why should I fear to set my heart fully in the way God has forbidden?

Where will you find a parallel to such wickedness? Only think of a state of moral hardihood that can abuse God's richest mercies — that can coolly say — God is so good that I will abuse Him all I can; — God loves me so much that I shall venture on without fear to insult Him and pervert His long-suffering to the utmost hardening of my soul in sin and rebellion!

Let each sinner observe — the day of execution is really set. God will not pass over it. When it arrives, there can be no more delay. God waits not because He is in doubt about the justice of the sentence — not because His heart misgives Him in view of its terrible execution; but only that He may use means with you and see if He cannot persuade you to embrace mercy. This is all; — this is the only reason why judgment for a long time has lingered and the sword of justice has not long since smitten you down.

Here is another curious fact. God has not only deferred execution, but at immense cost has provided means for the safe exercise of mercy. You know it is naturally a dangerous thing to bestow mercy — there is so much danger lest it should weaken the energy of law and encourage men to trample it down in hope of impunity. But God has provided a glorious testimony in favor of law, going to show that it is in His heart to sustain it at every sacrifice. He could not forgive sin until His injured and insulted law is honored before the universe. Having done all this in the sacrifice of His own Son on Calvary, He can forgive without fear of consequences, only provided that each candidate for pardon shall first be penitent.

Now therefore, God's heart of mercy is opened wide and no fear of evil consequences from gratuitous pardons disturbs the exercise of mercy. Before atonement, Justice stood with brandished sword, demanding vengeance on the guilty; but by and through atoning blood, God rescued His law from peril — He lifted it up from beneath the impious foot of the transgressor, and set it on high in safety and glory; and now opens wide the blessed door of mercy. Now He comes in the person of His Spirit and invited you in. He comes to your very heart and room, sinner, to offer you

the freest possible pardon for all your sin. Do you hear that gentle rap at your door? “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me.” Look at those hands. Have they not been pierced? Do you know those hands? Do you know where they have been to be nailed through and through? Mark those locks wet with the dew. Ah, how long have they been kept without in waiting for the door to open! Who is it that comes? Is it the sheriff of justice? Has he come with his armed men to drag you away to execution? Oh no, no; but One comes with the cup of mercy in His hands; He approaches your prison-gate, His eye wet with the tear of compassion, and through the diamond of your grate He extends that cup of mercy to your parched lips. Do you see that visage, so marred more than any man’s — and are you only the more fully set to do evil? Ah, young man! alas, young woman! is such your heart towards the God of mercy? Where can we find a parallel to such guilt? Can it be found anywhere else in the universe but in this crazy world?

The scenes and transactions of earth must excite a wonderful interest in heaven. Angels desire to look into these things. O how the whole universe looks on with inquisitive wonder to see what Christ has done, and how the sinners for whom He has suffered and done all, requite His amazing love! When they see you set your heart only the more fully to do evil, they stand back aghast at such unparalleled wickedness! What can be done for such sinners but leave them to the madness and doom of their choice?

God has no other alternative. If you will abuse Him, He must execute His law, and its fearful sentence of eternal death. Suppose it were a human government and a similar state of facts should occur; who does not see that government might as well abdicate at once as forbear to punish? So of God. Although He has no pleasure in the sinner’s death, and although He will never slay you because He delights in it, yet how can He do otherwise that execute His law if He would sustain it? And how can He excuse Himself for any failure in sustaining it? Will you stand out against Him, and flatter yourself that He will fail of executing His awful sentence upon you? Oh, sinner, there is no possibility that you can pass the appointed time without execution. Human laws may possibly fail of execution: God’s laws can fail never! And who is it that says — “their judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not?”

## REMARKS

**1.** Let me ask professors of religion — Do you think you believe these truths? Let me suppose that here is a father and also a mother in this house, and you have a child whom you know and admit to be under sentence of death. You don't know but this is the very day and hour set for his execution. How much do you feel? Does the knowledge and belief of such facts disturb your repose? Now your theory is that the case of your children is infinitely worse than this.

A death eternal in hell you know must be far more awful than any public execution on earth. If your own son were under sentence for execution on earth, how would you feel? Professing to believe him under the far more awful sentence to hell, how do you in fact feel?

But let us spread out this case a little. Place before you that aged father and mother. Their son went years ago to sea. Of a long time they have not seen him nor even heard a word from him. How often have their troubled minds dwelt on his case! They do not know how it fares with him, but they fear the worst. They had reason to know that his principles were none too well fixed when he left home, and they are afraid he has fallen into worse and still worse society until it may be that he has become a bold transgressor. As they are talking over these things and searching from time to time all the newspapers they can find to get, if they can, some clue to their son's history, all at once the door bell rings; a messenger comes in and hands a letter; the old father takes it, breaks the seal — reads a word and suddenly falls back in his seat, the letter drops from his hand; — Oh he can't read it! The mother wonders and inquires; she rushes forward and seizes the fallen letter; — she reads a word and her heart breaks with agony. What's the matter? Their son is sentenced to die, and he sends to see if his father and mother can come and see him before he dies. In early morning they are off. The sympathizing neighbors gather round; all are sorrowful, for it is a sad thing and they feel it keenly. The parents hasten away to the prison, and learn the details of the painful case. They see at a glance that there can be no hope of release but in a pardon. The governor lives near, they rush to his house — but sad for them — they find him stern and inexorable. With palpitating hearts and a load on their aching

bosoms, they plead and plead, but all seems to be in vain. He says, Your son has been so wicked and has committed such crimes he must be hung. The good of the nation demands it and I cannot allow my sympathies to overrule my sense of justice and my convictions of the public good. But agonized parents must hold on. O what a conflict in their minds! How the case burns upon their hearts! At last the mother breaks out. Sir, are you a father? Have you a son? Yes, one son. Where is he? Gone to California. How long since you heard from him? Suppose he too should fall! Suppose you were to feel such grief's as ours, and have to mourn over a fallen son! The governor finds himself to be a father. All the latent sensibilities of the father's heart are roused within him. Calling to his private secretary, he says, make out a pardon for their son! O what a flood of emotions they pour out!

All this is very natural. No man deems this strange at all.

But right over against this, see the case of the sinner, condemned to an eternal hell. If your spiritual ears were opened, you would hear the chariot wheels rolling — the great Judge coming in His car of thunder; you would see the sword of Death gleaming in the air and ready to smite down the hardened sinner. But hear the professedly Christian father pray for his ungodly son. He thinks he ought to pray for him once or twice a day, so he begins; but ah, he has almost forgot his subject. He hardly knows or thinks what he is praying about. God says, pray for your dying son! Lift up your cries for him while yet Mercy lingers and pardon can be found. But alas! Where are the Christian parents that pray as for a sentenced and soon-to-be-executed son! They say they believe the Bible, but do they? Do they act as if they believed the half of its awful truths about sentenced sinners ready to go down to an eternal hell? Yet mark — as soon as they are spiritually awake, then how they feel! And how they act!

What ails that professor who has no spirit of prayer and no power with God? He is an infidel! What, when God says he is sentenced to die and His angel of death may come in one hour and cut him down in his guilt and sin, and send his spirit quick to hell, and yet the father or the mother have no feeling in the case? They are infidels; they do not believe what God has said.

2. Yet make another supposition. These afflicted parents have gone to the governor; they have poured out their griefs before him and have at last wrenched a pardon from his stern hands. They rush from his house towards the prison, so delighted that they scarcely touch the ground; coming near they hear songs of merriment, and they say, how our son must be agonized with company and scenes so unsuited and so uncongenial! They meet the sheriff. Who, they ask, is that who can sing so merrily in a prison? It is your own son. He has no idea of being executed; he swears he will burn down the governor's house; indeed he manifests a most determined spirit, as if his heart were fully set on evil. Ah, say they; that is distressing; but we can subdue his wicked and proud heart. We will show him the pardon and tell him how the governor feels. We are sure this will subdue him. He cannot withstand such kindness and compassion.

They come to the door; they gain admittance and show him the pardon. They tell him how much it has cost them and how tenderly the governor feels in the case. He seizes it, tears it to pieces and tramples it under his feet! O, say they, he must be deranged! But suppose it is only depravity of the heart, and they come to see it and know that such must be the case. Alas, they cry, this is worst of all! What! not willing to be pardoned — not willing to be saved! This is worse than all the rest. Well, we must go to our desolate home. We have done with our son! We got a pardon for him with our tears, but he will not have it. There is nothing more that we can do.

They turn sadly away, not caring even to bid him farewell. They go home doubly saddened — that he should both deserve to die for his original crimes, and also for his yet greater crime of refusing the offered pardon.

The day of execution comes; the sheriff is on hand to do his duty; from the prison he takes his culprit to the place of execution; the multitude throng around and follow sadly along; suddenly a messenger rushes up to say to the criminal — You have torn in pieces one pardon — but here is yet one more; will you have this? With proud disdain he spruns even this last offer of pardon! And now were are the sympathies of all the land? Do they say, how cruel to hang a young man, and for only such a crime? Ah, no; no such thing at all. They see the need of law and justice; they know that law so outraged must be allowed to vindicate itself in the culprit's execution. And



now the sheriff proclaims — “Just fifteen minutes to live;” — and even these minutes he spends in abusing the governor, and insulting the majesty of law.

The dreadful hour arrives, and its last moment — the drop falls; he trembles a minute under the grasp of Death, and all is still forever! He is gone and Law has been sustained in the fearful execution of its sentence. And all the people feel that this is righteous. They cannot possibly think otherwise. Even those aged parents have not a word of complaint to utter. They approve the governor’s course; they endorse the sentence. They say, we did think he would accept the pardon! But since he would not, let him be accursed.! We love good government, we love the blessings of law and order in society more than we love iniquity and crime. He was indeed our son, but he was also the son of the devil!

But let us attend the execution of some of these sinners from our own congregation You are sent for to come out for execution. We see the messenger; we hear the sentence read, — we see that your fatal hour has come. Shall we turn and curse God? No, NO! We shall do no such thing. When your drop falls, and you gasp, gasp, and die — and your guilty, terror-stricken soul goes wailing down the sides of the pit, shall we go away to complain of God and of His justice? No! Why not? Because you might have had mercy, but you would not. Because God waited on you long, but you only became in heart more fully set to do evil. The universe look on and see the facts in the case; and with one voice that rings through the vast arch of heaven, they cry — “Just and righteous are Thou in all Thy ways, Thou most Holy Lord God!”

Who says, this is cruel? What! Shall the universe take up arms against Jehovah? No. When the universe gather together around the great white throne, and the dread sentence goes forth — “Depart, accursed;” and away they move in dense and vast masses as if old ocean had begun to flow off — down, down, they sink to the depths of their dark home; but the saints with firm step yet solemn heart proclaim — “God’s law is vindicated; the insulted majesty of both Law and Mercy is now upheld in honor, and all is right!”

Heaven is solemn, but joyful; saints are solemn, yet they cannot but rejoice in their own glorious Father. See the crowds and masses as they

move up to heaven. They look back over the plains of Sodom and see the smoke of her burning ascend up like the smoke of a great furnace. But they pronounce it just, and have not one word of complaint to utter.

To the yet living sinner, I have it to say today that the hour of your execution has not yet arrived. Once more the bleeding hand offers Mercy's cup to your lips. Think a moment; — your Savior now offers you mercy. Come, O come now and accept it.

What will you say? I'll go on still in my sins? Then all we can say is that the bowels of divine love are deeply moved for you — that God has done all to save you that He wisely can do; God's people have felt a deep and agonizing interest in you and are ready now to cry, How can we give them up? But what more can we do — what more can even God do? With bleeding heart and quivering lip has Mercy followed you. Jesus Himself said — "How often would I have gathered you — O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! How often I would have saved you, but ye would not." Shall Jesus behold and weep over you, and say, "O that thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day — but now it is hidden from thine eyes." What, O dying sinner, will you say? Shall not your response be — "It is enough — I have dashed away salvation's cup long and wickedly enough — you need not say another word. O that bleeding hand! Those weeping eyes! Is it possible that I have withstood a Savior's love so long? I am ready to beg for mercy now; and I rejoice to hear that our God has a father's heart."

He knows you have sinned greatly and grievously, but O, He says — My compassions have been bleeding and gushing forth towards you these many days. Will you close in at once with terms of mercy and come to Jesus? What do you say?

Suppose an angel comes down, in robes so pure and so white; unrolls his papers, and produces a pardon in your name, sealed with Jesus' own blood. He opens the sacred book and reads the very passage which reveals the love of God, and asks you if you will believe and embrace it? What will you do?

And what shall I say to my Lord and Master? When I come to report the matter, must I bear my testimony that you would not hear? When Christ comes so near to you, and would fain draw you close to His warm heart,

what will you do? Will you still repeat the fatal choice, to spurn His love  
and dare His injured justice?

# VALEDICTORY SERVICES

*(Special farewell service for Finney conducted by Dr. John Campbell of London Tabernacle [of Whitefield])*

It is now our painful duty to announce the close of the evangelical labors, for the present, in England, of Mr. Finney. To complete our previous notices of this distinguished stranger, we shall, therefore, add the facts which have attended the termination of his services. Last Lord's-day morning he preached from James 2:22, —

“Seest thou how faith wrought with his works,  
and by works was his faith made perfect?”

The weather was favorable to attendance, and the congregation accordingly was large, although both the services of the day were signalized by one of those things which generally tend somewhat to winnow metropolitan assemblies, — collections were made at both times for the Christian Instruction Society. The subject of faith in relation to works is one with which Mr. Finney is peculiarly fitted to deal, and accordingly it was wrought out with consummate ability.

The subject is such, of course, as to admit of but little originality in its mode of treatment, and it was selected, not for exhibition, but for usefulness. The primary object was to state the truth comprised in the given text, and to press home its consequences. But only to have done this would not have fully met the demands of the occasion, in a day of general, superficial, cheap, and easy profession. The subject is one of immense importance in the economy of redemption, as entering fully into the very essence of true religion. It is a point on which millions have erred to their own eternal undoing. The error comprises two extremes: men on the one hand have relied on a faith that produces no works, and on the other they have rested on works that did not proceed from faith — works which had no regard to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Either extreme is alike certainly fatal to all who are the subjects of it. To prevent the occurrence of either evil is, therefore, the business of the public teacher, but this is not enough; it is also a matter of the utmost moment to recover such as are fallen into

one or other of these errors, and accordingly, this was not forgotten by Mr. Finney, who with characteristic penetration, distinguished between things that differ, and, with his accustomed point and vigor, pressed home the great lessons upon all whom the several matters concerned. The refuge of lies was swept away as with a hurricane, while the honest and earnest — those betaking themselves to works of faith and labors of love had much to encourage and fortify them. The Evangelical system was strikingly exhibited in all its grace and loveliness. The tendency of all such discourses must be to purify real religion and to elevate it. In the evening Mr. Finney took his text Acts 24:24 and 25. On this occasion the house was much crowded, and the preacher rose with the occasion. He has repeatedly equaled, but never exceeded, the power of the discourse then delivered. Blending a good deal of mental and moral philosophy, which was rendered subservient to theology, he came exceedingly close to the conscience of the audience. One copious passage fell with a weight on the assembly superior to anything we ever heard him utter, putting us in remembrance of some of those outbursts of intellect and emotion which were wont to characterize the preaching of Dr. Chalmers on great occasions, and which frequently signalize the pulpit labors of Mr. Parsons. After about an hour and a half of a mingled stream of argument and address, the preacher paused, giving place to the pastor, who addressed the assembly on certain matters of arrangement. This was followed by devotional services, when the congregation was dismissed, it being intimated that all who chose to remain for a further address might do so. Accordingly, overborne by heat and fatigue, a multitude withdrew; but when they were gone scarcely a sitting seemed to be left vacant, curiously exemplifying how closely human beings may be packed together.

It may be observed, that, as last Lord's-day was that appointed for taking the census, the audience was carefully counted, both morning and evening, by two individuals at each entrance, who took each a separate account, afterwards comparing their computations. The attendance in the morning was 2,100 and in the evening, in round numbers, 2,200; these numbers refer to adults, as the Sunday-schools were not present either morning or evening, there being for these a separate service.

The tea-meeting, at which upwards of 600 sat down, took place in the Royal British Institution, Cowper Street, City-road, Mr. and Mrs. Finney,

of course, being present. We say Mrs. Finney — for the wife of the great evangelist accompanies him. Not having had occasion till now to mention this excellent lady, it may be proper to say a word concerning her. This may be considered due to her own personal worth, and useful as serving to open her way elsewhere to humble efforts at public usefulness. Mrs. Finney is a woman of wholly kindred spirit with her husband; she sees everything in the same light, estimates all matters by the same standard, and by the same means seeks the same ends. Her heart is strongly set on advancing the kingdom of God, and to that end, like him, she perseveringly labors. She established the daily morning female prayer-meeting, which has been held in the Tabernacle for this last nine months, and over which she has, while in London, uniformly presided. In addition to this, she has on a number of occasions addressed meetings of mothers and other females in the Tabernacle and in other places, besides occasionally addressing Ragged and other schools, and Temperance Societies. In this and other ways Mrs. Finney is in a high degree a helpmate for her husband.

The Tea-meeting occupied from five to seven o'clock, when, for the accommodation of the friends assembled, and others expected to join, although unable to attend the tea-meeting, the assembly adjourned to the Tabernacle, which was very considerably filled, both in the pews and in the galleries. After the devotion exercises, in which Dr. Brown, of Cheltenham offered prayer, the Pastor in the chair, having addressed the meeting on subjects which had been suggested by the occasion, turning to Mr. Finney, said —

My dear Friend, you must now for a moment allow my character of president to merge into that of representative of a body of people among us to whom you are peculiarly dear. You will, therefore, please to consider me as their embodiment. Whatever I now feel, speak, and do, you will kindly consider as felt, spoken, and done by them. They are anxious to assure you, that by them you will never be forgotten; and they are very unwilling that they should be forgotten by you. They have, therefore, devised a means by which, in some measure, to prevent this: they have provided the copy you see in my hands of the English Hexapla, comprising the Greek Text of the New Testament, with six translations subjoined, in which is inscribed the following: —

Presented to the Rev. C. G. Finney, as a token of respect and affection, by his friends in the Tabernacle, London. March 31, 1851, on his departure for his native land.

Permit me, then, my dear brother, to present to you this book in their names, as a memorial of your British visit and of your London friends. The thing and the deed are both to be considered solely as monumental — as “*in memoriam*.” It will serve at times to remind you of another clime and of other men than those of the New World. It will also serve to apprise your posterity that their ancestor visited the Fatherland in 1851, and that there it pleased God to give him favor in the eyes of many of the excellent of the earth, and to honor him through the conversion of souls to add to their numbers. Accept, then, the book as a token of love. Such it is — nothing more — nothing less. The question of its pecuniary value was wholly excluded from yours. Its character is altogether spiritual; its object is entirely moral; you will accept it in the same spirit in which it is given, with the strong desire, with the earnest prayer on their part that you may continue for many years to publish its truth with increasing success, fidelity, and power, and that through life, and at the close of life, its doctrines may be your support and your consolation.

Dr. Campbell, then turning to Mrs. Finney, said,

My dear Friend, will you permit me to beg that you will apply to yourself what has just been uttered respecting your husband. As every way one, you cannot be separated, and assuredly it is not the wish or intention of those whom I now represent to attempt it. But, although one, you have your distinct personal identities, attributes, characters, and claims. I have, then, to assure you, on their behalf, that you are highly esteemed, not simply for your husband’s sake, but for your own. Those who have been privileged to hold intercourse with you, and to share your friendship, highly prize your worth, and greatly respect your character. They have also witnessed with delight your anxiety to be useful, and the efforts you have made for that purpose, both among ourselves and through the locality. They will long remember you, and they desire that you should not wholly forget them. To prevent this, as far as may be, they adopt the same method towards yourself as your husband. I hold in my hands, the condensed Commentary of Ingram Cobbin, the best production of its class

in the English tongue, bearing an inscription, the exact counterpart of that presented to your husband: —

Presented to Mrs. C. G. Finney, as a token of respect and affection, by her friends in the Tabernacle, London. March 31, 1851, on her departure to her native land.

Allow me, then my dear Friend, to place this in your hands, and to beg your acceptance of it as a token of Christian affection. When far away from the white cliffs of Albion, it will remind you of intercourse which was profitable to others, and, it is to be hoped, pleasant to yourself. It will remind you of a place where prayer was wont to be made, in which you had long the privilege to lead or join. It will tell your children and your children's children, that their revered mother was once in England, and had friends in the Mother Country who prized her worth, and were stimulated by her zeal.

Turning to the audience, the Chairman said: In looking to these two beautiful and invaluable volumes, I am strikingly reminded of the fact of the decease of both the men whose honored names are inseparably connected with them — Samuel Bagster, as the projector of the English Hexapla, and Ingram Cobbin, as the author of the Condensed Commentary. In connection with the subject of the Scriptures, Bagster and Cobbin are by far the two most remarkable men of their own time. Bagster founded the most complete Bible establishment the world has seen; and for intense, prolonged, and useful labor, on the sacred Scriptures, Ingram Cobbin had no equal among his contemporaries. Cobbin is no more; he rests from his labors, and his works follow him. The turf was only just placed on his honored grave, when it was announced that Bagster had followed him. The venerable publisher died last week, and is still unburied. Peace to their ashes, and honor to their memories! My friends will excuse this digression, and perhaps, consider that it is not wholly impertinent to the occasion. There is something due to the memories of those who have been distinguished as the benefactors of mankind upon a scale which embraces all nations and which will extend to a distant posterity; and more especially is it meet and grateful, while inscribing tablets to the worth of the living, that we should pay a passing tribute to the wisdom and the virtues of the dead who have aided us in our enterprise.



But let me now, before I close, ascend for a moment from the particular and more personal to more general views and endeavor to impress on you the fact, that this is not simply a night of friendly valediction. It is also, or it ought to be, a night of solemn individual self-inquisition. A voice is now sounding in the ears of the assembly: "Let them assuredly know that a prophet has been among them!"

You have for a long period been receiving from the lips of a stranger, instructions the most precious, warnings the most solemn, enforced by considerations the most tender. You have been plied with every consideration that love, knowledge, and experience could devise. All the resources of Scripture, fact, and argument have been brought to bear upon you, with a view to detach you from the world, and bring you to the Lord. In no other spot in Europe, perhaps, no other on the earth, during the same long period, has there been such an amount of evangelical labor put forth upon such a multitude of people. Six nights a week the doors of this edifice have been thrown open, its walls have literally never cooled; and what is to be the issue? So far as Mr. Finney is concerned, this stupendous effort of pulpit toil is at an end. Another service, and he is on the mighty waters, speeding his way for the land of the Pilgrim Fathers, to meet with the bulk of you no more till you meet in the solemn judgment! What is the day to declare? What will eternity reveal? Who among you are to prove his joy at the final audit? When the Lord shall write up the people, of whom will it be heard, this man, and that man, and the other, were born there?

Concerning whom shall he say, "Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me?" May the result to him, to you, and to all that have heard him, be glory and joy for evermore!

It was my wish for many years that Mr. Finney should visit the shores of England. His works had come before him, and, when his Lectures on Revivals appeared, I read them with avidity, and, as a portion of you will remember, for three months, from week to week, at special meetings, I read and expounded them in this edifice. Their value was not in my estimation at all lessened by their peculiarities, and by what might be called, not without truth, their occasional extravagance, both of thought and of language. These I considered, and still consider, but as the dust in the balance — as spots in the sun! The volume, as a whole, I have ever viewed as of extraordinary importance. The more I pondered, the more I perceived

its inherent excellence. The book excited a very strong desire in me to see the man, and still more to hear him. The man I have seen, the man I have heard, and in both, the expectations excited by the book have been more than realized. But I have not only seen and heard him: after the manner of the Ancients, we have eaten salt together. You all know the adage, "If you will know a man you must live with him." Mr. Finney and I have lived together for the space of some nine months, a period which, I suppose, will be admitted sufficient for the purpose in question. I think I may, therefore, say I have a tolerable knowledge of him, and that it is but simple justice to say that to increase knowledge has been only to increase regard. Throughout that long period, we have seen in him much to love and much to admire. I shall never cease to prize his friendship and to think of him with unalloyed satisfaction and high pleasure. His virtues partake not a little of the old Roman, while his manners are strongly Republican. In everything good the reality exceeds the appearance, and, as the observation becomes closer, the esteem ascends.

But, it is incumbent on me, in the present occasion, to say something on the subject of Mr. Finney's Theology; circumstances render this imperative. My own creed is, I believe, generally considered sound. I swear by the sacred scriptures, their plenary inspiration, and their supreme authority, holding, with a firm grasp, those views of their import which have ever characterized the Nonconformists of England. This is by me confessed; it is my boast and glory! While I call no man on earth master, I hesitate not to declare my very general concurrence with that illustrious body of men, the most distinguished class of Britain's sons, the Puritans and Nonconformists of England. Such are my views and my avowal of them. Now there are those — and among them people of sense and worth — who think that Mr. Finney and I preach very different gospels. These have expressed their sorrow and amazement that he should have so long occupied the pulpit of this ancient edifice. Those worthy people are much mistaken, if they refer to *principles*: I am not aware of any tenet of revelation connected with the hope of man on which we differ. We may differ in our views of many Scriptures, and in modes of stating many truths, and the proportions in which such truths ought to be combined and presented. On these points we may differ; we do differ; but that difference, while a fact, is a proof of nothing but itself. I may think

Mr. Finney would be improved, in some respects, by leaning a little more in my direction; and it is just possible my friend will conclude, that I should be improved by leaning a little more in his; and who is to decide? However, I believe we are both right. Were I to commence Evangelist tomorrow, I would most assuredly, to a great extent, run in the view of Mr. Finney, the propriety, the expediency, and the necessity of which have been thoroughly made out under my own observation. On the other hand, were Mr. Finney to become a settled pastor tomorrow, I think it is just possible that he would pursue the course which is now pursued by the bulk of the best of English ministers. For special efforts I think his method incomparable; for settled pastorship I should deem it very defective. I view the ministrations of Mr. Finney as partaking of a special character; I look upon them as admirably adapted, as special means, to accomplish a special end. The thing, however, is not to be determined by prior reasoning, it must be tested by its harmony with the Divine examples, and by its results as indicative of Divine approbation. I have encountered considerable obloquy in some quarters, on account of the course I have pursued with respect to Mr. Finney; but assuredly none of these things move me. So far as I can judge, with the amplest means of ascertaining the fact, his creed is as sound, in all radical matters, as that of John Owen. Even his opponents being judges, Mr. Finney's faults have been mainly of a negative character. The regrets which have been felt — the regrets in which I have occasionally shared — have arisen not from what he has said, but from what he did not say. When he has been with his own peculiar vigor, "breaking up the fallow ground" of the human heart, it has been lamented that he did not, at the same time, both plough and sow; but Mr. Finney had his reasons for his course, although these reasons were not always understood. What he did not state it was presumed he denied; but I need not tell the bulk of you, that when Mr. Finney did preach the gospel no man ever preached it more fully or more purely. The noble specimen of yesterday morning is still fresh in your memory.

I reflect with the utmost satisfaction on the course I have pursued respecting Mr. Finney, and cannot doubt but that it has the approval of the Master of us both. Would that everything else I have done in connection with his cause were as sure to obtain from His lips — "Well done!" I have not hesitated, both with tongue and pen, to defend Mr.

Finney, and to promote the success of his labors to the utmost of my power. In all I have done I do rejoice, and will rejoice. I ask, on Mr. Finney's behalf, candor and inquiry. Let this be granted and I seek no more. For a long period I have stood alone in the face of the public in the character of advocate; now, however, I find myself in the company of such as I highly value, and such as serve largely to fortify me as the advocate of our American friend and his potent labors. Dr. Redford, of Worcester, as a theologian second to none in these realms, has boldly prefixed his name to the English edition of Mr. Finney's Theology, just about to appear under the respectable auspices of Mr. Tegg. Dr. Redford has prefixed to the volume a preface, which I now hold in my hand, and a portion of which I will read to you;

“The Editor having had the pleasure and honor of forming a personal acquaintance with the Author soon after his arrival in this country, did not long remain ignorant of his Theological Lectures. After the first hasty perusal of them, he ventured strongly to recommend their publication, both for the sake of making the British churches better acquainted with the Author's doctrinal views, and also on account of the direct benefit which students, and other inquirers into the theory of Gospel doctrines, would be likely to derive from a work so argumentative, and so unlike all the works on systematic and dogmatic theology known to the English schools. After due consultation and deliberation, the Author pressed upon the Editor the work of revision, and placed the lectures in his hands with the request, that he would read them carefully, and suggest such alterations as he might deem desirable to adapt the work to the English reader; and then submit the whole to the Author's adoption or rejection.”

“There is another important circumstance with which the reader should be made acquainted, which will enhance the value of this edition, and render it highly preferable to the American; it is this, on the publication of these Lectures they attracted the attention of many able theologians in America, and were severely attacked by the periodical press. The Author replied at considerable length to the most learned and distinguished of his critics, fairly and fully meeting every objection that had been urged against his views. The

present edition incorporates the substance of these objections with the replies of the Author.”

“The Editor, however, would not have ventured to recommend the publication of these Lectures in this country, if he had not deemed them, as a whole, eminently deserving the attention and examination of British theologians. When they first came into his hands they struck him as so pleasingly unlike all the other systems of dogmatic theology and moral philosophy it had ever been his lot to peruse, so thorough in their grappling with difficulties, and often so successful in the solution of them; so skillfully adjusted to modern metaphysical speculations, and so comprehensive of what is valuable in them; so manifestly the production of a masculine intellect and independent thinker, that he was not only pleased with the air of freshness and originality thrown over old themes of dry and elaborate discussion, but greatly benefited and instructed by some of the Author’s views of important moral and theological questions. It may not be the same with all the Author’s English readers; but assuredly few will rise from the perusal of the whole work without confessing that, at least, they have seen some points in a new and impressive light, have been constrained to think more closely of the opinions they hold, and in other respects have been benefited by the perusal.”

“As a contribution to theological science, in an age when vague speculation and philosophical theories are bewildering many among all denominations of Christians, this work will be considered by all competent judges to be both valuable and seasonable. Upon several important and difficult subjects the Author has thrown a clear and valuable light which will guide many a student through perplexities and difficulties which he had long sought unsuccessfully to explain. The Editor frankly confesses, that when a student he would gladly have bartered half the books in his library to have gained a single perusal of these Lectures; and he cannot refrain from expressing the belief, that no young student of theology will ever regret the purchase or perusal of Mr. Finney’s Lectures.”

“One recommendation he begs respectfully to offer to all readers whether old or young; it is this, suspend your judgment of the Author and his theology until you have gone completely through his work. On many subjects, at the outset of the discussion, startling pro positions may be found which will clash with your settled opinions; but if you will calmly and patiently await the Author’s explanation, and observe how he qualifies some strong and novel assertions, you will most probably find in the issue, that you have less reason than you supposed to object to his statements.”

“In many respects, Mr. Finney’s theological and moral system will be found to differ both from the Calvinistic and Arminian. In fact, it is a system of his own, if not in its separate portions, yet in its construction; and, as a whole is at least unique and compact; a system which the Author has wrought out for himself with little other aid than what he has derived from the fount itself of heavenly truth, and his own clear and strong perception of the immutable moral principles and laws by which the glorious Author of the Universe governs all His intellectual creatures.”

Now, my friends, what say you to this? Is not this going as far as I ever went on the subject of Mr. Finney’s Theology? This seems a tolerable testimony to be borne by such a man as Dr. Redford to a Republican heretic! But, seriously, Mr. Finney is a man of no human school; he has framed his own chart, and made his own compass; but, notwithstanding this, it will be found, that he is a safe guide on the ocean to eternity. For his special work, what many worthy people have deemed his defects, are really his excellencies, and constitute, in no small degree his strength. To point out the advantages which have arisen from this would take more time than we can now afford, and therefore I shall not attempt it. Suffice it to say, that in this way he has commanded attention, excited inquiry, and awakened fears for the world to come, which could not have been awakened by a simple, polished, stereotype exhibition of the common salvation, as it is generally administered in these realms. Of the acceptance of his ministry in this city I need say nothing; the result is before the world. No such experiment has been made on the population of the great Metropolis in our times; and, so far as numbers and continued attendance

are concerned, the experiment has been complete. Had a Council of the Ancients, as wise and experienced men in matters appertaining to Metropolitan religion, at the close of March, last year, been converted, and their opinion solicited as to the likelihood of success, it is highly probable, that, with one consent, they would have predicted its utter failure, — they would have foretold the impossibility of any man whatever commanding audiences such as he has commanded so frequently, and through so long a series of months. Had these reverend councilors, before they began to deal with the question, been permitted to hear Mr. Finney deliver one of his “fallow-ground” manifestoes, they, of a certainty, would have predicted, that before two months, he would have fairly scattered the largest congregation in London, and have been in a position to present the keys to the masters of the concern, to prevent further damage to the edifice. So blind is man, and so difficult is it to ascertain the springs which govern the human mind.

I must close my observations by reciting to you the draft to the letter which it is proposed to hand to Mr. Finney, as expressive of the sentiments you entertain towards him, which, if it meet your approval, will be signed by the Pastor and Office Bearers, and communicated to our friend. The proposed draft is as follows:

“Dear and Honored Sir, We cannot suffer you to return to the land of your Fathers without expressing to you the pleasure we have derived from your visit. Your spirit and speech, while they have oft-times not a little contributed to reprove and to condemn, have also served to animate and cheer us. Your enlightened zeal for the salvation of men has been rendered instrumental in firing many hearts that required to be animated, and in giving fresh impulse even to those that were previously valiant for the truth. Your vigorous, pungent, faithful ministrations have greatly tended to quicken believers; while your broad, luminous, and impressive exhibitions of the great doctrine of Repentance towards God have been made extensively the means of awakening the careless to a sense of their danger, and of leading them to flee from the wrath to come. We have witnessed with delight, often not unmingled with astonishment, your *self-consuming* and *unwearied efforts* for the salvation of the perishing, and *greatly rejoice in the manifold tokens*

*of success* on all sides which are already apparent, while there is the utmost reason to look on what is known as only the *first fruits* of a *coming harvest*.

“But, beloved Brother! while rejoicing in the profit which has redounded to ourselves as a flock, to many of our families, to a portion of our congregation, and residents in our immediate locality, we reflect with special satisfaction on the benefit which we have grounds to believe will result to other churches in our neighborhood, and throughout the city. There is on all hands proof abundant that your labor in the Lord has not been in vain; but that your visit to England has been one of the most useful periods of your laborious life.

“You will, therefore, dear and honored Sir, accept this expression of our sincere and most cordial thanks for all your intense endeavors to advance the Kingdom of God in our midst, together with the assurance of our grateful esteem. You leave our country bearing with you the affectionate confidence of multitudes, who will pray for journeying mercies to you, both by land and sea; and that, with your dear and much esteemed companion, Mrs. Finney, you may reach your home in safety, and find all well.

“Wishing you and yours grace, mercy, and peace, and every blessing of the New Covenant, we remain, dear and honored Sir, on behalf of the Church and congregation assembling in this house, yours most truly in the bonds of the Gospel.”

Mr. Edward Selby then moved the following resolution: —

That the draft of the letter now read be transcribed, signed by the Pastor and Officers, and transmitted to Mr. Finney.

Mr. Henry Child, with great cordiality, rose to second the resolution. They did not exactly agree with their friend Mr. Finney on all points; but they believed he had preached to them the glorious Gospel of Christ, and that in the way in which he had been taught by the Holy Spirit. They were satisfied he was doing God’s work, and it was impossible that independent minds should on all points see with one another; it was only the noodles of the earth who saw eye to eye on every matter, and subscribed



unreservedly to creeds, and catechisms, and even to the dots of the i's and the crosses of the t's.

The resolution was then put to the meeting upstanding, and carried unanimously; but on the contrary being put, a number stood still; this, however, was explained, amidst considerable merriment, by a gentleman who called out from the crowd, — “We are only standing because we are obliged to do so.”

Mr. Finney then rose to reply, and was received with the most enthusiastic applause, which was suppressed by the pastor, on the ground that it incommoded Mr. Finney. After a few introductory remarks with reference to the novelty of the position he occupied, he proceeded to detail the circumstances which led him to visit this country. His ancestors were English. New England was peopled by the English from whom he was descended. In New England they had all our names, customs, and, to a large extent, held our views. In England he felt at home in almost every respect, so far as the people were concerned. His lectures on revivals — the book which had been published in this country — were delivered some twelve or thirteen years ago, and were reported at the time by the Editor of the *New York Evangelist*, and were published in successive numbers of that journal. He thought it necessary to state that he did not see those lectures until they were in print; but that before they were gathered up into a volume, he had just glanced through them to correct any serious errors that he might happen to meet with. This volume was published in England by Mr. Tegg. The consequence was, that many persons interested in the subject wrote to him from all parts of the United Kingdom, and this correspondence gave rise to a desire in his mind to visit England. About this time his health so failed as to compel him to desist from his labors as evangelist, and he accordingly took the pastoral oversight of a church in New York, and has continued to sustain the pastoral office ever since. His church and congregation at Oberlin was one of the largest in America. He understood, therefore, very well, what Dr. Campbell meant by the difference between the labors of an evangelist and those of a pastor. He had labored eighteen years as a pastor, but it was always on the condition that a portion of the year should be devoted to his labors as an evangelist. He could not tell them how much he had been affected by the number of persons from all parts of the United Kingdom whom he had met in

America, and who testified to the benefit they had derived from the perusal of his works, — more especially of his Lectures; and it was the interest which these circumstances had excited that induced him to come. For a time he was prevented by the state of his health, and then by his public duties; but for the last twelve years he had been constantly entertaining the idea of coming, and he had accordingly taken the first opportunity at which God had seemed to open the way. On arriving in England, as Dr. Campbell had said, he passed straight through London, and went down into Huntingdonshire. He soon afterwards came up and preached several sermons at the Borough-road Chapel. Then he returned to the Provinces, and labored first in Huntingdonshire, then in Birmingham, and subsequently in Worcester. Various rumors were circulated respecting him, and the first minister he saw told him that reports were circulated that he (Mr. Finney) had become an infidel! Now, this minister had himself been rescued from infidelity by the perusal of his works! Before he had been long in Birmingham, Mr. James received various letters calling in question his orthodoxy; some said he was a Unitarian, some a low Arminian, and some a Perfectionist; and all united in warning Mr. James lest he should aid in the diffusion of heresy! But he appealed to Mr. James, whose position in the matter had assumed importance, at once to satisfy himself, and forthwith to pronounce upon the matter. Mr. James had abundant opportunities of hearing him, but not satisfied with this, he handed him two volumes of his “Theology,” wherein the said errors were reported to be found. These volumes Mr. James and Dr. Redford, of Worcester — in whose logical and theological acumen Mr. James had great confidence — submitted to three days careful examination. So satisfied were they with their general soundness and accuracy, that Dr. Redford urged their publication in this country for the benefit of the British public. Subsequently, he went to preach for Dr. Redford, when the subject again came up, and he handed his volumes to the Doctor, with the request that he would go through them, and make such criticisms and corrections as would enable him to make himself understood by British theologians. This Dr. Redford did; and without his solicitation, had also, at the instance of the publisher, consented to have his name appear on the title page as Editor.

Dr. Campbell: It ought to be known that I advised Mr. Finney to get Dr. Redford, who had read the work to write a preface, but he said, "Let the book go alone, and stand on its own merits." Mr. Tegg, however, knew his business better, and secured it.

Mr. Finney: The present publication by Mr. Tegg contains only a part of my Theological system, which was necessary to meet the necessities of my theological class in their preparation for theological examination; and further, the Oberlin edition, as Dr. Campbell observes, was not very nicely got up. In fact, the firm to whom the printing was entrusted had but just commenced business, and this was the first book they ever produced. I myself wrote them under so great a pressure, that I could not edit it properly, so that that portion of the labor was committed to other hands. I wrote them at the rate of one a day, in the midst of all my other duties, and therefore it is not to be wondered at if they needed revision. I have no doubt you may find errors even in the present English edition; but those who know what I have been doing here, will find sufficient excuse in the multiplicity and continuity of my engagements. I may just observe, that, although I am not pecuniarily interested in the sale of this work, which is the property of the Publisher, yet I am interested — and deeply interested — in its being read. I want people to read it and to judge for themselves.

But I never meant to speak so much of myself. The fact is, I never attended a meeting of this kind before, or any meeting of which I was myself so much the subject. As to the manner in which I have been received in this country, I may say that I have been greatly affected by the way in which I have been treated, especially by those ministers and others with whom I have become personally acquainted. I have felt myself more and more at home amongst you, and more and more united to all Christians. Let me say with respect to Dr. Campbell, as he spoke of me so freely, that Mr. James said to me, "I want to have you see Dr. Campbell. I think you will find in him a kindred spirit in the work in which you are engaged." Dr. Redford also said, "I want you to go to the Tabernacle, for Dr. Campbell will stand by you." He also intimated that Dr. Campbell was "not afraid." (Great laughter.) Now, I wanted to find a man who could stand fire. (Increased laughter.) I know that a minister, to stand by me under such circumstances, must have some brass in his face, and some firmness in his heart, and a strong determination to stand for the sake of

truth. I have now lived nine months in the Doctor's family, and I always love to live with the pastor with whom I labor, that I may get at his heart daily, and he at mine, so that if there be any running to and fro and talking, we may understand each other, — I have been, as I said, nine months in his house, and I can most cheerfully reciprocate what he has said of me, — the more I know him, the more I love him." That he would agree with me in all things I never expected. I have my own views, and I express them freely, and I allow my brethren to do the same. I do not say, I will not tolerate them because they do not agree with me; for if they do not agree with me, it is because I do not agree with them. Nevertheless, I call no man a heretic who maintains the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and such a man I cordially love. If he holds the fundamental truths of the Gospel, I bid him God-speed. I have published my views with pen and voice, and expect others to do the same. However some may prefer to see every truth together and adhere unreservedly to a stereotyped orthodoxy, independent minds cannot do so, so long as the progress of mind is what it is. Again, it is all the more honorable to religion when it is found that men holding diverse views can bid each other God-speed in the great work. Because they have the same aim they unite; and, if they do not exactly agree, yet they do not quarrel.

I have my own way of doing things, and can do them in no other man's way. Of course, a man must be crazy to undertake the pastoral office, and set about the work as a mere Evangelist would. I plough my own church up afresh every year, but I do not confine myself to that species of labor. My discourses have embraced a very extensive range, which, of course, I should neither have had time nor inclination to accomplish had I been simply an Evangelist.

For my dear wife, to whom, with myself, you have presented these beautiful volumes, — for which I most cordially thank you, — I must say, that we have found warm and loving hearts here. We have met with a greeting which has greatly delighted us in Dr. Campbell's family. We have seen the hand of God in that family, and we shall never forget it as long as we remember anything.

Mr. Finney concluded his address by a pathetic appeal to the young converts, whom he urged to come forward and announce themselves to Dr.

Campbell and his officers. This, he said, was simple justice to them, that they might glorify God for the success which had attended their efforts. He then went into copious details of his own emotions towards the spot on which he was converted, and described his grief at finding the beautiful grove transformed into a simple field. He could not take his leave of them on that occasion, as he hoped to address them once more on Wednesday (this evening). He would not indulge in any appeal to their sensibilities. When he left them his heart would still remain with them; his body departed, but his heart remained; and when he was pushing away o'er the mighty deep, he asked them to pray that the Lord would bless and preserve them, and give the winds and the waves a charge concerning them, that they injure them not.

Dr. Brown, of Cheltenham, who had been an interested auditor during the lengthened service, on the stroke of ten o'clock, received intimation from the pastor, that the few closing minutes would be accorded to him; and the Doctor, in standing up, intimated that the eyes of multitudes in all parts of the kingdom were now being directed towards this spot, and that they were anxiously waiting the result of these special movements, apprising the converts, that they, in a great measure, held the honor of the movement and of those concerned in it in their own hands. In confirmation of this, he stated a most touching fact which occurred in Dorsetshire, and which came under his own eye — the case of a wife whose persecutions from her husband were severe in the extreme, but who combined the utmost meekness with the most unflinching firmness, the result of which was completely to overcome her husband, who became, in the end, himself a companion in her pilgrimage, and a man of exemplary piety and eminent usefulness. The fact gave a beautiful finish to the interesting service.

It may be proper to state, that, with one or two exceptions, the numerous expressions of intense interest and sympathy with which the addresses were interspersed, to economize space, have been suppressed in the report. Altogether the service was one which will be long remembered.

# THE LOSS WHEN A SOUL IS LOST

*“For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”  
Mark 8:36, 37*

Ours is an inquisitive world, and the present especially is an inquisitive age. Particularly is this inquisitiveness developed in perpetual inquiries upon matters of loss and gain. Almost universally this class of questions agitates the public mind often tasking its powers to the utmost. Almost the whole race seem all on fire to know how they can avoid loss and secure gain. Assuredly therefore, this being the great question which men interest themselves to ask, it cannot be out of place for God to propose such a question as the text presents, nor for His servants to take it from His lips and press it upon the attention and the consciences of His hearers.

And let me here say it must be specially proper to propose it to the young men who are seeking good, and studying questions of profit and gain. Your souls thirst for happiness. How much, then, does it become you to ask whether these questions from the lips of your Redeemer may not give you a priceless clue to the secret of all real and permanent good.

The question concisely expressed, is — *What is a fair equivalent for the soul? For what consideration could a man afford to lose his soul?*

To bring the subject fully before your minds, let me

- I. DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE WORTH OF THE SOUL;**
- II. TO THE DANGER OF LOSING IT;**
- III. TO THE CONDITIONS OF SAVING IT.**

**1.** Whenever ministers enter the pulpit to preach, they always take many things for granted. All do this more or less; all must do it if they would preach with any effectiveness to the heart; and it is right that they should. This is true not of the gospel minister only, but of every teacher. Every

teacher assumes that his pupils exist; and that they know this truth; also that he exists himself.

Many other truths are assumed by the preacher. We must always begin somewhere. Generally we begin as the Bible does. The Bible assumes the truths of natural theology, and proceeds in its teachings as if all men knew at least these truths.

This congregation professes to be Christian, and I may therefore assume that at least nominally it is so. I shall not therefore address you as a heathen people, or as atheists, or even Universalists.

There are certain great truths admitted by almost all Christians; for example, that *the soul is immortal*. This is admitted so generally, I shall assume that you all admit it. You admit it to be true of both the righteous and the wicked. You admit that the bible teaches this, and I shall not therefore attempt to prove it.

It must also be admitted that from the very nature of mind, its capacities both of intellect and sensibility, will be always increasing. This increase is obviously a law of mind in this world, although from the connection of mind with matter, old age and disease seem to form an exception. This is indeed an exception to the common law, yet one which plainly results from the influence of physical frailty, and can therefore have no existence in a state where no physical frailty is experienced. It must be admitted that the exception does not result from any law of mind, but purely from a present law of matter.

The common law of mental progress is exceedingly apparent. Put your eye on the new-born infant. It knows nothing. It begins with the slightest perception, it may be of some visible object, or of the taste of its food. From a starting point almost imperceptible it goes on, making its hourly accessions of knowledge and consequent expansion of powers, till, like a Newton, it can fathom the sublime problems of the great law of the physical universe.

It is generally admitted that the capacities of men in the future state for either happiness or misery will be full — absolutely *full*. That coming state must be in respect to enjoyment, not mixed like the present, but simple; — unalloyed bliss, or unalleviated woe. Hence the soul must actually enjoy or

suffer to the utmost limit of its capacity. You all admit this; or if not all, the exceptions are few and I am not aware of any among you.

Let us not forget to connect with this idea of progression the idea of eternity. It is not only progress, but *eternal* progress. This is involved in the immortality of the soul. No doctrine is more plainly taught and more universally implied in the Bible; none is more amply confirmed by testimony drawn from the nature of the soul itself. It stands among the truths admitted by almost everyone who bears even nominally the Christian name.

Now what follow from these admitted truths?

If men are always to progress in knowledge and capacity, then a period will arrive in which the least intelligence will be able to say — I know more now than all the created universe knew when I was born. This must be true. Its truth follows by necessity from the truths we have admitted.

But even this is not all. For when he has reached this point of acquisition in knowledge, he has only begun. Eternity is yet before him. The time will come when he will know ten thousand times as much as all the universe did when he was born; nay not merely ten thousand times as much, but myriads of myriads of times as much. The time will arrive in the lapse of eternal ages when, if all the present created universe were tasked to the utmost to conceive or estimate how much this one intelligence can know, they would fall entirely short of reaching the mighty conception. And even this is only a mere beginning, for this vast intelligence is not a whit nearer the terminus of his progression than when he was one day old. To be sure all the universe have kept pace with him. They have all moved along together, under a law of progress common to them all. Each one can say the same and as much as he. The attainments of each and of all will forever fall short of infinite, although they are always indefinitely increasing.

Look at the happiness of the righteous. Always increasing; evermore swelling its deep and gushing tides, with no limit to their growth and no end to their progression. Who does not know that this must be so? Look at the little infant. It seems to have but the least possible capacity, and this is developed at first only in its physical powers. All the earliest germs of sensation and emotion pertain to the body alone. The little one is hungry



and cries; then is nursed and is quiet; it opens its little eye and beholds the light and is pleased; by and by it comes to know its mother's presence and to love that beaming look of fondness and those soothing tones of love. Here opens to that infant mind a new source of happiness; progress — progress is the established law of our mental and sentient being. By and by that child late an infant, is a pupil in school and then a youth in college. On and still onward is his progress in knowledge.

Nor let us lose sight of the fact that the same law of progress obtains also in the department of the sensibility. A uniform relation is then maintained between man's intellectual and sentient faculties. Knowledge increasing gives scope for increased joys or sorrows. Thus the mind progresses through all the stages of its earthly existence, new knowledge continually opening new sources of enjoyment or suffering. Mark how much that man or woman is capable of enjoying, compared with the capacity of his or her period of infancy. Now he may be bowed down under an overwhelming weight of sorrow, or he may be lifted up in ecstasies of joy unspeakable and full of glory. And this progress, we should remark, is often made despite of very unfavorable circumstances. The law of progress acts with a positive energy that no ordinary circumstances can resist.

But let us now look into the next world — the next state of our existence. Knowledge sustains still the same relation to the sensibility; what you know there serves no less than it did here to augment your bliss or aggravate your woe. All the powers of your being sustain the same mutual relation as ever. Just think then how vast the joys and sorrows of that coming state! Mark how they tower high above all that is experienced in this brief state! This is no poetry. It is more than poetry — infinitely more!! It is too obviously and certainly true to admit of the least question. Its truth results from admissions you make and doctrines you hold as a Christian congregation — admissions and doctrines common to all who are not atheists — common to all who observe the laws of our present existence and who admit that these laws will follow our existence into our future state of being.

Following out these admitted truths to their necessary results, we see that the time must come in the lapse of eternal ages when each saint can say — I now enjoy more in a given time than all the saints in the universe did

when I first entered heaven. For as with knowledge, so with happiness. It must of course come under the same law of progress. Its measure must sustain its established correlation to the amount of our knowledge, so that as the one stretches onward and still onward with no limit to its progress, so also does the other. As therefore the time will come when no created mind can estimate the knowledge attained by the now feeblest intelligence, so will it also come when no capacity can estimate the measure of its happiness. The Bible says, God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we are able to ask or even to think. This will have its striking fulfillment in the future heights of bliss and glory to which He will raise His redeemed people. O, who can measure these heights of bliss and glory! Yet when you have fixed your eye upon their towering loftiness at any period along the track of endless ages, you have it to say then and there — This man's happiness is only begun. He has only just entered upon his everlasting progress in knowledge and in bliss. And still so vast are his capacities at this remote period of his existence that if we could look into their amazing length and breadth and depth, and measure their magnitude, we should sink like dead men at the sight. See him drawing draughts of joy from God's own eternal fountains! Will he ever cease to quaff those draughts of joy? Never. Can they ever grow less? Nay; they must of necessity be forever increasing.

Now see also the progress of the wicked. They too are moving onward. The law of progress cannot be arrested by any amount of sinning. Onward still their minds are progressing; more and more capacious for knowledge and of course for sin and suffering. And O! What then! What follows from these established laws of the human mind and of human existence? Let your reflections trace out the fearful results which accrue from these laws of eternal progression. When we get into the midst of these things, the mind becomes exhausted and overpowered; it sinks down and cries out with crushing emotion — O what an eternity is this for the sinner, lost forever!! O look upon that sinner after he has passed along through millions of ages of his unceasing progress in knowledge and in growing capacities for sin and suffering. Hear him. He says, hell knew but little of sin and suffering when I came here, compared with what I suffer now! They all then sinned and suffered but little, even taken in the vast aggregate, compared with what I sin and suffer in my own single being

now! Alas, I seem to have all hell in my own bosom! I sin and suffer enough with my vastly augmented powers to make an awful hell even if these agonies were equally distributed among myriads of my fellow beings. How awful!! Sin, misery and ruin enough to make one awful hell, locked up in the agonized bosom of a single sinner!

If this were only poetry I should be glad, but all is true, and so much more is true that no language can express it; no modes of computation and no forms of estimate can reach its appalling magnitude. So much is true that to see the thousandth part of it must set your soul all a fire!

Take any sinner here — any young man or woman from this congregation. Follow him onward from this hour through a life of sinning, a death of darkness and horror, and then onward still as he falls in the agonies of the second death and moves onward age after age in the unceasing progress of a human mind expanding its intelligence, learning more and more of the God the sinner hates, and only hating Him forever the more, and only making himself the more immeasurably wretched by sinning with bitterer hate, and suffering with still enlarged capacities as the eternal years roll on! O young man! you will one day be able to say — All that hell knew of suffering before I came here is nothing compared with what I now suffer! All is nothing to the aggregate of my sins and of my sufferings. And all I now endure is only a beginning. My miseries have only begun. This soul of mine has only begun to know how to suffer the real sufferings of the damned. Its keen sensitiveness to agony has only begun to develop itself. Yet at some period in the flow of those endless years of progression in sorrow, each one will say — If all the universe at the moment of my death, had taxed their minds to the utmost to conceive the guilt and miseries that wring my heart, they could not even have begun to reach the appalling estimate!

Would to God this were only poetry! Alas, that it should be among the best established truths in the universe of realities! Young man, there is no axiom in mathematics more true than this. No problem you ever solved in algebra brought out its result with more certainty; no proposition of Euclid ever carried you more unerringly to its conclusion than our reasoning upon these known and changeless laws of mind in their progression onward through the endless cycles of eternity. Go onward and still onward; you

must yet say — after ever so many periods of largest conception, I have only just begun. I am only entering the vestibule of this world of woe — only counting off the first moments as it were of the eternal cycles of my existence!

To pursue this train of thought in its details seems utterly impossible! How the mind sinks beneath the overpowering view! O, the worth of the soul, progressing forever under a law as fixed as and as enduring as Jehovah's throne! The worth of a soul that must make progress in knowledge, and consequently in its capacities for bliss and for holiness, or for sin and for woe — who can estimate it to the last fraction! Tell me, ye young men of mathematical genius — ye professors in this science of certainties — ye who think you have some knowledge of fixed truths and some skill in educing them from first principles; tell me, are these things poetry? You know they are eternal truth; you know they are verities that which none in the universe can be more sure. "What, then, shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

## II. BUT WHAT MUST BE SAID OF THE DANGER OF LOSING THE SOUL?

This danger is exceedingly great, because men have only to neglect the soul and it is surely lost. It does not require attention and labor. You can lose your soul without the least possible effort made specially for this purpose. You need not go about to commit sin in order to ensure the ruin of your soul hopelessly and forever. You need only neglect its salvation and it is surely lost. You need only be as negligent as you have been heretofore. It is only necessary that you slide along in the same thoughtless, reckless manner as in your past days and the end will be "sudden destruction and that without remedy." As says the apostle; "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" There is none other name under heaven given among man whereby ye can be saved. And there is no salvation through this name but by a living faith which works by love and makes the heart pure from sin.

Men will lose their souls *if they mistake the conditions of salvation*. For these conditions require intelligent effort, and to misunderstand them

makes it certain that your efforts will not be made intelligently, even if any sort of effort is made at all. There is therefore, most imminent danger in this quarter.

Again, there is the more danger because men are so little inclined to inform themselves respecting those truths which relate to the conditions of salvation. It is a most astounding fact that in matters so deeply interesting to everyone who is to be saved or lost, no man should incline to search after the requisite knowledge of the way to be saved.

There is also the more danger because men are surrounded with temptations to neglect the soul's salvation. It is the policy of Satan to surround men with as many temptations as possible to neglect this great subject. He gives them everything else to do; sets their wits at work to kill time and devise amusing and diverting occupations, and stave off all serious thought into some unknown future. Nothing delights or employs him more than to draw the sinner in and hold him fast in the snare of his infernal devices.

Again, there is the more ground to fear because you are in so much danger of practicing deception upon yourself, especially this deception — that you can better attend to the saving of your soul at some other time. This is Satan's master-piece of deception. It has fixed the doom of damnation upon myriads of souls.

If I had time to enter upon these various dangers and expand them at length in view of the awfulness of losing the soul, how startling would be the fearful facts of the case! If all these countless dangers were seen in their real magnitude, and especially if they were seen in their bearings upon the loss of a soul, methinks it would rouse all mankind into excitement almost to madness in securing the salvation of their souls. How could they refrain from crying out in the very streets and within the very walls of their bedchambers — What shall I do to be saved from such a hell? The danger is real although due sensibility to it is so rare. We have it from the lips of one that knew — “Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and many there be that go in thereat.” And no fact is more open to observation than this. Everybody sees it; all may know it.

### III. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS OF SAVING THE SOUL?

Here let it well be considered that the conditions are none of them arbitrary. All are naturally necessary. Each one is revealed as a condition because in the nature of the case it is and must be. God requires it as a condition because He cannot save the soul without it. For example, you must be sanctified and become holy in heart and life. Why? Not because God sees fit arbitrarily to impose such a condition, but because it is impossible you should be happy without it; because it is impossible you should enjoy heaven without holiness.

So also you must be sanctified by faith in Christ, and saved in all respects by this faith, for the simple reason that no other agency can sanctify and save. There is none other name given among men whereby ye can be saved. No other Redeemer exists to be believed in; no other power but that of faith in such a Redeemer ever yet reached the heart to subdue it to submission, penitence, and love.

### REMARKS

**1.** There is nothing more wonderful and strange than the tendency of the human mind to neglect reflection and serious thought upon the value of the soul. The entire orthodox world admit the truths upon which we started, and admit substantially those other truths which are necessarily connected with them. Now it is most astounding that these truths should be dropped out of mind — their bearings forgotten, and all their relations be overlooked as if they had no value, as if they were indeed only fictions and not facts. They are forgotten by parents, so that few indeed think of the bearings of these truths upon their children's well-being for eternity; they are forgotten by husbands and by wives, so that in these relations of life little is said, little felt, little done, for each other's salvation. In fact these great truths have come to be less regarded than almost anyone of the ten thousand things of this world. The least of these worldly matters is practically treated as of more value than the soul. Must there not be a strange delirium upon the human mind?

**2.** Nothing is so important to the Christian Church and to the world as that the Church should direct her attention to those great things till they arouse her whole soul — till they awaken from spiritual lethargy every member of Christ's nominal church on earth. The primitive Christians of apostolic times pondered these truths until their hearts were on fire and they could not wish to do less than to lay themselves out for the salvation of the world. The same engrossing and soul-stirring attention to these great truths is needed to awaken the churches of the present day.

**3.** As these great truths of the soul are neglected, worldly things magnify themselves in apparent importance. If men do not dwell upon eternity, time comes to be their only reality. If they do not dwell upon the great spiritual truths that relate to the eternal world, to heaven and to hell, if they do not pour their minds out upon these truths, the trifles of time will assume the chief importance. Men will become worldly-minded. Their minds become contracted in the scope of their views to the narrow circle of their earthly relations, and they come to live as if there were no God, no heaven, no hell.

**4.** You may see the nature of worldly-mindedness. It is real insanity. Suppose a man to act as if he had no relations to this world. Suppose he should act as if he had no more to do with it than most men seem to have with the other world beyond this. Let him act as if he had no bodily wants — no occasion for food or for clothing. Of course he would be regarded as a mad man; his friends, or if not they, the civil authorities would hasten to put him in a mad-house. They would sue out a commission of lunacy against him to save his property, if he had any, for the benefit of himself and his family. For precisely this is real insanity — overlooking real facts and acting as if they did not exist.

But what shall we say of those who treat these truths of eternity as if they were not truths? Is not this also real insanity? The man knows the great facts respecting the future world. He has a book well authenticated, containing all the facts, fully revealed; he holds all the important facts with the utmost tenacity and would deem himself slandered as a heretic if you were to intimate a doubt of the soundness of his faith; in fact his orthodoxy is his pride and his glory; *but yet he lives as if he did not believe a word of it!* Surely this man is practically insane. You cannot but regard

such a case with horror. O, you say, if he had never known these things, he would not have incurred the guilt of this dreadful insanity; but alas! he does know them all. He has them all written down; all are embraced in the standards of his faith, and he would not be supposed to doubt one word of those standards for the value of his best reputation. Then is he not insane? Alas, the world is a complete bedlam! See their manuals of doctrines; read carefully their standards and see what they believe; then see how they live — as if there were no heaven and no hell; no atonement, no Savior; nothing but this world and its good things! And are they not madmen? Does the Bible slander them at all when it declares — “*Madness* is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead”?

**5.** How must the people of other worlds look upon the men of this! Particularly, I ask, how must they regard those who live in those portions of our world where light blazes and every eye must see it? How are they astonished in heaven to see such exhibitions of depravity on earth! How must they look on with unutterable amazement as they mark the clear and blazing light which God pours upon the realities of the eternal world, and then observe how little this light is regarded even by those who see it most and best!

**6.** How many are struggling to secure anything and everything else but the salvation of the soul! And yet they know that everything else gained is worse than loss if the soul is lost. What egregious folly! And what is more, think of the appalling guilt? And of the coming account to be rendered for both the guilt and the folly! God will call you all to account — *you* for the property you sought to the neglect of your soul, and chose at the cost of ruining your soul; and *you* for the education which you valued more than the salvation of your soul. What, young man, do you propose to do with that education which you have put before your soul and sought to the neglect and ruin of your eternal being? You may enter the eternal world an educated young man — with all your powers developed and matured so that you can take your position in that world of woe in an advanced class — as some young men come here prepared to enter in advance as far perhaps as the junior year; so you by virtue of your education, may enter among the more advanced minds in hell, ripe for drinking deeper draughts of remorse, your intellect enlarged for broader views of your relations, and sharpened for keener impressions of your guilt! O what must it be to take



your starting point in that world of agonizing thought, in advance of your age and your time, ready to start off with more rapid strides in the dread career of progression in the knowledge — in the sinning — and in the consequent woes of the damned! Take such a mind as Byron's. How much more is he capable of suffering in one hour on his death-bed than a mind of only ordinary capacity! Sit down by his death-bed; mark his rolling eye — his look of agony — the reach and grasp of his capacious soul! See how keenly he feels every sensation of remorse — how large his scope of view as he thinks of his relations to the God he should have loved but did not, and to the world he should have blessed by his talents but only cursed by his depravity! You may have often said — If I were only as great and as talented as Byron; if I only had his power as a poet — his genius — his talent — how glorious! I could ask nothing more.

You would then be as great as Byron! But what then? Suppose you were; what would you gain? What would it profit you to gain all he ever gained of mental power, or earthly fame, and to lose your soul? O think of this; to be a Byron and to lose your soul! Would this be gain? Could you afford to devote your being to such an object, and having gained it, die and go to hell?

Or suppose you aspire to be a statesman. You climb the slow ascent of office; you rise in the confidence of your party, till step by step you ascend the tall acclivity, and see the summit of ambition only a little way before you; then down you go to hell! How much have you gained, even if you have reached the glittering summit, and then lose your soul?

**7.** In the eternal world there will be an entire reversal of position; the highest here are lowest there, and the lowest here are the most favored or certainly the least accursed there. The kings of the earth, highest on their thrones, will have the largest account to settle there, the heaviest responsibilities to bear and of course the most fearful doom. Here he sits in grand and lofty state; the subject must kneel before him to present even a petition; but death reverses the scene. Let this king on his throne but die in his sins; he tumbles from his rotten throne to the depths of hell! Where does he go? What is his position among the ranks of the lost? Down, deep in the lowest depths of perdition. Here his princely steeds and out-riding footmen have him the \_clat of nobility, and if he abused his dignity to the

feeding of earthly pride and to the crushing of the poor, he sinks deep below those once so far beneath him. Now they mark his fall like Lucifer, son of morning. Now perhaps they hiss at him and curse him, saying, How art thou fallen from the throne of thy glory! And thou art here, down deep in the infamy of hell! Thou wretch! How they hiss at all his plagues! The very fires of hell roar and hiss at him as he sinks beneath their wild engulfing billows. So the great ones of any country who sell their souls for ambition and earthly power; what have they gained? An office — it may be, a crown; but they have lost a soul! Alas, where are they now? The most miserably guilty and wretched among all the wretched ones of hell! Hear what they say as they do down wailing along the sides of the pit! “So much for the folly of selling my soul for a bubble of vanity! For an hour I sought and chose to be exalted; how fearfully do I sink now, and sink forever! O the contrast of earth and hell!” Hark, what do they say? The man clothed in purple and fine linen lifts up his eyes in hell being in torments; he sees Abraham afar off and Lazarus, that old ulcerated beggar, is now in his bosom; and what does he say! He cries aloud — “Father Abraham, I pray thee send Lazarus to me; let him dip only the tip of his finger in water and put it on my tongue; I can do without my golden cup; that’s gone forever now; but let Lazarus come with his finger dipped in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.”

But what is the answer to this agonizing prayer? Son, thou hast had thy good things, all of them, to the last dregs; and Lazarus all his evil things; now he is comforted and thou art tormented.

Let this illustrate what I mean in speaking of the wide but righteous *contrast* between the state of souls in time and in eternity; the strange reversal of condition, by which the lowest here becomes highest there, and the highest here become the lowest there.

**8.** Men really intend to secure both this world and salvation. They never suppose it wise to lose their own soul. Nor do they think to gain anything by running the risk of losing it. Indeed, they do not mean to run any great risks — only a little, the least they can conveniently make it, and yet gain a large measure of earthly good. But in attempting to get the world, they lose their souls. God told them they would, but they did not believe Him. Rushing on the fearful venture and assuming to be wiser than God, they

grasped the world to get it first, thinking to get heaven afterwards; thus they tempted the Spirit; provoked God to forsake them; lost their day of salvation and lost all the world besides. How infinitely just and right is their reward! Why did they not believe God? Every one of them knew that being saved through Christ, he would be infinitely rich, and being lost, he would make himself infinitely poor; and yet he rushed upon the fatal venture, and went down, despite of grace, to an eternal hell!

**9.** What is really worth living for but to save souls? You may think it is worth living for to be a judge or a senator — but *is* it? Is it, if the price must be the loss of your soul? How many of our American Presidents have died as you would wish to die? If you should live to gain the object of your ambition, what would be your chance of saving your soul? The world being what it is, and the temptations incident to office and worldly honors being as they are, how great would be your prospect of saving your souls? Would it be wise for you to run the hazard?

What else would you live for than to save souls? Would you not rather save souls than be President of this Union? “He that winneth souls is wise.” “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever.” Will this be the case with the ungodly Presidents who die in their sins?

What do you purpose to do, young man, or young woman, with your education? Have you any higher or nobler object to live for than to save souls? Have you any more worthy object upon which to expend the resources of a cultivated mind and the accumulated powers gained by education? Think — what should I live for but the gems of heaven — what but for the honor of Jesus, my Master?

They who do not practically make the salvation of souls — their own and others, — their chief concern, deserve not the name of rational; they are not sane. Look at their course of practical life as compared with their knowledge of facts. Are they sane, or are they deranged?

It is time for the church to give up her mind and her whole heart to this subject. It is indeed time that she should lay these great truths in all their burning power close to her heart. Alas! how is her soul palsied with the spirit of the world! Nothing can save her and restore her to spirit life until

she brings her mind and heart into burning contact with these living energizing truths of eternity. The church of our times needs the apostolic spirit. She needs so deep a baptism with those fires of Holy Ghost that she can go out and set the world on fire by her zeal for the souls of men. Till then the generations of our race must go on, thronging the broad way to hell because no man cares for their souls.

# JESUS CHRIST DOING GOOD

*“Who went about doing good.” — Acts, 10:38.*

The entire verse of which the text forms a part, reads as; — “How God annointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil for God was with Him.”

In treating of this text and the subject it presents, I propose,

- I. TO NOTICE WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEST;**
- II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE FACT AFFIRMED;**
- III. TO SHOW WHY CHRIST WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.**

I. The intended meaning of the language is obvious. Jesus Christ went about promoting the well-being of men wherever He went. He did what He could wisely do for the bodies of men, healing the sick, supplying physical wants; but more especially He sought to promote the highest spiritual good of the people, teaching, warning, rebuking and entreating, as circumstances seemed to require, evermore intent upon promoting the highest human happiness by every means in His power. His history shows amply how He did this.

## II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HIS GOING ABOUT DOING GOOD?

1. It is implied that this was His business — the thing He had above all things else at heart. For this end He came into the world. He came to do good and not evil; to bless and not to curse; to fill the world with peace, love and happiness, so far as lay within the range of His influence. The good of man was the great object which He sought.
2. It is implied that Christ sought the happiness of mankind disinterestedly, in the sense that He valued their well-being, that He really

loved it and enjoyed the efforts He made to promote it. He was truly and honestly benevolent. It was because He loved the happiness of men that He labored to promote it.

### III. I AM TO SPEAK OF THE *REASONS OR MOTIVES* OF HIS CONDUCT

These may be considered as either objective or subjective. The objective embrace the external object which creates a demand for benevolent action and becomes the exciting cause of internal benevolent purpose. The subjective reasons or motives are no other than the internal reasons — the grounds of benevolent action as they existed in the mind of Jesus Christ.

Negatively, the reason why He went about doing good was not His salvation. It was in His case no part of His object to secure or even use the means to secure the salvation of His own soul. There is no intimation that this was any part of His object.

Nor was He forced into this labor by a sense of duty. He did not move under the goading of conscience, pressing Him on in an up-hill business with the perpetual appliance — you must do this — you must do all you can. Not so did He labor. He went forward not because commanded; not because He feared any threatening: — not because some dreaded penalty hung in terror over his head.

It is no doubt true that Christ had respect to the fact that the law of His intelligence and the law of God also, required of Him benevolence . But mark; — it was not law merely that pressed Him up to this — not merely any external law; — I mean, external to His own mind and apart from the ruling purpose of His own will. The simple truth is, He had chosen benevolent action as the course of His life and as the law of His own voluntary existence. He determined to do this, and as I might say, He had voluntarily determined to love the doing of good to all beings, and thus had made this the governing law of His voluntary action.

Now we cannot exclude from such a state of mind the idea of duty. Every mind knows that such a state of mind is duty — is what God requires, and what the demands of the external universe require. All moral agents, acting

virtuously, act according to duty. Their inward purpose and their external acts, if virtuous, will correspond with God's rule of duty; and yet it is still true that a higher motive than a conviction of duty impels them onward. They pursue this right course of internal purpose and of external act because they have determined to be benevolent and to act benevolently, and because consequently they enjoy being benevolent, and not merely because God has formally required of them benevolence. A good man loves his neighbor as himself, and he knows this is duty and also knows that not so to love his neighbor would be wrong; but yet the internal law of doing good — made a law of his moral being by his voluntarily choosing it to be so, is the active principle from which in the last analysis his actions flow.

The benevolent mind regards the happiness of being as a great good. It seeks this good and voluntarily makes this seeking of others good the great business of its own existence. Now I have heard people say that they regarded the idea of benevolence as a pure abstraction. Let them go and talk in this strain to a mother. I wonder if the idea of benevolently seeking the good of her children, is a mere abstraction to her. Go and ask her if she really knows anything about devoting herself to her family. Tell her you believe that idea is nothing better than a respectable abstraction. Tell her it may sound well in talk and might seem somewhat noble and self-sacrificing if it were only real; but assure her that nobody can ever have the least confidence in its sincerity — that all the world knows that every man and every woman too are supremely selfish, and there is no such thing in reality as loving others as ourselves, or as devoting ourselves to others good except so far as we can see selfish good resulting for our motive and reward. Go and talk to some simple-hearted mother in this strain. Will you convince her that she knows nothing about devotion to the interests of her children?

I can understand how this subject may perplex some minds. A young man said to me today — “Does a selfish, wicked man understand what it is to be devoted to the good of others? Can he have any just idea of what this is?”

To meet this question, you may take that form of benevolence which we often see in ungodly parents. They know what it is to have their hearts bound up in the happiness of their children. Although in this very parental

affection, their minds are in a perfectly selfish state towards God, yet this devotion to the happiness of their children is a positive reality to them — none in all the world perhaps is more so. Now just enlarge this idea; suppose this devotion which even ungodly parents feel towards their children were to expand the scope and range of its regards and embrace every neighbor — friend or foe; then all the men of one's nation; and next all the human family: would not this be essentially real benevolence?

Perhaps this mode of illustration may serve to explain the point in question as well as any that I can adopt. We all understand it to be a law of our being to love our offspring. This love is as truly natural in the human mind as self-love — the desire of one's own happiness. Now we can suppose this love of offspring to be enlarged so as to embrace others as well as our own children: nay, we can suppose it to be so much enlarged as to comprehend within its scope all the human family. Suppose we could unify all beings of whom we have any knowledge — comprehending them all within the grasp of our mind and the scope of our affection as if they were all but one person; then let us love ourselves, and we should have the idea of real benevolence is not abstraction.

Benevolence an abstraction? Who can so regard it? A mere abstraction is it to promote the happiness of others! Was it so in the case of Jesus Christ? If it had been, would He have made His cradle in a manger and His death-scene on the cross, for human welfare? Or is it an abstraction in the case of those who labor and suffer for others good? If you can understand anything, you can surely understand that benevolence is no abstraction. What do you think of Jesus Christ going about doing good? Was the idea of benevolence in his mind a mere abstraction?

If we can have correct conceptions of anything, we can have of enjoyment and suffering. Understanding these things, we can also understand what is meant by putting away sorrow from all hearts, and pouring joy into the souls of all our fellow beings all around about us. What sort of a man must that be to whom this seems a very difficult thing to understand?

It is said of Christ — “Who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.” Observe, He had no special regard to His own personal happiness; this was not the direct object He sought; and yet He enjoyed doing good to others. He found a happiness in blessing others,



which was not the direct object of His search. His doctrine was — “It is more blessed to give, than to receive.” His state of mind was such that He enjoyed conferring happiness upon others, even more than they enjoyed receiving it. It was, in His state of mind more blessed for Him to give, than for those to whom He gave it to receive.

Thus when He met the widow at Nain — saw her sorrows; came up and touched the bier, and they that bare it stood still; — when in this affecting case He called this young man to life and restored him to his mother, although she enjoyed her restored son exceedingly, and could have gone dancing home with delight, yet he enjoyed it far more than even she did. The act met the demands of His own conscience and nature. He had given His heart up to the doing of good to others and consequently He felt more joy in doing good to others than they could in receiving it. Hence He could “endure the cross, despising the shame.”

Again, there can be no doubt that Christ had a proper regard to His Father’s feelings toward Him. Human fathers always enjoy seeing their children do nobly. When they send their children away on missions of love and give them the parting kiss, and their parting benediction, saying in the fullness of their souls — “God bless you and make you do good as long as you live;” and don’t want to bring them back, though trials and toils betide them; — and the missionary himself says, “I know this labor I am doing will gratify my aged father and my praying mother; — I will write them all that the Lord has wrought by me, for I know they will enjoy it exceedingly;” — you all see in this case that the toiling missionary is sustained in part by the hope of enhancing the happiness of his parents by his labors; and why should not Jesus have the same interest in the joy of His Father? God always enjoys the labors of love wrought by His Son; He had them all in mind from eternity. So also did Jesus have all these things in His mind. He knew that His self-denying toils would gratify all His friends in heaven.

Ah, say the self-denying missionary, I will write back to my Christian friends. They prayed for me when I left my native land, and they have been praying for me ever since. I know they must enjoy the knowledge of what the Lord has wrought by me in answer to their prayer.

Now this is not selfish; it is not being proud. It is a simple regard to the happiness of those left behind.

So with Christ. He knows that in heaven they are prepared to appreciate such tidings. There may be few on earth to appreciate them, but many in heaven. There were patriarchs and prophets — there were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — there were a countless host who had been waiting long ages for this glorious consummation, and when they came to hear what Jesus was doing and suffering on earth, did it not enhance their happiness? Yea, was not the happiness of heaven increased even more than that of Jesus Christ Himself? O, what joy must have thrilled the hearts of the holy in heaven, when they were told what Jesus was doing — how He was raising the dead, healing the sick, casting out demons, preaching the gospel to the poor, saying to many a burdened soul, “thy sins are forgiven thee — go in peace;” — when these glad tidings, swifter than on telegraph wires, flashed from earth to heaven, was there no augmented joy there? When it was told them, Jesus is preaching salvation — is planting the tree of life all over the barren wastes of earth, rebuking hell, is about to set wide open the blessed gates of mercy, so that whosoever will, may enter and find life and peace — O, then was there not joy in heaven unknown before?

Hence in going about to do good to others, Christ had regard not merely to the immediate good He might do them, but also to other and higher interests. And had you been on earth to see and know those deeds of love and to enter into the sympathies of those whom He blessed — then also, into the sympathies of His own gushing heart, O, how rich the scene for a benevolent mind to enjoy! Was it, think you, an abstraction to Him? So far from this, it stirred up all the warmest sensibilities of His being; nay more, so great was His zeal in this work that it literally ate Him up! It actually consumed the vital energies of His physical being!

## REMARKS

**1.** How very simple and intelligible is the nature of true religion. Every man knows what it is to love to do good to some individual. Every person has some one or more objects of affection. Now suppose that selfishness were all put away — that we were to associate our own happiness most

intimately with that of all our race, taking as much interest in each other person's well-being as in our own; could we not then understand this state of mind! This is real religion.

Devotion to other's good is a very simple thing. When our devotion to the production of happiness is not restricted to ourselves, but we labor for other's good, and love to promote the good of others not less than our own, this is an intelligible thing; and this is true benevolence — real religion.

**2.** You have revealed in our subject the state of mind to which the rewards of heaven are promised. These rewards by no means appeal to human selfishness; they were never intended to stimulate the selfishness of the human heart. God promises to reward those who live as He lives — who labor for the same ends. Suppose a father should promise his estate to his children on condition they should live as they ought to. Would this mean — If you are careful and anxious to get my estate, you shall have it? No, but it would mean this; If you regard my will and happiness, and if you try in all things to do right; if you love me, and love all the family, with a single eye, and prove yourself to be in every respect a worthy son — then you are entitled to my estate.

And would this be an appeal to their selfishness? By no means. No intelligent child could so understand it.

**3.** We can see to whom and to whom alone the rewards of eternal life are possible.

On this point selfish men are almost sure to mistake. They have erroneous views of what secures salvation. No man can be saved unless he enters into such sympathy with God as to find his own happiness as God finds His.

But what are these rewards of eternal life? Suppose a man makes a mistake and regards the whole matter of salvation as one of mere loss and gain, altogether a mercenary thing; is it not plain that he entirely misapprehends the subject? It were well that he should ask — What are these rewards? What were they in the case of our Lord? I answer — The joy of doing good — the joy of witnessing and enjoying the happiness of others, so that when He saw the results of His labors, they were their own reward and He could not but enjoy them.

Ere long all of us who have the Spirit of Christ and of Paul shall get home to heaven. Then we shall see Paul. Now, and of a long time past he has seen the thousands, converted under his own personal labors — the fruits of all his toils and groans and travail; he sees and has long seen their intense happiness in God and in Christ, and he understands that these are his spiritual children, whom he has begotten in his toils and labors, and does he not enjoy their joys? While here on earth, he was always rejoicing; but O, how much more is he always rejoicing now! Now, having gone home, his works have followed him; and what are these works? The fruits of his pen and tongue — of his labors in his correspondence and in his oral preaching.

But on what conditions can these fruits of his labors make Paul happy? These are the very results for which he labored. He has been a successful man — successful in all his enterprises of labor for God and for souls. As Christ sees of the travail of his soul and is satisfied, so Paul. Both are happy because they have attained the object for which they labored. The fruits are being gathered in the great storehouse of the Almighty. Age after age, they come, and though a thousand ages shall pass away, each freighted with souls saved, yet still they come. And is not this reward enough? Say, young man, is not this an ample reward for all the sacrifice and toil endured by Jesus Christ and by his servant, Paul? See the missionary who has gone to Africa. He rolls back the dark cloud of moral death that hangs over that cruelly wronged and morally neglected people. Many are they that learn of salvation from his lips and catch the new song of praise and love. By and by he gets through his work and goes home. His works do follow him. Year after year he sees them coming up to cast their crowns at Jesus' feet; and is not his an adequate reward? They had sympathized with Christ all along during their labors; they sympathize with Him not less now in these rewards of their labor. Christ enters into their joy, and they into His. And is all this benevolence an abstraction in heaven? Nay, verily; let it be anything else — but not an abstraction!

**4.** It is wonderful to see the astonishing blindness of mind which often exists as to real religion.

Often before my conversion did I pause and wonder what I was doing and what object I was living for. The very end of my existence seemed to be to

me altogether vague and indeed unknown. I had no conception of the ends for which a Christian lives, and truly I could see no other ends of life worth living for.

I am afraid that some among you do not know at all what it is to be constrained by the love of Christ to labor and to suffer for the good of others and to be a co-laborer with Christ in the great labor of this world — the redemption of souls that else must perish.

**5.** Religion, to truly religious persons, is never a burden. Those who think so, know nothing yet as they need and ought to know. Of old the prophets were wont to say — “The burden of the Lord” — “The burden of the Lord;” and many seem to regard every message from the Lord as a burden, and all the work He calls upon them to do, as a burden. Young people say, We must by all means enjoy life now, and religion is utterly unsuitable to our age and to our pursuits. But how is this: Cannot the hearts of the young be warmed to love? Is it only the aged that have such hearts as love can warm and holy zeal inflame.

Yet how passing strange are the views of many as to early piety? Said a woman in Troy — “It seems a pity that my daughter should become a Christian now. She has just reached an age in which she can enjoy society, and mingle with pleasure in young company? O what a pity that all her pleasures should be spoiled!”

When I was converted, my brother had but one word to say about it — “Charles,” said he “is ruined!”

So, often, people think that religion is far enough from being a present good. Yet what can be a greater good than to give one’s self up to that in which we shall find most congenial, permanent and supreme satisfaction? But those who do not give up their very hearts to the joys of benevolence, do of course find it altogether an up-hill business.

**6.** People who are truly religious have no other joy but this. I mean, that all their joys are mingled with their religion. They can enjoy nothing without religion. They want to meet God in everything; then they enjoy it. But without God and without a benevolent heart in sympathy with God, they could not enjoy either food, or society, or study. All would lack its appropriate appeal to their sensibilities. Their hearts would refuse to go

into it. They have one great object connected continually with all happiness. Their religion consists substantially in sympathy with Christ — in having the heart absorbed in the same spirit which Christ had. Now if you read Christ's history and see how great, how deep, and how all-absorbing His interest was in His work, you will also see the real heart of all His true followers.

**7.** This is the religion of the saints of olden ages; of prophets, of apostles, and pre-eminently of Paul. He counted all things else but dross that he might win Christ and wear Christ's Spirit.

**8.** Those who do not thus devote themselves to the good of others deserve no good themselves.

How plain this is! One who knows the value of others' happiness, yet cares not to promote it; none who knows the miseries of his fellow-beings yet cares not to alleviate them, what claim has he upon either God or the universe for happiness? What could he do or enjoy in heaven? If he lives only for himself, what could he do there? Just think of him, carrying all his selfishness into heaven! A man once said on the floor of Congress—"The people in the North are so selfish that if they should hear of the river of life, their first thought would be to ask if there were any mill-seats on it!" How can minds so steeped in selfishness be happy even in heaven?

**9.** Some live to get and not to do good, and thus fail of the great object of life. If those who are living thus are not awake to their danger, they will get into so selfish a state that they will never enjoy anything — will never get anything to enjoy. If you live to get good, and do not try to do good, it will surely be your ruin! This truth should be reiterated again and again. It must be appreciated, or men will make shipwreck of their happiness forever.

**10.** It sometimes happens that persons who have been active and useful before they came into this place, suspend all active labors to do good when they get here. They say — "O there are men enough here to do all the good that need be done." Soon they tell us they can find nothing either to do or enjoy. They cannot enjoy nearly so much here as they used to elsewhere. This is the inevitable result of their course of life.

Young man, have you nothing to do for the spiritual good of your roommate? Do you know his state of mind? "O, I presume," you say, "that he

is in a good state.” Do you know anything about it? O, you don’t know. You have never asked him. Have you nothing to do? Look all round about and see. Will you reply, You are the minister and you can find enough to do; but what can I do? There is work for every man who will find a heart and a hand to do it.

Theological students sometimes make this great mistake. They expect to do nothing here, but put off their labors for the good of men’s souls till they get through their studies and into their field. They could scarcely make a worse mistake. Thank God, all have not made it. Some have made a path-way of light all along their course. You hear of them — you see their luminous pathway; God is with them, and they labor for Him not in vain. The man who goes upon mission ground, having been useful here will be useful there. But if he has not learned to labor to effect here, he need not expect to labor successfully there.

**11.** The benevolent live to make others happy. In a thousand ways they show that this is the object of their lives. They love this work. They are not misanthropic, complaining, fault-finding, censorious; but joyful in their work, taking a lively interest in everybody’s happiness, enjoying all the good that they see great masses moving onward in the career of social and civil progress, ideas of civil and religious liberty developing, new channels and means of usefulness laid open, seeing these omens of progress, instead of taking somber views of things, they are hopeful and happy. They see much good already done, and in all this they rejoice exceedingly. They do indeed see some eddies in the mighty current of progress, and sometimes they see back currents; but yet Christ carries on His work, and confiding in Him, they still believe in ultimate success, and still hold on their way hopeful and rejoicing. Jesus their great Captain, they know is not on earth but in heaven; yet though in heaven, He has not ceased to labor and to pray for His own cause. Indeed He is there because He can labor there to better advantage than here.

Hence all their prospects are full of hope. They lift up their eyes and see whole masses moving onward, and in this movement they cannot fail to rejoice. They are not the men to turn away from such a sight and mope along in dull and misanthropic melancholy. They do indeed see wickedness enough; but glory to God, Christ reigns, and will reign till He hath put all

His foes beneath His feet. Jesus reigns and the trumpet of His gospel is being blown in all the earth.

It is astonishing to see how stupid many professed Christians can be in this matter of human progress. If they awake, they would stand on tiptoe to see the tops of the great thoughts and ideas of the present age of progress.

Young men and young women, what do you say? What are you here for, and what am I here for? For what object did your parents send you here? And what are all these teachers here for? All, to do good; surely there is no other object that deserves an hour of our time and labor. Are there those among you who do not know what this means? I am grieved and ashamed that men can live in Oberlin without having their hearts all on fire with the benevolence of the gospel of Jesus Christ!



# AWAKING FROM THE SLEEP OF SPIRITUAL DEATH

*“Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” — Ephesians 5:14.*

This text and the subject it presents will lead me to discuss the following points, in the order stated.

- I. WHAT IS THIS DEATH?**
- II. WHY IS IT CALLED DEATH; WHO CAUSED IT, AND WHO WAS THE OCCASION OF IT?**
- III. THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION SPOKEN OF; AS AGENCIES AND INSTRUMENTS;**
- IV. THE REASONS FOR THE APPEAL — “ARISE FROM THE DEAD.”**

## I. WHAT THIS DEATH IS

This Epistle, chapter 2:1, gives us a safe and satisfactory answer. “And you hath He quickened (that is, made alive,) who were dead in trespasses and sins.” This shows what sort of death is contemplated — a death in sin. The general scope of the Epistle shows that the apostle is conceiving of the state of lost sinners, fearfully depraved, as being dead; that is, he uses the term, death, by a figure of speech, to denote their terrible apathy on the subject of their guilt and danger, and their fearful condition as exposed to the curse of God. A careful attention to the scope of this epistle will show this most fully.

Let it not be understood that this death is a state of perfect unconsciousness — by no means; nor is it a state in which all power of voluntary action is destroyed or even suspended; but it is a state in which no right moral action takes place. It is death in trespasses and sins.

We may revert to Romans 8:6, for a more specific description of this spiritual death. In this passage Paul says — “To be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.” The precise sense of the original is this; “The minding of the flesh is death;” the giving up of the mind to the demands of the flesh is utter ruin to the soul; because, says verse 7, “the minding of the flesh is enmity against God,” and this enmity against God at once constitutes a state of spiritual death and must of course prove the eternal ruin of the soul.

Reverting again to the train of thought and illustration pursued in Paul to the Ephesians, we read; — “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time passed ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the 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:) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,”

This death, therefore, as we see, is a death in sin — not one in which the mind is sunk into utter inactivity — not a state in which no action is possible; but simply one in which the mind acts, and the individual “walks according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air” — the same Satanic agency which energizes in all those who are disobedient to God. It is a *death unto God*, and to His character and claims. The dead sinner is regardless of God and of God’s rightful authority as one physically dead is unconscious of what passes around him; he is borne to his grave, but he knows not by whom; — so the spiritually dead are voluntarily insensible to the great facts of the spiritual world — insensible to God, to truth, and to their own relations to both. They may be intensely alive to the things of the natural world, to everything relating to earthly pleasure; but to God and duty, they are dead.

This state, then, is called death figuratively, and yet so accurately does it describe the sinner’s real case that it can scarcely be called a figure.

## II. I AM NEXT TO INQUIRE, WHO CAUSED THIS DEATH; AND WHAT IS ITS OCCASION?

The nature of the death spoken of, will readily answer both questions. By its very nature, it consists in being governed by the desires of the flesh and of the mind. It is being under the dominion of the appetites and passions. In language more strictly accurate, it consists in the mind's giving itself up to obey the demands of appetite and passion in opposition to the counter demands of reason, conscience, and God.

And now I ask, Who caused this death? If sinners are dead, who has killed them? Are they suicides, or has somebody else killed them? This is a vital question in our subject.

I am aware that sinners are wont to regard their depravity as their calamity and not their fault — but this point needs to be carefully considered, and thoroughly searched out. We shall have a clue to its real merits if we push the question — Who is it that has killed the sinner?

And yet when this question is pushed, there are some who will say — No matter who killed me if I am really dead. But this is by no means true or just. No suicide can stand up before God and claim that it matters not who caused his death; that it must be overlooked as his misfortune and not regarded as his fault.

Now the sinner's death is clearly proved to be a case of suicide. For, by the very nature of his death, nobody else could have caused it — no agency in the universe can be the cause of it but himself. For the cause of the death lies in his own voluntary action. He of his own free choice yields up himself to the demands of his appetites. He himself voluntarily chooses selfish good before and instead of God and of the universe, which is the very death of which we speak. In this and in this only consists his death in sin. He has made this fatal choice of pleasing self and displeasing God, not only through all the past years of his moral activity, but is making it at the present moment. In other words, he not only killed himself when he first began to act morally, but he has been repeating his suicidal acts ever since, and is repeating them even now. Now, even today, his own moral activities

are altogether suicidal, so that if he had never killed himself before, the voluntary sin of this day would be the murder of his soul.

The things I now affirm follow inevitably from the very nature of moral, voluntary action. No one compels a sinner to love himself more than he loves God; no one compels him to follow his own propensities, instead of obeying the voice of his reason and his conscience. No one man ever killed another in the sense of spiritual death; no man ever did or ever can sin for another so that his sin shall be the death spiritually of his neighbor. One man may entice another to sin; may tempt him — may lead him along into sinning; this is only being the occasion; and when we ask for the occasion of the sinner's spiritual death, much may be said about the agency of others. No doubt much is to be ascribed to the influences which occasion sin; but occasion and cause are entirely distinct and should never be confounded together. The cause is the acting agent who sins; the occasion may be any influence from other agents, acting upon the sensibilities of his being, appealing to his appetites and passions, and presenting inducements to wrong moral action.

The cause of an event or act is the efficient power which does it. It always implies the exercise of force or power, adequate to the production of the effect. Now with this meaning of the terms before our minds, we see that the only cause of sin must be the sinner's own voluntary powers of choice. No other being can compel him to sin; if the thing were possible, the sin when committed would not be his own sin, but the sin of the compelling power. Just as in physical death, you may tempt your neighbor to suicide; if in his sane mind he commits it, though under your temptation, it is suicide; he has killed himself, and however great your guilt, he is still the guilty cause of his own death. So of all temptations to sin. They are the occasion of sin, and sin never takes place without occasion. There must be something presented to the sinner's mind as an inducement which leads him to choose selfishly. All sin is choice which the sinner makes and persists in — choice of the good hoped for in disobeying God before the good promised in obeying. These temptations are various. Adam's first sin became the occasion of great sin to his race — very great sin; — of this there can be no doubt. So all the intemperance that has ever existed has made the appetite more clamorous, for by a law of our physical constitution, the habits of the parent affect his constitution, and his

constitution affects that of his offspring. Thus the effects of Adam's sin have passed over upon all his race.

Whether if Adam had not sinned, any or all of his race would have sinned, I do not know. Some men have thought themselves very wise on this subject; but the Bible states this fact, that Adam's sin has occasioned the sin of all of his race. This is all the Bible affirms on this point. It does not at all assume to show what would have been the course of things in our race if Adam had not sinned. The Bible has however taught us one other fact about sin, namely, that all sin is transgression of law, and of course it implies intelligence of law, and voluntary action in stepping over it. And indeed, our own consciousness affirms that all sin is voluntary action.

It can therefore be of no use to us to speculate upon Adam's sin, and upon what would have been, or might have been, if Adam had never sinned. It is enough to know that all sin is voluntary — that temptation can only be an occasion and never a cause; and hence that however much culpability may attach to the tempter, enough of the guilt of sin will always rest upon the sinner himself to crush him under its fearful curse.

I repeat and wish it to be borne carefully in mind that this death is spiritual, not physical; and essentially consists in a voluntary subjection of the whole being to the demands of self-gratification. The voluntary agent gives himself up to the indulgence of self in just those respects in which God commands him to deny himself; that is, he goes into self-indulgence where the divine law commands him to please God and not self — or to benefit his neighbor instead of seeking to engross all benefit to self.

Now it is a radically essential element in this state of mind that it is voluntary. It can never be forced. It can never be the direct and proper effect of causation exercised by another being. If it were, we could not call it sin in the subject of such force. If any man could be made, despite of himself, to do acts which are in their own nature sinful, they could not be sin in him. This is too obvious to need proof. There is therefore no such thing as forced sin — sin done by me which another being caused and compelled, despite of my resistance.

Again, the death spoken of is not what some have designated original sin. Many old divines hold that there is such a thing as original sin, which

however is not transgression of law — is not voluntary action of any sort, but is a certain sinfulness in the very substance of the soul. They hold that all the faculties, parts and powers of the soul are sinful; and this sinfulness they call original sin.

This however is not God's teaching, but man's. It is taught in human creeds and catechisms; not in the Bible. When the Bible comes to speak of man's death in sin, all is made plain, as in our context, and in its parallel passages. The whole of the matter is that man of his own free will gives himself up voluntarily to self-pleasing. The Bible fastens the guilt of this state and of all its moral activities directly upon the voluntary action of the sinning agent — not upon his created powers but upon his voluntary exercise of his powers — not upon the substance of his soul as created, but upon his own responsible action after he has been created.

It is wonderful that man should have represented this death as consisting in original sin as I have described it, while the Bible so plainly describes it as a voluntary minding of the flesh, — and as a “walking after the course of this world.” Everywhere the Bible fastens the guilt of sin upon man's voluntary rebellion against God's claims. “They have loved idols.” “They will not frame their doings to turn unto the Lord.” They say unto God, — “depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.”

Again, if the Bible had taught original sin as some divines have taught it, the human intelligence could never have received it. If the Bible had affirmed that this death is not voluntary, but consists in a created nature, no man could rationally admit it. What other position could an intelligent man take under this doctrine than that which a friend of mine once took. His mind had been filled with the notion that Adam's first sin had been imputed to all his posterity and to himself among the rest; and that consequently he came into existence with a nature itself sinful; — What could he do therefore but reject these doctrines, even though he must reject the Bible with them? He was told that this original sin, committed not by himself but by Adam, became in him a death, in producing which he had no agency, and yet was condemned for it to an eternal hell. How could his intelligence admit this! He was told that from this death in sin he must rise at once, although he had no more power to do it than he had to move a world; — what could he do with such a demand!

I found him rejecting the Bible. I asked him why he should do this? He answered me — Because I know it is not true.

But said I to him — what do you mean? He explained. “The Bible says that man came into the world, all sin — every faculty sinful — the faculties themselves actual sin; and then it holds that God commands me to come out of this state on pain of damnation, although, at the same time, He knows that I have no more power to do it than to create a world. Now such being the teaching of the Bible, I know that the God who made my mind never made that book.”

Such language will perhaps shock many of you, yet it is only the simple statement of facts. In reply, he was told that the notions he had justly deemed so absurd were not God’s teachings but man’s. I assured him those things were drawn from human creeds and catechisms, not from the Bible. He was confounded, and thrown at once utterly out of his position of infidelity. He saw that he had been rejecting the Bible for reasons which had no basis in the real teachings of that book. In the issue of this reaction upon his mind you will rejoice to learn that on that very day he was converted to God.

And now, beloved, if you would reach the truth on this great matter of the sinner’s spiritual death, you must compare scripture with scripture. You must resort to scripture to explain itself. Pursuing this method you learn that this death is a minding of the flesh, a walking after the flesh, and consequently a self inflicted death — a death of voluntary opposition to God because it is a voluntary consecration of self to sin.

### III.. THE NATURE OF THE RESURRECTION SPOKEN OF; AS AGENCIES AND INSTRUMENTS;

The nature of the resurrection here spoken of, may be learned from the nature of the death to which it stands opposed. It is arising from the state of death described. Of course the rising must correspond to the death. Since therefore the death in question consists in a voluntary devotion to sin, involving a moral stupor, and an intense dislike of God and of His claims; so the rising from such a death must be a voluntary rising of the

mind to a sense of its responsibilities to God and a voluntary placing of itself under God's influence, in the attitude of obedience and submission.

As to the nature of the agency employed in this resurrection, the Bible refers much of it to the Spirit of God, and no doubt with the utmost truth. Yet this like many other truths has been woefully abused, for many, observing how much is ascribed to this agency, have maintained that this agent does all the work and man himself nothing. A writer not long since attempted to prove that the work of spiritual resurrection and regeneration is wrought of God. To this it was replied that this statement tells but half the truth; for the Bible ascribes this work to the influence of revealed truth as often and as fully as it ascribes it to the divine Spirit. The Bible also ascribes it to man, for instance to Paul, who himself says, "I have begotten you through the gospel." And finally, it ascribes the work to the sinner himself.

Now, what if I should adopt the same method of proof as the writer alluded to, and try to show that this work is done by man himself and cite my proof texts and stop there. Or suppose I labor to prove that the work is wrought by the influence of other men, by gospel ministers, for instance; — cite my proof texts and stop there; or that it is done by revealed truth; — then cite my proofs and pretend that I have exhausted the subject, and stop there. Now plainly these methods of presenting the subject all stop, having given but a part of the truth in the case. They none of them present a full view of the Bible teachings on this subject. According to the Bible, there is always a combination of agencies, the Spirit, the truth, other men, and the agent or sinner himself.

The manner in which divine and human agencies cooperate in this spiritual resurrection we may never be able fully to explain, yet there are many things in the Bible which may throw light upon it. Take the case of healing the impotent man, Acts 3. Peter fixing his eyes upon the cripple said — "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," Forthwith, the cripple begins to make effort; Peter takes him by the right hand to lift him up; his feet and ankle bones receive strength; then he, leaping up, stood, and then walked. Here was a real miracle — a supernatural exertion of physical power, yet with it, there was also an exercise of the mind and of the muscular powers of the subject. So when Christ came to the grave of



Lazarus, and cried with a loud voice — “Lazarus come forth;” immediately there was motion where all was the stillness of death before. When this voice rang in his ear, he started up and came forth. These were indeed physical changes, but they may serve to illustrate the change that takes place when God says to a dead sinner, Come forth. Before this, God’s servants could not get the sinner’s attention. Every sense seemed locked up in the sleep of spiritual death. He heard not until God spake. When others spake to him he seemed to hear as a man will sometimes hear the cry of fire in his sleep, or the striking of a clock in his reverie, but no thorough impression is made on his mind. So in the case of the sinner; man may speak to the outward ear, but God only speaks to his mind. When the sinner hears God’s voice, his ears are opened. God cries in his ear — Come forth; — then as if a peal of thunder rang in his ear, he starts up in terror and trembling. Still he sees not the bow of promise. He sees only that awful cloud of thunder and blackness. Sinking in terror, he cries out, — God has spoken to my soul and how can I rest? Then if he can only see that bow of promise, spanning the cross of Calvary, and seeming to spread its wing of love over himself, then, O then, how he leaps up from the grave of his spiritual death! He hears God saying to him, “Awake thou that sleepest;” and does he rise? Yes, at once, and without delay, he puts forth the requisite activities and comes into real life.

Of instruments, I need only say that God usually employs some third person, of which we have a beautiful description in Ezekiel 37th.; the vision of the valley of dry bones. No doubt this was intended to represent God’s manner of calling men out of the death of unbelief into the spiritual life of faith. When, as is there described, God’s voice, through His servants sounds all abroad, then His power is felt.

The reasons of this command which bids the sinner arise, next require our attention.

As this death is a voluntary suicide, men would be to blame for it even if they were unable to rise from it to life again. Yet if they lay under this absolute inability, God could not require them to rise. He might hold them guilty for the suicide, and yet not hold them guilty for not raising themselves to life again. The latter would doubtless be the case if they had no power to bring themselves to life.

But the sinner has this power. His death in sin is a voluntary state of mind, and is kept up by voluntary action. In fact so strong is God's appeal to the intelligence and conscience of the sinner, that he has to exert himself to keep himself dead. It often seems as if he would rise in spite of himself, like a cork pressed under water, struggling to reach the surface. Some of you know this in your own experience. How many of you have been almost persuaded to become Christians; the voice of God rang in your ears, and its powerful appeals to your reason and conscience pressed with mighty power upon your soul; His Spirit strove with you and you were scarcely able to resist; almost you were persuaded to forego your sins and all their pleasures; it might be said of you — "He is not far from the kingdom of God" — but you did not enter. You still held on to your beloved idols, and after them you would go. In fact, it is so far from being true that men have no power to rise from spiritual death, that they can scarcely summon power enough to keep themselves from rising. They can scarcely resist the appeal which God makes to their hearts.

Every man affirms to himself that he ought to rise from this state of spiritual death — ought to be and become a Christian. His own reason affirms to him that he has no right to remain in a state of voluntary spiritual death. He knows that the only reason why he does not rise at once out of this death is his own voluntary refusal to do so. Consequently, the sinner who listens to these affirmations of his own intelligence and conscience, can have no rational peace in his sins. Much of the stupid peace which sinners do enjoy in this state, is afforded them by those perverted notions of inability to which I have alluded. By the aid of these, the conscience relieves itself of obligation and the sinner finds a torpid quiet in his sins for which the real truth affords no justification whatever.

## REMARKS

**1.** Sinners are the worst of suicides. During my life I have seen but one case of physical suicide, nor would I wish to see another. I could never lose the impression of awful horror made on my mind by the spectacle. It shocked the whole community. It was indeed a most awful sight.

Yet what is physical suicide in its most awful form compared with destroying one's own soul!

There may be reasons which strongly urge a man to take his own life. There never can be any good reasons for a man's destroying his own soul. A man may labor under physical derangement, and under this influence may take utterly false views of things, which may lead him to physical suicide; but that a man should destroy his own soul — what can be more shocking! How utterly inexcusable, especially after all God has done to save the souls of lost sinners!

**2.** We may see in what sense we are dependent upon God's Spirit. It is in this sense simply — to induce him to do what he ought to do of himself. With no other light than God has given to all men in His word, they ought to see their duty, and duty being seen, they ought at once to do it. And yet they are dependent upon the light of the Spirit. Why? Because they will not admit to their own minds the light of God's word without the Spirit's extra aid, and because light seen is resisted.

Take a supposition. Suppose a man has made up his mind to commit murder. He reveals his plan to his wife. She does her utmost to dissuade him from his purpose, but in vain. He still goes on in his preparations to execute his plan. She thinks of a friend who has such influence over her husband as may avail to save him. She rushes to him for help. He is successful.

Now this is a supposable case. All this might in fact occur. But in such a case as this, you cannot but see that though this man was dependent on his friend for his salvation, yet that his very dependence was his fault. He was dependent, not in the sense that he could not forbear to commit murder, but only in the sense that he would not desist from his purpose, under any influence short of this. He would have committed the murder but for the interposed influence of his friend.

So of the sinner. The Spirit's influence is needed only to make you do what you ought to do without it. Hence, so far from being an excuse for your inaction, it rebukes all inaction, and shows its damning guilt.

- 3.** Hence the Spirit's influences are altogether gracious. They are in no sense a matter of merit on our part, or even of claim on the ground of our inability.
- 4.** The gift of the Spirit being a matter of grace may be withheld or withdrawn at the divine option. You may expect the Spirit to leave you if you continue to resist and abuse His agency.
- 5.** Death in sin no more involves an inability to become holy than death to sin does an inability to sin again. There is no proper inability in either case. The Christian dead to sin, has the power to return like the dog to his vomit; the sinner dead in sin, by an equally voluntary death, has the power to emerge from that stated death, by the voluntary efforts of his own mind.
- 6.** Our text makes its pungent and personal appeal to sinners in their sins. Addressing you — all ye who are dead in sins, it cries — “Awake, awake, open your eyes and behold the light of truth; put forth your own agency and activity; come forth from that grave in which you have slept so long. And what do you say? Do you reply — Lord, I hear Thy voice — Lord, I come — I come to Thee? Then come forth to light and life forevermore.

But are you groping about after light? Or are you caviling and resisting? Do you talk of being so dead that you have no power at all to rise? Remember, you are your own murderer. You lie in your spiritual grave because you are resolved to have earthly and not heavenly good for your portion. And now do you want the light of God upon your sealed eyes? Open those eyes and welcome the light that shines from God upon you. Feel your responsibility and meet it as becomes an accountable, immortal mind.

## THE FEARFUL RESULTS OF A SPIRITUAL RELAPSE

“When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” Matthew 12:43-45.

The immediate occasion of these words was the manifest and great backsliding of the Jewish people generally after the temporary awakening which was occasioned by the preaching of John the Baptist. It is obvious from the history that the nation had been extensively moved under John’s preaching. Great multitudes flocked to hear him — indeed the historian says, “Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.” Public attention was aroused and a solemn impression made. More still than this, it should be said that their minds had been specially directed to One who should come after him — far greater than himself — indeed the same whom the good men of their nation had long expected as their promised Messiah. Yet when the great Messiah came, the people were unprepared to receive Him. A great change had passed over the spirit of the nation. No sooner did Christ begin to preach than a strong opposition began to be manifested. There had evidently been a great backsliding. We must suppose that many who had been aroused under John’s preaching were now bitterly hostile to Christ’s doctrine.

When this fact became apparent, the Savior illustrated its guilt and danger in the language of our text, by a figure taken from the then common occurrence of demoniacal possessions. An unclean spirit has had possession in a man; he goes out; finding no rest elsewhere, he returns, and here finding all things so well prepared for his reception, he is encouraged to get more company; — goes and gets to go with him, seven other spirits more wicked than himself; they all enter in and dwell there, so that the last

state of that man is worse than the first. The poor man did not take advantage of the absence of the unclean spirit, and put himself at once in a position in which no such being could ever come near him again, but rather prepared himself the more for their reception. Consequently he soon had enough of them to make his last state worse than his first.

Thus does our Lord illustrate the case of the Jewish nation who had temporarily recovered themselves out of the snare and the power of the devil — had given heed to the words of life spoken by John, but had suddenly and woefully relapsed, rejecting their great Messiah, and now were seven fold more under the power of the devil than ever before.

But theirs was no unusual experience. It happens to all who relapse in like manner, rejecting the truth which they had begun to receive. Hence the text reveals a *general principle*.

In discussing this principle and bringing out clearly its present application, we must,

- I. CONSIDER WHAT IS REPRESENTED BY THE DEPARTURE OF THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.**
- II. THAT THE STATE OF THINGS CONSEQUENT ON HIS DEPARTURE CANNOT CONTINUE LONG.**
- III. POINT OUT THE DANGERS AND RESULTS OF A SPIRITUAL RELAPSE.**

I. The first and great thing represented by the departure of the unclean spirit is, the breaking up of the *spell of sin*. Sinners who can live stupidly in sin are spell-bound. Sin has a charm — a power of infatuation over them. They don't see their sins nor at all understand their spiritual condition. They can even say — "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; but they know not that they are wretched and poor and miserable and blind and naked." Poor souls! They do not know the first thing about their true condition as they ought to and need to know it.

But the thing represented by the going out of the unclean spirit is, the breaking up of this spell of self-delusion. The man becomes troubled on account of his sins. He is convicted and begins to bestir himself. Perhaps he sets about some external reformation, taking the greatest pains to make

some clean spots on the outside of the cup and platter, yet leaving the inside full of all uncleanness. Pressed by conviction of sin, he comes towards the gate of mercy, yet pauses there and lingers long through indecision. He thinks; he prays some; he waits and deliberates on the very threshold of the kingdom of heaven. This seems to be precisely the state represented by the case of the man out of whom the unclean spirit has gone. There is a temporary suspension of the reign of evil; and a consequent opening for new relations with the good. The sinner might now have life, and he makes some approximation towards it; perhaps he does all, but the vital thing, viz., to close in finally and fully with the conditions of salvation. He is almost persuaded, does everything else but give his whole heart to God, yet failing of this, nothing is so done as to secure any permanently good results. The Jewish nation had gone so far that they seemed quite prepared to receive their expected Messiah — yet when He came, where were they?

This leads me to consider,

## II. THE FACT THAT THIS STATE OF MIND, ILLUSTRATED BY THE TEMPORARY ABSENCE OF THE EVIL SPIRIT, CANNOT CONTINUE LONG

**1.** The Spirit of God is soon grieved away. His convicting work is scarcely ever continued long unless His monitions are heeded and obeyed. With awful emphasis God has declared — “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” When a man resists God’s efforts through His Spirit to convict and save his soul, he may expect to be left soon to the bitter folly of his own infatuation.

**2.** Restrained propensities, unless soon subdued by submission to God, will reassert their terrible sway, and if so, will do it with augmented force. They will not brook restraint long, unless grace comes and lends her strong arm for their subjugation. If the man will let Christ come into his breast and barricade his soul all around about to fortify him against all temptation, and withal, to become a fountain of strength within, then restrained propensities are brought under and victory is both sure and permanent. But not otherwise. It is all in vain for a convicted sinner to

suppose that without divine help, he can keep his propensities long under such restraint as conscience and reason dictate.

**3.** The conscience soon becomes seared. It is found to be less and less active — less quick and less vigorous in its rebukes. He who has one day found its fangs almost intolerable, finds ere long that its voice is almost entirely silent. This result of resisting truth is a law of mind. It must take place where conscience is unheeded and truth, seen, is disregarded. How often do we see this terrible law of mind exemplified!

But I must hasten to speak,

### III. OF THE DANGERS AND RESULTS OF A SPIRITUAL RELAPSE

Of its dangers how can we say less than that it is infinitely fraught with danger, of the worst kind. The worst forms of evil are sure to follow. Seven other spirits more wicked than the first are sure to enter in, and what is more, they go in to *dwell* there, little expecting to be ever ousted from their secure abode.

The sinner's dangers will be as numerous as his temptations, for probably each temptation will now get the mastery over him.

After the action of the mind in its convicted state, there naturally comes on a reaction, and this is generally fatal. When persons, having been partially reclaimed, have relapsed into any particular vice, there is small reason to hope they will come up again. How often has this been seen in the progress of the Temperance Reform? Thousands have been caught hold of by the strong arm of affection and lifted up to the edge of the awful quagmire; but unless they have themselves caught hold of the arm of Jehovah's strength, they have in many, many cases slipped from their treacherous footing and slumped back in to that awful Slough of Death — *A Drunkard's Relapse*. You have seen such things. They are developments of a general law of mind. Unless the effort of reform is backed up by grace, reaction will certainly ensue and its power will be terrible. Let the dykes once begin to give way and the current set across the breach — all is over. Relapse bursts these flood gates of death. The power of the mind to resist



temptation seems to be broke down. The mind seems to have given itself up to be overcome, and the genius of evil is not slow to seize his opportunity of making his victim sure. Nor is there an encouraging hope of deliverance. The mind has once met the question — Shall I give myself wholly up to God and take hold of promised grace to subdue all future sin? It met this question, but failed to decide it right. It is henceforth averse to meeting the question again. A sense of shame perhaps forbids. A feeling of self-respect rises up and seems to demand that a position once taken shall be maintained. The mind is irked and vexed with the perpetual recurrence of an unwelcome question, once set at rest. Hence there is small reason to hope that the mind will return to the subject and make a right decision, and thus secure the deliverance needed and provided.

All these influences combine to put the relapsed soul on an inclined plane, down which it glides smoothly and swiftly to the gulf of ruin. The house does not stand long, waiting to be filled; soon a seven-fold evil comes in, and comes to *dwell* there.

The case as given by our Lord illustrates a great principle. If the Jewish nation falls back from the moral elevation gained under John's preaching, temptations rush in again with their augmented returning waves, and the fearful crisis of its moral ruin hastens on apace. The individual soul that gives way again to temptation after a partial rescue has less power to resist than before; the mind becomes chafed and restive, or perhaps discouraged; it hates restraint more than ever, and sometimes seems to come all suddenly to the decision — "*I will not be restrained any longer.*"

## REMARKS

**1.** Everyone acquainted with the history of the Jews knows how aptly this illustration meets their case. Who ever has read Josephus' history of the Jewish Wars, and of the ensuing destruction of their beloved city, will recognize at once the moral features of the likeness drawn by Christ in our text. The nation perished because it was too awfully wicked to live any longer. Who that has read of their awful corruption does not see the seven other wicked devils in undisputed possession, and the last state of the nation worse than the first — ah! with a vengeance! Retribution came, as it

always must when the cup of iniquity is full, and none who saw it as it measured out its terrible judgments upon the doomed city and people could forbear to cry out — “Verily, the anger of their God is heavy upon them and there is no remedy!” When they pressed into Pilate’s court and cried — “Let Him be crucified.” — they recklessly braved if indeed they did not invoke the vengeance of Jehovah — “His blood,” they say, “be on us and on our children!” How terribly did it fall on them ere long!

**2.** The same principle applies substantially to every reformation that has ever occurred. It has come with its hands full of blessings which some have received, and have found good, even to the extent of everlasting life; but others, rejecting these blessings, have become indefinitely worse. Their becoming worse is no fault of the gospel itself, but is altogether their own. It is no more the fault of the gospel now than it was in Christ’s own age and under His preaching. Then as now, some rejected the counsel of God against their own souls, and as a consequence what came from God to bless them they turned into a terrible curse and cursed themselves with it for eternity.

Thus seasons of reformation in every age of the world are set for the fall and for the uprising of many in Israel — for the fall of many never to rise again; and for the uprising of many to life and blessedness eternal. The reformations are themselves faultless and may be conducted unexceptionably: but he who repels their influence will soon find his soul beyond the reach of good in this or any other world. There can be no good to those who scorn God’s means of conferring it. How rapidly they go down to moral destruction when once by resisting truth they have lost the bottom of their minds, so that hence forth they hear truth only as a tub without a bottom holds water!

**3.** The passage before us and the principle it illustrates should be compared with that fearful declaration of God which speaks of those that “perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved,” and of whom He says — “for this cause God shall send upon them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not all the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Discarding and hating the truth which God reveals in love to their souls, they were suffered to embrace errors more and more

destructive. They chose darkness rather than light; what therefore could a God of light and truth do for them more? What else should He do but make them beacons to warn other sinners against the rocks on which they made shipwreck of their moral natures and hence of their eternal well-being? Time was in their case when the evil spirit went out of them also, but they utterly failed to improve their opportunity for God; the spirit came back, found all things to his mind; took seven spirits indefinitely worse; they all take up their abode in that sinner's heart; then follow infatuation and swift damnation.

**4.** We see the danger incurred by churches and families, if they fail to “know the day of their visitation.”

The fearful woes which fell on the Jewish nation came on them, said their offered Savior, “Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” They had a visitation of mercy; God came near as He could to bless them; but the mass saw not, or at least heeded not His coming; practically they “*knew* not the day of their visitation.” They ought to have known it. It was more their fault than their misfortune that they failed to know it.

So of churches and families in our day, to whom God comes graciously near but who fail to notice His presence, or are not quite ready to greet His coming, until He is gone! Alas! How many such cases occur both in churches and in families! They see not their hour of mercy till it has past. They are not in the secret counsels of the Most High — do not abide so near the Lord as to know His near approach. A few individuals may have such communion with God as to feel His special presence; but their testimony may be wholly unknown, and if known, may be unheeded by their brethren. Many such churches have I seen, which seemed in many respects just on the eve of being blessed with great power; but the cloud of mercy broke and passed off with only a great wind; Satan came back and with him legions of evil spirits, and their last state was seven-fold worse than their first.

**5.** From this point of our subject, we can see the great guilt of those who “come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty,” until the strength of the few who are in the battlefield is spent. In all cases where the Lord comes near to bless a people, many laborers are needed to cooperate in His work. If they are not on hand, the work flags, and soon the

Spirit of God is withdrawn. This is the more certainly the case if the lack of laborers is the fault of God's professing people. If it should occur without their fault, the fact would not offend God and would not be necessarily a reason for the sudden withdrawal of His Spirit.

But as the cases commonly occur, the lack of laborers is wholly attributable to the spiritual apathy of professed Christians. All appearances indicate that God is about to work mightily through and by His people; a few observe these tokens and enter with all their strength upon the work of the Lord; but the many are not ready for the sacrifice and effort called by the tokens of Jehovah's presence; they do not come up to the help of the Lord against His mighty foes. The angel of the Lord sends down His curse upon them. "Curse them bitterly," says He, because in the hour of need they would not help in the work of the Lord!. God called, but they came not. The crisis came, and the crisis went: they moved not: now therefore the wrath of the Lord waxes hot against them for their fearful disobedience to Heaven's high command.

**6.** Reaction is disastrous in proportion to the extent of the partial reformation. It was obviously so in the case of John's preaching. Those who learned from him most fully the way of salvation and who when Jesus came rejected Him were most deeply guilty and most awfully cursed by the returning power of other unclean spirits.

We who are parents may see what you have to expect if you allow this spiritual relapse to come upon your children. Perhaps you will not realize their danger and will fail to press them to the final and full decision for Christ until the precious season is past: until the unclean spirit returns and legions more, yet worse, come in and dwell there. Depend upon it, you will find the illustration given in our text but too fearfully true. Just in proportion to the light sinned against and to the nearness with which the kingdom of heaven is brought to their hearts, will be the terribleness of their relapse and the uncertainty of their being ever again brought even so much as near to Christ's kingdom. O how fearful a thing for a Christian parent to suffer a child to slip past the sealing time, and go on his broad and easy way towards remediless woe. How carefully should they watch the hour when the unclean spirit is gone out, and bar the door forever against his return! For, once returned and admitted — once reinforced with

the presence of seven other more wicked spirits, the state of one who is even a child of praying parents becomes fearfully perilous. Let parents think much of their responsibility to seize now the favoring moment. Never wait till sin gets entrenched in the heart. Take care against even one relapse from a convicted state into unconcern and stupidity. You can scarcely conceive how terribly one such relapse augments the difficulties in the way of sound conversion ever afterwards.

**7.** The relapse is usually more or less sudden, always more or less obvious and apparent, according to the tone of general influence which prevails in the place. For under a strong moral influence, the most hardened sinners are often kept morally decent for a long time. But go into a place where sin takes to itself free scope and ranges at will; there you will see the legitimate workings of a spiritual relapse. There you will see how terrible is the tendency of sin to drag its victim downward, downward, to the very depths of hell. You can there mark the fearful reaction which follows deliberate rejection of offered mercy, especially if done despite of the powerful action of divine influence, seeking to persuade the sinner to repent. If you have never seen these developments in so strong a light as I have represented them, you need only go where external restraint is chiefly or wholly withdrawn, and you will surely see it, and will say the half had never been told you.

**8.** How terrible, therefore, must be the moral state of those who profess to be religious, but who yet have relapsed entirely in heart and are only kept in moral decency by the force of involuntary habits or that of public sentiment. How appalling is their danger! Every physician knows what a relapse is in his patient; he has seen them till he has reason to dread them as his most dangerous adversaries. He thought the crisis of danger was nearly past — all seemed to be doing well; hope had sprung up in his bosom and become almost settled into assurance, when suddenly the awful fact of *relapse* — flashes upon his eye! Ah, now there is peril! Now let medical skill do its utmost; there is scant hope at the very best. There is scarce a more fearful event in the whole range of medical practice than this of relapse. The system has perhaps rallied itself to its utmost strength to throw off disease and it seemed about to conquer; but now, its powers exhausted, its enemy charges again as with fresh forces and the conflict if not fatal is at least terrible.

Not less so is the conflict between the seven-fold forces of sin and the retreating and half-crushed moral energies that remain after a spiritual relapse. Alas, how many have found the conflict short and feeble, and the issue forever fatal. My dear hearers, it is a fearful thing to suffer a deep moral relapse. Woe to those upon whose backsliding souls it shall fall!

What then will you do? What will you do *today*? Are you aware of the state of things among yourselves, of the degree in which the Spirit's power is manifested here even among you? If you were fully so, you must see that this is no time for spiritual trifling. You would see a stronger emphasis than ever you have seen before in the language — "Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." From many of you the unclean spirit has gone out, and in the deep calm which ensues, you might with hopeful ease, escape the snares of Satan and place yourselves under the shadow of the Savior's wing; *will you do it*? If still you are tempted to linger, — I say unto you, beware of those seven other spirits, more wicked than the first, for they need only this very lingering of yours to be their signal for returning with more awful power to take such a possession of your soul as your efforts, thenceforward faint and feeble, will never avail to disturb.

## PAUL AND FELIX; OR PREACHING AND PROCRASTINATION

“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season; I will call for thee.”  
Acts 24:24-25.

Paul, on a visit to Jerusalem, had been seized by the bigoted and hostile Jews. A conspiracy was formed against him to take his life. Several men had madly taken a solemn vow not to eat or drink till they had slain him. This came to Paul's ears — was by him communicated to the Roman officers; and in consequence of this a strong guard removed him from Jerusalem to Cesarea, the residence of the Roman governor. Here Paul lay confined, awaiting trial. The history describes the commission of Ananias the high priest, with the elders, and an orator named Tertullus, to appear against Paul before Felix the Roman governor — their charge and plea, and Paul's defense. All these you can read at your leisure in Acts 24. They present a beautiful specimen of Roman justice, developing the principles of law, then in current practice, and especially that celebrated usage of their courts, whereby the accused were allowed to answer each for himself. It was in pursuance of this usage that Paul as in our text was brought before Felix and there permitted to plead his own cause.

On this memorable occasion Paul appears before us, not absorbed in the interests of his own individual case, though this involved personal liberty if not even life; — but we see him true, as he had long been, to his work as a preacher of Christ's gospel and intent chiefly to save souls. He preached “concerning the faith in Christ.” “He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” On these points he spake with such power that Felix trembled, and answered — “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

In pursuing my remarks upon this wonderful defense, I remark,

## I. THAT IT GIVES US A CLUE TO THE APOSTOLIC MANNER OF PREACHING SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST

You will observe that, it is said that he preached concerning the “*faith in Christ.*” This was made in those times, the great question. The Jews had long held that salvation is to be obtained through works. Paul speaks on the subject as if salvation must be only by faith in Christ. Here then was the issue as between the self-righteous Jews and the apostles.

Now observe Paul’s manner closely. *What* did he preach? Our text is explicit. “He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” And he so reasoned on those points that Felix trembled. The narrative begins with saying that Felix “heard him concerning the faith in Christ;” but you will observe that as it progresses to the details, it specifies that he “reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come.” Did he, then as some seem to suppose, preach Christ, Christ, nothing but Christ? Did he begin with an unenlightened uninstructed sinner — a sinner who had no just sense of his sins, and preach only Christ, with no allusion to that sinner’s guilt and need of such a Savior as Christ Jesus? We can easily see how it was. Paul carried his appeal at once to the conscience of his royal hearer. It mattered little whether this king was or was not familiar with Jewish law; Paul did not care. Paul knew he had a conscience, and that upon this conscience his appeal would take hold with convincing and condemning power. He therefore made this his first effort. He first appealed to the conscience of Felix on the great law of right — brought up to his own notice the life and conduct of the man — the sinner, and set all his past deeds in array before his eyes, and as they stand forth in the light of a judgment to come. Whatever good works Felix may have supposed himself to have done, were not brought into the account at all. Indeed we must presume that this sermon left him no room to think of his good works at all. Probably it threw them all utterly out of view and showed him that he labored under the greatest mistake if he supposed they were of the least conceivable value. The method adopted by Paul



compelled Felix to seek salvation elsewhere than the heathen seek it, for it showed him that they can find no salvation adequate to meet the case of a lost sinner. It held him to his obligations to a life of righteousness and temperance as in view of a coming judgment, and thus made him feel his need of such a Savior as Christ. Paul knew well that this reasoning must condemn the entire life of Felix, and that the only hope of ever doing him any good lay in an attempt to force conviction upon his conscience. Hence his policy.

Another thing. It does not appear by any means from the history that Felix had ever heard the evidence to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the true Messiah. Be this as it may, it does not appear that Paul tarried a moment on this point on the present occasion. Instead of setting himself to array and substantiate these evidences, he goes at once before the conscience of his auditor, by one powerful appeal shutting him up at once to the necessity of having such a Savior as Christ. He talks to him of a judgment to come; shows him from the laws of his own moral being that there ought to be such a judgment and that from the righteousness of God's throne, there *must* be. Such was the strain of his appeal.

## II. LET US NEXT NOTICE THE EFFECT OF THIS METHOD

It is told in few words. Felix trembled. Conviction of guilt flashed upon him. Although the preacher was before him, a prisoner in chains, yet an arrow had pierced his conscience and it made him quail on his throne of state. He saw that there was a King on a higher throne, before which himself stood arraigned and guilty. He saw there must be a judgment to come and that the great God must surely judge him there. He saw that Paul spoke only the words of truth and soberness, for his own conscience affirmed and endorsed every charge which the preacher made. Hence when Paul appealed to his conscience about law, sin, and a coming judgment, he was shut up and condemned, and hence prepared to enquire whether there can be any way in which God can be just and yet justify the sinner who believes in Jesus.

### III. I NEXT OBSERVE THAT WE HAVE IN OUR TEXT A SPECIMEN OF THE MANNER IN WHICH SINNERS REJECT THE GOSPEL AND EVADE ITS CLAIMS

We see how apostles preached Christ; how, beginning with the law and making its appeal to the sinner's conscience, they shut men up to the gospel and compelled them to flee to it for refuge if they would have any refuge at all; but how did sinners then evade this duty? How escape, or at least *try* to escape the pressure of this appeal?

We can readily see. Felix did not and could not deny the truth of what Paul had preached. He saw and in some degree felt the fearful truth as to his own sin and guilt, and righteous doom as a sinner. He must moreover have seen his *remedy*. The gospel was before him in its greatest plainness and simplicity, no doubt, and therefore he knew that he might have Christ *now* as his own Savior, if he would. Yet though so convicted before the chained apostle as to tremble on his very throne of judgment, he did not bid this gospel welcome. He was still so selfish that he sought to make this matter of personal salvation a thing of convenience. "When I have a convenient season, said he, I will call for thee." The subject agonized him and he wanted therefore to dismiss it for the present at least. Besides he managed, as most sinners do, to work in another quite incidental question and give it an entirely undue influence. Shall I sympathize, said he, with a man who is a prisoner before me, and take sides with a despised Christian against the whole Jewish nation? What effect would such a course have on my popularity?

He could not say — I will never accept the gospel, I will never have anything to do with it. No; he knew too much of its truth, and too deeply felt his own need of it, to allow him to turn off the matter thus. In fact, he was in precisely the position of thousands in our own land; entirely convinced of the truth of the gospel, yet by no means ready to embrace it. Political motives restrained and embarrassed him, and under their influence he could readily believe that he could yet have this salvation at some quite convenient time when he should be prepared to attend to it and embrace it. He held it to be an offer that he could accept at his own convenience, and

therefore, though he deeply felt its great importance, and though his nerves trembled and he could not rest, yet he could at least delay; and this he resolved to do. In this decision he did not stand for what was right as between his soul and his offered Savior: nor did he heed the influence of his example, nor consider his responsibilities as affecting the salvation of hundreds besides himself.

Moreover, he did not purpose to reject this gospel offer finally and forever; by no means; he still hoped to be saved at last. But, here was a door open to get some money; and this hope ravished his selfish soul. He hoped Paul or his friends for him, would offer a bribe for his release, and therefore — to get some money — not to get salvation — “he sent for him the oftener and communed with him.” But with the hope of a bribe in his eye, how could he come down in the spirit of a little child, self-emptied and self-condemned, and embrace the pure and self-humbling gospel? He did no such thing. It does not appear that he made any advances in this direction, even after the first fatal hour, when he said — “Go thy way for this time.” Beyond this the descent was precipitous and no power could retard his rushing speed to ruin. He never found the convenient time to close up this concern by giving his whole heart to Jesus, and bidding welcome to his needy soul the offers of free salvation.

## REMARKS

**1.** It is worthy of notice that the inspired teachers always assume the true philosophy of mind, and hence the true way of teaching it and controlling its decisions. True, the Bible does not intend to teach mental philosophy in a scientific way, nor indeed in any direct way yet by inference the Bible does teach mental science most clearly and most fully. If any man will give his mind to this subject and ask — “What does this command imply as true in regard to the mental constitution of those to whom it is addressed?” he cannot fail to arrive at the correct answer. He must see that a command imposed by a good Being, implies the possession of power to obey it. So let him take up also the promises and put the same question, asking, what is assumed to be the moral state of those to whom such promises, are addressed? There can be but one answer, and that will reveal just principles of mental science. See how Paul approached and appealed to

this heathen man. Did he assume that this heathen had a conscience before which he could make and lodge his appeal? Most clearly he did, and acted promptly upon this assumption. He knew that however dark his mind might be as to revealed religion, or how ever sophisticated by false reasoning, it would still cry out, *Amen*, AMEN, whenever God's truth came clearly before his intelligence.

It is curious to observe also that the true philosophy of conversation is always implied by the apostles in their modes of effort to secure this result. Understand this subject practically, they always made their appeal, not to the sensibility, but to the intellect and through this to the conscience — bringing men first to see the truth — then to feel its moral pungency and power: and then to obey it. Thus and only thus did they attempt to subdue the will. Now in the effort to change the entire moral position of the will towards God and holiness, it makes all the difference in the world whether the appeal be made to the sensibility, or to the conscience. If it be made to the sensibility alone, then as soon as the excitement subsides, the mind falls back again to its old position.

It deserves special notice that Paul appealed to the common life of Felix. He reasoned before him of those very sins of which he knew him to be guilty. Of these intemperance in the general sense of incontinent indulgence of appetites and passions, was one. Yet not this alone, but we must suppose that the preacher overhauled his entire life of sin, and if he did not say out openly — *You* have done this, he at least made his meaning unmistakably plain. Paul wielded a sharp sword, which cleft its way to the heart and the conscience and made its thrusts most sensibly felt. Else the proud king had not trembled on his throne and before his courtiers. Paul laid open to view the guilty life of the king and then assured him that a fearful judgment was coming. This doubtless was the manner of Paul, not only with Felix, but with all other sinners: and not only the manner of *Paul*, but of Peter and of other apostles. They made sinners see first of all, that they *were lost*; and then showed them the way of rescue and of life. The course opposite to this is utterly unphilosophical and unreasonable. It is like offering a remedy to a man who feels himself well and believes he has no disease upon him. Not unlikely, he takes it as an insult. Those who feel themselves whole, never apply to the physician. Sinners unconverted are certain never to embrace an offered Savior.

Convicted sinners generally suppose they need to have great feeling before they can repent. They assume that they must act under the influence of feeling — than which a greater mistake can hardly be made. One is amazed to see how strangely they talk and think of this subject. Do they not know that God expects them to act *intelligently*, and according to the decisions of an enlightened conscience? And yet they will tell you they cannot come to Christ because they have not *feeling* enough. They must wait for more feeling.

A short time since, I conversed with a young lady who had been brought up under religious influences, but yet remained unconverted. I soon caught a glimpse of the true difficulty in her way. She fancied that she should become a Christian at once if she felt right. Have you tried to become a Christian? said I. Yes. What have you done? I have tried to get right feelings.

It is wonderful to see how common this mistake is — to think that religion consists in right feelings, or at least that if they could only get up feeling enough, it would certainly move the will and secure conversion.

This is the exact way in which thousands fail to being truly converted. Instead of looking at the truth, and becoming deeply convinced under its power that they are all wrong and God wholly right, so that under this conviction they can intelligently turn right about, justify God and condemn themselves, and then turn their whole souls to God; instead of this, they try to get feeling; but as this course does not succeed, what feeling they have soon subsides, and they fall back fatally and forever.

In this way many of you have been waiting, and waiting and waiting — but wholly to no purpose. The right way and the *only* right way, is to study the truth, to learn what it is, and what its claims upon yourself are, and then meet those claims and perform those duties. Then truth being known, act in all things according to its demands as seen in your intelligence, and inferred by your conscience.

There is no end to the errors into which men fall through failure to understand this simple idea, of obeying the truth. A man came to me with great solicitude, saying — “I think I am not a Christian, for I certainly have not all the feelings that I expected to have. Indeed I do not know about my

experience at the time I thought I was converted. I was acting rationally all the time; I seemed to understand my own relations to God and my duty towards Him clearer than ever; I knew the reasons of my conduct at every step, and never was more calm, and never seemed to myself to see duty more clearly. Now how can such an experience as this be real conversion?"

But, said I, is your heart changed? That is the great question. "I don't know, said he, I thought the Holy Ghost was to change my heart if it were ever truly changed; but at the time referred to, I seemed to change it myself. How can this be genuine conversion?"

Men seem to think they shall *see* the Holy Ghost as it were with their very eyes, if He comes. They have exceedingly vague and often mystical notions about His work. You will observe that Jesus said of the Holy Ghost, that when He should come, "He should not speak of Himself," but should only "bear witness of the truth." He should come to "reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." Sinners don't seem to see that the Holy Ghost is *in* the preaching of truth from the minister's lips, and that, thus coming, He conceals Himself and shows only the truth, it being His only object to present and enforce the truth so that sinners shall be made deeply sensible of sin and shall be persuaded to renounce it. The sinner, thus convicted, sees the truth and is not conscious or at all aware of seeing anything else. The Holy Ghost is indeed there, else this sinner would have no such conviction of truth; the Holy Ghost is there and at work, doing His appropriate business, yet wholly unseen. Therefore you should no more wait for the Holy Ghost to change your heart than you would for me to do it if I were trying to persuade you to turn yourself at once to God.

True conviction is apt to produce a kind of trembling and a tearless agony of soul. I can well recollect the time when I first went to an enquiry meeting. I trembled so that my very seat shook under me. At that time I had never received such instruction as I needed; for if I had, I should have been converted at once. But in my darkness of mind as to what I had to do, I was in great agony, for I knew full well that God's wrath was upon me and that I was living on the very verge of hell. No wonder therefore that my soul was in great agony — tearless agony, for I could not get the relief of a single tear, and yet my whole being seemed to tremble and quake to its

center. I was not at this time under particular and special conviction, but only a general conviction of being all wrong. Such I have reason to suppose are not unfrequently the convictions of awakened sinners.

The convictions of Felix were wholly ineffectual. Convinced that Paul was innocent and with ample power to set him at liberty, nay more, under the most sacred obligation to set an innocent man at liberty, he yet closed his administration leaving Paul bound, and this for no other reason than to do the wicked, malicious Jews a favor. Alas, how far was he from the kingdom of God!

There are few sinners in this house who have not sometimes had a strong and deep conviction that you ought to be Christians, but you, like Felix, have dismissed the subject until it should be quite convenient. Like him, you have been convinced, and perhaps you have even trembled under those convictions, but less and less affected, after seeing your Paul repeatedly, you at length dismiss the matter forever. Perhaps like Felix you could even turn away and leave the Christian cause in the hands and at the mercy of its foes. You find in your experience even now that truth affects you less and less, as it did Felix, and with a growing reluctance to its presence and claims, you are glad of any apology for turning it away. In the case of Felix, we hear nothing about his trembling, after the first interview; that point once passed, he became careless, and managed for a season to live without trembling.

But now always could he live without trembling, for the judgment to come awaited him and he is long ere this gone before God to meet his doom.

This first interview with Paul was the crisis in his history. While he sat there and the chained apostle stood and preached Christ before him, the crisis hours were passing. Then and there he might have had salvation; beyond that point, it was virtually impossible.

So *you* have your crisis-period. As it was said of some, “they came and went from the place of the holy,” so it may be said of you. Often have you come and gone from the place where the saints worship; but alas, no better in heart after the end of all than before the beginning. Says the inspired one — “I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy;” — wicked still, and none the less so for having frequented the place

of God's saints. So with some of you. We shall soon bear some of you away to yonder hill — wicked till you die and then “driven away in your wickedness,” to the place of the wicked forever. Now you sometimes tremble and sometimes are stupid; and with some of you the crisis is already past. With every lost sinner there must be some place where the crisis is turned. *Most sinners pass the crisis just as Felix did.* Like him they settle the question — by simple procrastination. Few say, I never will attend to this subject again. Commonly they dismiss it with — “Go thy way for this time.” If the devil should suggest to them to take a solemn vow — “I never will have Christ — I never will even think of the subject seriously again” — it would startle them quite too much. Satan is too cunning for such imprudence. Therefore he only says — Let it pass *for this time*. This answers all his purpose abundantly. Hence this is the very way in which most persons pass the final crisis. There is no need of anything more than this to make damnation certain. It would startle you to go the whole figure at one leap and solemnly swear — “I have done with the gospel of Jesus and with heaven, henceforth and forever.” Therefore Satan is not wont to put you up to so daring a step as this. It is quite sufficient for all his purposes if he can persuade you to say — “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will close up this matter as it should be.”

But Oh, this fearful crisis-point! Have some of you passed it already? Have some of you quenched the Spirit quiet and grieved Him wholly away? Have you settled down in moral hardness — with no interest in these things? It is not difficult for you perhaps to recall the time when God's Spirit pressed the truth upon your conscience, but you resisted and delayed doing your known duty! Your conscience smarted under the sting of truth, forced home by the Spirit of God; but you resisted — you repelled the Dove of heaven and where are you now?

Some of you may be about to take this fatal step today. Oh will you madly rush on your own certain damnation? Will you say — I mean to be a Christian at some future time, but *not now!* Ah, when God says NOW — do you reply to Him, *not now?* Then there is no hope that you and God can agree! You need not expect His Spirit to co-operate in the renewal of your soul to holiness — for how can two work together except they are agreed?



# GUILT MODIFIED BY IGNORANCE

*“And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” — Acts 17:30*

This passage is part of Paul’s sermon at Athens. In discussing it I shall,

- I. SHOW WHAT IT MEANS.**
- II. APPLY ITS PRINCIPLES TO SOME OF THE GREAT MORAL MOVEMENTS OF THE PRESENT AGE.**
- III. SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN REPENTANCE.**
- IV. SHOW WHY MEN SHOULD REPENT AND REFORM NOW.**

I. Paul is speaking of those places and times where the gospel had not been. It was concerning moral actions performed then and there that Paul said, “God winked at” them. This affirmed a plain and well-established truth, viz. *that men are held responsible morally according to their light*. Speaking of times when men were but imperfectly enlightened, he did not say men were then absolutely guiltless, but only comparatively so. Their sins were a matter of *comparative* unimportance. When we use this language — wink at a thing — we mean, let it pass with slight notice, let it go. Such must have been Paul’s meaning. The principle assumed is as I have said, a well-established one — that men are guilty, or not guilty, or as the case may be, are more or less guilty, according to the knowledge they have or do not have, of their duty.

## II. APPLY ITS PRINCIPLES TO SOME OF THE GREAT MORAL MOVEMENTS OF THE PRESENT AGE

Applying this well-established principle, which all men hold and must hold, I remark, that since my recollection, a vast amount of light has been

thrown on many great moral questions, and consequently the conduct of men in reference to the points they involve has assumed very different shades of moral character.

For example, *the question of Temperance*. I can well remember when ministers used to drink before they went into the pulpit and drink after they came out of it. The same practices still continue in other countries. Then they thought it no wrong, unless they drank to excess, and beyond their own convictions of right. They measured their ideas of its harm by their own standard. But now so much light is abroad that the moral character of rum-drinking is essentially modified. In those very places where men drank without much guilt, they can no longer drink at all without great guilt. Then men were often advised to drink by their physicians. They thought they ought to drink for the sake of health. But this apology is available no longer. Why not? Because men have learned that health does not demand rum-drinking. They now know that it is wrong to use ardent spirits as a beverage, and that very rarely indeed does it need to be used as a medicine. Of course they cannot use the article as of old without great guilt — without losing every particle of their piety.

So on the subject of *Slavery*. For a long time this subject was scarcely discussed at all. Slavery was abolished so quietly and gradually in the Northern States, that but little general discussion was excited. Yet the manner of its abolition in the North left the impression that Northern men had nothing to do with its abolition in the South. The work having been achieved by state legislative action, and without much of any foreign influence of any sort, it was not unnaturally assumed that other states would abolish slavery in the same way. Indeed so little attention was given to this subject by Northern men, that they did not notice the gradual encroachments of the slave power upon the general government.

But this state of things has greatly changed. Now men generally understand the relations of slavery to the national government. The startling fact is but too apparent that our Union is virtually a slaveholding state, and that Congress have seriously undertaken to make the entire domain of our country a slaveholding land. They enact their Fugitive Slave Bill into so-called *law*, and then send their commissioned agents into the free states, upon free soil, to compel free men, whose souls abhor slavery,

to become slave-catchers, and to deliver up unto their masters or claimants, the servant that has escaped — in the very face of God's own command to the contrary, not to say also in the very face of every dictate of humanity. When the Northern states set their own slaves free, they had no thought of ever being dragged thus into the support of slavery. They expected, and were authorized to expect that the example of emancipation would be followed by the Southern states. But instead of this, what do we see? Laws enacted by Congress which people all the free states with commissioners authorized to seize men as slaves — which leave them only the miserable mockery of the forms of trial, and which then, under heavy pains and penalties, compel us to sustain all this iniquity, and aid in dragging the arrested victim into hopeless bondage.

I do not want to rail — you who hear me preach so often know full well that I am not; nor do I mean to rail on the worst of men or the most oppressive of their measures now; but the question what we, as Christian men shall do under this monstrous oppression is really momentous. The question now has taken this form; shall we individually and personally *aid in making men slaves?*

This makes a solemn issue. I feel it to be such. So must all Northern men and Northern Christians. It is a new issue. We did not expect when we entered into this Union, that we were to be dragooned into the business of slave-hunting. We did not calculate then to become the tools of the slave power, to help make men found on free soil slaves. We must make up our minds how we will act under this new issue.

This whole subject presents some curious questions pertaining to political action, the pulpit, and the duty of Christian men. Before and during the American revolution, there was much more political discussion in the pulpit than there is now, or perhaps than there has ever been elsewhere. Indeed the great questions of the revolution were all discussed in the pulpit and with signal ability. As some writer has said, "The pulpit thundered and lightened on the subject of liberty." The consequence was the true ideas of liberty were understood, and came to have a living development in the public mind. The tallest statesmen of the land heard the gospel of liberty proclaimed from the sacred desk. Who needs be told that ministers then met their responsibilities to the state and to the public weal,

fearlessly and boldly? Who does not know that all these questions were then blended with prayer, and civil liberty was hailed as a boon from heaven?

But ministers in our day have become afraid to stand forth and speak as honest, fearless men on this subject, and political men have become fearful and sensitive lest the pulpit should utter its voice for freedom. But why this sensitiveness of politicians? And why this timidity in the heralds of the gospel? Have not all Christian men political duties to perform? Ought they not to search out these duties, and settle in the fear of God all the great questions they involve, and then meet their political responsibilities in the fear of God and for the welfare of the nation?

It is not generally considered that neither of the two great political parties can manage this question of slavery at their option. It is a great blessing to have two great parties. They correct each other's errors, watch each other's movements, and if either party should swerve essentially from the right path, the good men of this swerving party would go over to the other, and quickly turn the scale.

At the South, both parties are united on the subject of slavery, and will not for a moment diverge from the line of strictest fidelity to its interests. Each of the two great parties have, or rather had their other issues; now all other issues have fallen into comparative insignificance, and the matter of controversy between them turns no longer upon principles, but upon men, and the spoils of office. But the thing I would say is, that neither of them can control the subject of slavery. Hence when the united South take their stand firmly, and irrespective of party, say — "So far will we go and no farther," then each party must meet them on their own ground, or lose their support, and with it all chances of success as a party.

Both parties therefore concede to the South all they ask. For example, they both accede to the Compromise acts, Fugitive law included, and affirm this law to be "a finality." This done, they cry, Drop the question of slavery — let all be quiet as the grave on this point, and let us each carry our other questions if we can. This is just the issue now made. Drop the question of slavery, and no longer make it in any degree a political issue. This is the demand first of the whole South; next, of the two great political parties. Shall the Christian church accede to this? Shall we let this entire subject

alone, and go in for contention of the other issues as if they had any importance worth naming in the comparison?

Until matters assumed their present form, a multitude of Christians acted conscientiously with one or the other of these great parties. Both of these parties have promised Anti-Slavery men pretty largely. For example, the Whig party promised to keep out Texas, and to prevent a war with Mexico; and many did believe, honestly too, that one party or the other would do something to withdraw the support of the general government from slavery. So long as they could reasonably indulge this hope, and honestly did so, I cannot condemn these Christians for their adherence to their parties. Many conscientious men thought that they could do most good in that course, and hence we ought not to complain of them for it.

But now it is not so much as *pretended* that any good results will ensue from acting with either of the great parties. Not even a bait is now held out to allure conscientious and good men into their support. Nobody contends that under the control of either of these great parties, there is, at present, the faintest hope of repealing or even modifying the Fugitive Slave Bill, or getting one good thing for truth or righteousness. Therefore, I ask, can any good man hold on to either of those parties — for no good object whatever — not even the promise of any good to the cause of the slave being held out as an inducement?

So of the church. Of old it was often said, What have we to do with slavery? Men did not see that Congress had any particular responsibility on this subject, and hence they could not see that as Christian men, or as a church, they could have any special responsibility in regard to slavery. But now the world is saying, What are ye Christians doing? Are you with us in the support of our great party? O yes. Now this may please the men of the world, but it certainly can never secure their respect. It never can do honor to the firmness of Christian principle. Do you ask, What ought Christian men to do? Doubtless they ought to use all their legitimate influence against the Fugitive Slave Bill, and against all the political aggressions of slavery upon our free land and government. Doubtless they ought to *vote* for freedom as against slavery, and speak out in no mistakable words and tones, till the nation shall hear and shall purge itself from all national patronage of this horrible system.

The same should be said of the responsibilities and duties of the great benevolent societies. Time was when great ignorance prevailed in these societies, touching their relations to slavery. When I entered the ministry, not a word was said about the relations of the American Board to slavery, or of the Bible Society, or the Tract Society. But ere long the question came up in regard to the relations sustained by each of those societies to slavery. The Christian public ask, What is the true position which those societies sustain towards slavery? What is their duty? What are they in fact doing? Does their influence go to sustain the foul system? They all claim to be disseminating a pure Christianity, and of course they profess to bear a pure testimony against every sin, and especially against all great public iniquities. Are they in fact doing so? They should consider that increased light begets augmented responsibilities, and that they cannot pass along now, treating slavery as if it were no sin — however conveniently they might have done so in those times of ignorance which God winked at. There is too much light now on the sin of slavery, and on its multiform relations to the church and to the nation, to admit of neutrality in regard to it, or to allow the assumption that it is not to be regarded as a great sin.

### III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN REPENTANCE?

Repentance is turning the heart to God, and abandoning selfishness. The work of repentance belongs to the heart or will. Of course it must be the function of the voluntary or moral department of the mind's powers.

But especially let me remark, that whole repentance is genuine, there will be and must be external reformation. Men may have emotions of sorrow, with no change of purpose; but this is not real repentance.

### IV. WHY SHOULD MEN NOW REPENT AND REFORM?

Because as soon as we get light on any former practice which shows us that it is opposed to God's will, we cannot persist in it without greatly augmented guilt. For example, the case of intemperance. As soon as

increasing light on this subject showed the extent of its mischiefs, and the absence of any and all redeeming good, the practice of using intoxicating drink as a beverage came to be seen at once as the murder of a man's own body and soul, and as a fatal temptation to his neighbor. Then, how could any man persist longer in its use without damning sin?

So of slavery. As soon as light prevails on this subject, men can no longer go on in the same course of sustaining the system, without the greatest guilt. It will not answer to substitute evasions, and dodging and side issues in place of real repentance and true reform. To evade the claims of truth thus serves not to acquit the soul before God or man, but only to strengthen depravity and harden the heart.

For an illustration of this principle take the case of the Jews. Before Christ came among them, great moral darkness reigned. When Christ came among them, preaching the kingdom of God and illustrating its true import in His life and spirit, in His miracles of goodness and finally in His death on the cross, they could not but "see a great light." Therefore, when they resisted this light, and resorted to their lies to evade the evidence furnished by His resurrection, their consciences became exceedingly hardened. After all this light, could they go on rejecting their known Messiah without greatly augmented guilt? Nay, verily. The same principle applies to the nation as a whole, and to all its individual members before whom this gospel light shone.

Refusal to repent when light reveals sin and duty, must hasten the destruction of any nation or people under heaven. How long did the Jews continue to prosper after Christ had come and had been rejected? Terrible was their hardening under so much light, and equally fearful was their doom! History records no case of more fearful destruction, or of more black and inexcusable guilt. When the hour of their retribution at last came, God poured out the cup of His indignation upon them without mixture, and bitterly did they drink it to its dregs! So must it be with every nation that shall refuse to repent when light breaks in and duty stands revealed, and yet they refuse to do it.

The governments of the earth, if they resist the light that breaks in upon them, are sure to be destroyed. Who has not looked with admiration upon the English government, and marked its course when pressed by public

sentiment to adopt demanded reforms? Their history for centuries is a series of triumphs achieved by the growing intelligence, firmness and wisdom of the people, calling for reforms in government or in the social condition of the masses. We can, all of us, remember the agitation long and deep which preceded the glorious act of West India emancipation. If the government had withstood that appeal and refused to emancipate, I believe the refusal must have crushed the very throne itself. The people demanded the reform. The pulpit thundered and lightened — the whole public mind rocked as with the upheavings of an earthquake. The only safety lay in yielding to their demands.

No Christian nation since the world began has been able to stand against the united prayers and testimony of God's church. No one has had strength to resist any reform which God's people have unitedly demanded. If they were seriously to determine on resistance, they would find God Himself arrayed against them. O how would He drive His judgment-chariot, axle-deep in their blood and bones! Let His people stand on His side and do His work; they may expect His interposing arm for their support, crowning their toils with glorious victory. This must be so, by a law as undeviating and unfailing as the veracity of Jehovah!

This principle applies to all organizations, benevolent or ecclesiastical. If they resist reform when growing light demands it, God will be against them, and His chariot will grind them to powder! What does He want of a church or a benevolent society that resists reform when light and truth demand it, and sets itself in array against the progress of His cause? He knows how to use them for beacons of warning if they refuse to be used as instruments of progress in doing good. Therefore if any people or associate body will not receive and obey the light, their ruin is sure. The best of all possible reasons for repentance is, that it is God's good pleasure. What! if the expression of God's will — if the manifestation of His wishes to this effect cannot move men to repent, what can? What would you think of a child who should say, "No matter what my parents think — who cares for their feelings or their wishes? It is no reason at all for my conduct that my father or mother desire me to do as they say." What, I ask, would you think of such a child? Can anything be more monstrous than such a trampling underfoot of the most tender and sacred obligations?



Is it then no reason for you who are before me here today that God now commands you all to repent? Nay, more, that with tenderness He invites and entreats, and cries out, "How can I give thee up?"

## REMARKS

1. When light breaks in upon men, it is awful, and even terrifying if they only resist and rebel against it, gathering up their utmost strength like the ancient Jews, to oppose the claims of truth and of God. This is true of governments when they resist the light, oppose reform, and raise for odium's sake the senseless cry, *fanaticism!* FANATICISM!
2. But the occasion calls on me to apply these principles to the course pursued by some of the great benevolent societies of the day. We wait to know what they have done and are doing in regard to the great reforms of modern times. The American Tract Society is a great organization acting under a charter which allows them to publish only such matter as is approved by a publishing committee composed of six men, one from each of six leading evangelical denominations. All these are Northern men now, and I believe have always been so. If we inquire for the special circumstances under which they now act, we find that since the agitation of the slavery question at the North, the people of the South have become exceedingly sensitive lest some Anti-Slavery truth should come in among them in Northern books, and thus reach their slaves. They became jealous of the entire mass of Northern literature. The Tract Society, dreading to incur their jealousy, and anxious to make their publications acceptable to Southern people, have been in the practice of expunging Anti-Slavery sentiments wherever found in the volumes they thought best to publish. A great many choice books came before them, too valuable to be discarded, and yet some few pages or paragraphs of an Anti-Slavery truth raised a question which they met by expunging the passages. At first they did this without giving the public any notice of the fact. But when the fact came to be known, it was felt by very many to be great injustice to the authors and a fraud upon the public. They became alarmed and protested against the course. They exposed the obvious error of the Tract Society in mutilating books without giving notice of the fact. The result has been that the Tract Society were compelled to modify their course, so far as to advertise the

public of the omissions they had made, whether the subject were baptism, slavery, or any other moral or religious question. But in one important respect they have continued on as before. They have taken particular pains to strike out every Anti-Slavery sentiment, whether in psalms and hymns, or in any other books.

Now some have stigmatized the Tract Society's committee as Pro-Slavery, but I do not believe they are Pro-Slavery in the sense of aiming to sustain slavery. They aim I suppose to be neutral on this question, and especially they mean to print nothing which would offend the people of the South or their Northern friends. This I take to be their policy. I believe it to be a wicked policy, but I do not know that they sin in pursuing it. They may think they are doing God service.

But I need not pursue this subject farther. The policy is one which we do not approve, which no good man ought to approve, but it is one which prevails in a great many of the pulpits in our country — I cannot say to their honor, or to the augmentation of their moral power.

**3.** What shall we do with men who being enlightened upon their duty, do not repent? By one who spoke in behalf of the Tract Society, you have been warned to be on your guard against the force of the sentiment of justice, and perhaps not without some occasion. Many are ready to cry out for fire to come down from heaven upon the men who seem not to keep pace with the demands of truth. But this is never the best way to reform abuses and bring sinners to repentance. God acts on the principle of the greatest possible forbearance. He forbears as long as He wisely can. He beseeches and entreats, and thus labors to secure the desired repentance and reform.

What then shall we do with offending nations, and with our own government when they impose upon us fugitive laws? Of course we are to set about their reformation. Do you ask, *how*? The way is open. The Christian church has it in her power to reform this nation. She has long held the balance of political power, and she holds it still. Let all Christian men say, "We will not sustain slavery; the men who are in league with it cannot have our votes." — and the thing would be done. Let all Christian voters be united in this, and they could just as certainly elect the man of their choice as there should be another election. Let them try it. They have

the consciences of men on their side, and they would find strength and help rising up where they did not expect it. If they did not succeed in the next election, they surely would succeed soon. Ere another election came round, politicians would say, "We must honor and please the church," just as they now say, "We must honor the South."

But the way to do this is not to turn slaveholders ourselves, and force our opinions down men's throats, and cast them from the church if they do not vote our ticket. The right way is to enlightenment on the subject — to treat them kindly and yet with great fidelity, and to try to bring them over to the truth and the right by reasoning and persuasion. Substantially we should pursue the same methods of labor and influence that we adopt when we would change men's position on any moral question, the same as when we would convert sinners from sin to God.

In regard now to the Tract Society, shall I excommunicate them all at once? Would this avail anything? Shall we not rather attempt to persuade them as to what we think their duty? Shall we not try to convince them of the great mistake in their policy? What right have we to excommunicate them until we have expostulated?

But some of you say this has been done already. I ask if it has been done both kindly and earnestly, and with all the perseverance that the case demands?

But again the question returns, what shall be done by the church to abolish slavery? I answer, Let all her organizations speak out with decision and firmness. Let the Congregational Conference recently organized in Ohio take their stand and bear their solemn and earnest testimony. Let them send a commission bearing their fraternal exhortations to other bodies of Congregationalists — to Iowa — to Wisconsin — to New England, — wherever they can gain a hearing. But let us not cast off and condemn the Tract Society without a hearing. Who does not believe that it is in the power of the great Christian organizations of our country to reform that society?

**4.** There is another society formed for the dissemination of moral truth in its due proportions, not avoiding its bearings on the great sins of the times. No one can deny that it is always right to supply any defects in the labors

and influence of the great American societies by constituting another society to do the whole work, as it should be done. This is one of the proper means to correct the evils of which we complain. We can support the new society, and this will be of itself a testimony against the objectionable course of the old. Hence if I were to give anything to the old, I would give much more to the new, both because I would have my donations bear a testimony for righteous principles, and because the new society will have for some time yet to come, few friends and patrons, while the old will have many.

**5.** Another question is often asked, which has an important bearing upon the subject of church communion. Shall we commune with an offending brother *while* we are laboring with him to reclaim him from his sin?

In my view the answer depends upon his relations as an arraigned man. I must make no man a sinner by construction. I must not assume that he is wrong, but wait for the proof of the fact. The common doctrine of law and justice is that I must assume my brother to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty. On this principle, the question of treatment should obviously be determined, embracing, of course, the question of church communion.

**6.** It is always wise to avail ourselves of the admissions of our opponents. If on the question of Slavery they concede that all good Northern men abhor it, let us admit and use this concession. It will be a powerful weapon in our hands.

**7.** It is always impolitic to represent our opponents to be farther from us than they really are. For example, it would be the height of folly for me to say — The whole North American Church is for Slavery, defending and sustaining the system. If this were true, how greatly would the fact relieve the conscience of the South! Slaveholders would surely feel that the Christian sentiment of all those who were in a situation to judge in the case is in their favor. And if the fact were not true, it were much better I should not affirm it to be so. My affirming it will have much the same influence on Southern mind that the actual truth would have. Let me take care how I represent the church to be more in favor of Slavery than she is. Rather let us say, if the facts will sustain us in it, that we, Christian men of the North, are all agreed that Slavery is a great sin.

**8.** But there is yet another reason for the largest charity towards our Northern brethren. The want of charity serves to provoke rather than to convince or to convert. Suppose I meet a Northern brother, and accuse him of being pro-slavery, and try to make him a slaveholder by construction. If his judgment is not carried by the obvious justice of the charge, I am doing him to good. If he thinks himself innocent, he will of course feel himself wronged, and all my efforts with him are worse than useless.

Uncharitable measures never succeed. If even the Apostles, with all their miracles and tongues, had gone out with a bad spirit, they must have labored in vain. God suffers His own cause to experience a temporary defeat, rather than give success to men of a bad spirit. I have no doubt that in many cases the anti-slavery cause has been thrown aback by the bad spirit of its advocates. If we have erred in this matter, we must repent. We can never hope for the blessing of God until we do.

Before I went to the Mediterranean, I had taken the stand in my congregation in New York city that no slaveholder could come to our communion. In that vast congregation some slaveholders of professed piety were almost always present, and the rebuke was being solemnly felt. The example was exerting a decidedly good influence. But when I came back, I soon found that a strange state of things had come about. Everything was hot and fiery. I felt bound to tell them plainly that they were casting out devils through Beelzebub, and by getting his spirit were really doing his work. This would never do. The cause of love and of human well-being could not be built up by uncharitableness and hate.

If, now, our General Government needs reform, (of which I have no doubt,) then let us forthwith employ all constitutional means and measures for its reform. Of the wisdom of doing all this no one can for a moment doubt.

So of the Tract Society, they have done good; let them have all due honor for what good they have done. Some of you may have been converted through the agency of their publications and labors. I cannot say that any man of you is a hypocrite because I find you giving your money and your prayers to the Tract Society. If you choose to give to that Society, do so. The opportunity will be afforded by every man to give to whichever Society he pleases.

As for voting for either of the two great party candidates, on a strongly pro-slavery platform, that question is in my mind easily settled. I can do no such thing. Sooner shall I cut off my own right hand than suffer it to drop a vote for such men, standing on such platforms.

It would be interesting and useful too, if there were time, to show how all great reforms naturally throw men into three great classes, viz. the Conservatives, the Radicals, and the Moderates. It were easy to show the philosophy of this classification, and how it results from the laws of mind and the action of men in society. It were still more important to inquire what are the mutual duties of these three classes towards each other. Scarce any topic more needs to be discussed and well understood at the present time. My hour is more than spent now, and I must not enlarge.

In some respects I am sorry, and in some respects I am not sorry to be called on to say so much on this subject of slavery — its issues, and the duties of Christians in regard to it. There is the greatest need that these things should be investigated and well considered. The public mind will and must act on these questions, and the action taken is continually affecting the honor of Christianity and the welfare of the church and of souls, most fundamentally. It cannot, therefore, be amiss to bring this subject into the pulpit. Let it engage your serious attention, and more your hearts to seek divine wisdom in prayer.

My only regret to occupy your time on this subject lies in the fact that so many among us are all wrong, and need to be urged today to repent of all sin and yield up their hearts at once and forever to the service and fear of the Lord their God. For them, I fear it may be an evil to have their attention diverted, even for one Sabbath, from those great things that pertain to their present and everlasting peace.

# ELECTION AND REPROBATION

*“Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.”  
Jeremiah 6:30*

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22:14*

*“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” 1 Peter 1:2*

From these texts you will perceive that I have chosen for my subject ELECTION AND REPROBATION. In discussing it, I propose

- I. TO DEFINE THE TERMS.**
- II. SHOW WHAT THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE REALLY IS.**
- III. STATE THE REASONS FOR ELECTION AND ALSO FOR REPROBATION**
- IV. SHOW HOW, AS A GENERAL FACT, WE MAY DETERMINE TO WHICH CLASS ANY INDIVIDUAL BELONGS.**

First of all, let me admonish you not to be frightened at the terms, *Election and Reprobation*. They are Bible terms, and therefore need not alarm any but those who contend against the truth. They are Bible terms, yet have been greatly abused, so that my first business must be to define them, and then in my subsequent remarks, to illustrate them, in order to remove the stumbling-blocks occasioned by their abuse.

I. “Elected” means chosen. It means precisely this — neither more nor less. A “reprobate” thing is a thing rejected or cast away. To reprobate is to reject, to disapprove, and hence to set aside. It is the counter-part of elect. Such is the meaning of the terms.

## II. WHAT NOW IS THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE?

Briefly this: God has chosen to salvation a part of mankind, and has also made up His mind to cast off a part. The whole doctrine is embraced in this: God’s mind is made up as to what He will do in the matter of saving

or not saving the individuals of our race. His mind, I say, is made up; of course it is if it ever will be, for He has no new mind, and cannot ever have any new views, new knowledge, or new plans. All things are present to God from the beginning. To deny that God has made up His mind as to what he will do in this matter is to deny the essential attributes of God, for both the beginning and the end are both alike known to Him. With perfect and infinite knowledge ever present to His mind from all past eternity, it is impossible that His mind should not be made up, as to what He will do in the matter of human salvation.

### III. BUT GOD HAS GOOD REASONS FOR ALL HE DOES

He never makes up His mind without having good reasons, and never otherwise than in accordance with those reasons.

The elect, therefore, are those whom God has, for the best of reasons, determined to save; the reprobate, in like manner, are those whom, for infinitely good reasons, He has made up His mind to cast off for perdition.

What are these good reasons?

**1.** Not any arbitrary sovereignty on God's part, a sovereignty which has no good reasons for its foundation. God is indeed a *Sovereign*, but only in the good sense. He judges and decides alone, unaided by the wisdom of any created being; and this, not because He is above taking counsel, if there were any being whom He could wisely consult. God's acts of sovereignty, therefore, are all infinitely wise and benevolent. They are determined on and fixed, only because they are infinitely right and reasonable, and because he sees the reasons for them with perfect clearness, and feels their force so strongly that He cannot do otherwise than act accordingly.

**2.** The elect are not chosen on account of their own desert or righteousness. Mark what I say; not because they are *by nature any better than others*. They are not by nature any better than the reprobate, for they had nothing in the constitution of their being better than others had.



Nor was it because their sins were any less in number or aggravation than the sins of those whom God will cast away; but it was because he saw that he could save them under the wisest possible administration of government. He saw it possible to secure their salvation without departing from His chosen system of moral administration. He could secure their confidence in Him and their assent to His scheme of salvation. Yet let it be observed, not for their concurrence in this gospel scheme, considered as a thing of merit, a thing which *in justice claims* salvation. God *could* so arrange His government as to secure their voluntary consent.

The reprobate are cast off for their foreseen rejection, not on condition of their future wickedness, but *for* it. The elect are chosen on the condition of its being possible to secure their confidence in Him and their assent to the scheme of salvation.

When I say God *foresaw*, I use the term, not as when it is used of men. We do not foresee as He does. God sustains no such relations to time as we do. He dwells in time absolute. With us, events transpire, but not with God. Before Him all things are present.

The things which are always present to God, become known to creatures only as they transpire — only as they develop themselves in time. The things always known to God, become known to us only as they develop themselves in their occurrence. They were a secret from all eternity in His bosom. In the lapse of time, they come forth, boiling up before the eyes of creatures.

God's knowing future things does not make them occur. His omniscience no more controls our conduct than our knowing how men will act controls their action. The acts of free agents may be certain, in the sense that God knows with certainty what they will be, yet are they none the less free and voluntary.

In the case of those who are chosen to salvation, all the facts in view of which God made up His mind, will come out before the view of the finite minds of His creatures. On the other hand, all the reasons in the case of the lost will come up to view. All will pass in full review before the universe in the solemn judgment, so that all intelligent beings of the universe will say, God could have done no otherwise than He has. They will see that the

elect were chosen and finally saved on the condition that God could win them, and that the wicked were reprobated and lost because of the fact that God could *not* win them to give up their sins and accept of salvation.

Now, mark what I say: A great deal is said about God's sovereignty — a great deal of nonsense too. But mark this — it is not so much the sovereignty of God as the sovereignty of man, on which this question turns. No man can deny his own freedom, and to act freely is to exercise, in this respect, the attribute of sovereignty. Man is free, for how can he either promise or purpose anything without freedom? If he is not free, he can no more promise or purpose than a wind-mill can. Go up to a wind-mill, accost it by name, assuming its sovereignty and free independence, and ask it if it will please turn so and so, and with such and such velocity. You stand rebuked in your folly, for that is a wind-mill, not a man — a wind-mill acting without free agency, and not a man, conscious of freedom.

Man always assumes his own liberty and freedom. He can no more deny it rationally than he can deny his own existence. the fact is, every man knows himself to be free, and in this sense a sovereign.

God puts man upon his own character and responsibility; holds him to his responsibility, and cannot righteously do otherwise. He places before him *law*; this the sinner rejects. Then God presents the gospel, and having exerted such influence as he wisely can, leaves him ultimately to his own responsibility. God can do no more than to place before him motives to induce right voluntary action. If God should attempt to convert him in any other way than by acting upon his free mind, by means of truth, it would avail nothing. Some suppose that God takes hold of a man and changes his *nature*, the very constitution of his being. But this would not convert him unless it changed the voluntary state of his mind. A change in the voluntary attitude of the mind is primarily all that is needed. This, and nothing else or other than this, is conversion. God never acts on man otherwise than upon a moral being. Hence, man's own sovereignty must determine his destiny.

## IV. AS A GENERAL FACT, WE MAY DETERMINE TO WHICH CLASS ANY INDIVIDUAL BELONGS

The destiny for men for eternity is in general very plainly indicated in their lives. For if men are ever saved by the gospel, they must be savingly influenced by it while yet they live on earth. If they are ever lost, it will be because they reject the gospel. Now, therefore, if we see that the gospel is taking effect on any mind, we see reason to conclude that that individual will be saved, for he is being saved already. The gospel is already renewing his soul and saving it from sin. We have therefore the appropriate evidence that he is elected unto salvation.

But if we see that an individual is being cursed by the gospel — if it only serves to harden his heart and make him more obstinate, more wicked, more the child of hell than before, we see conclusive marks of his reprobation.

Hence if we would know whether men are elected or reprobated, we must watch. We must notice how the gospel affects them, and what attitude they take towards it. This we may with considerable certainty foresee their destiny — and in like manner our own.

How then may it generally be known whether or not any individual is elected to salvation?

It is not always possible for us to judge accurately in this world. Sometimes things are working deep in the mind which we do not see. Sometimes men seem to be going in the wrong direction with alarming certainty, but at length they turn, unexpectedly to us, and we find the gospel asserting its due power over their minds. So on the other hand, some seem to be running well for a time, but by a sudden turn they take the way of death, and crush all our fond anticipations.

Yet these are only the exceptions; the Bible teaches us that as a general rule we may judge who are reprobates. It requires us to prove our own selves and gives us the tests whereby we may know whether we are reprobates or not.

I therefore proceed to notice some of the indications by which men may know whether they are or are not reprobates.

I do this for two reasons,

- (1.) It is due to all the saints that they should have the consolation of knowing that they are among the chosen.
- (2.) It is of great importance that saints should know the marks as they appear upon others to show whether or not they are elected.

It is also well that sinners should be able to see as in a glass their own coming destiny, that being warned of their peril they may escape while yet salvation is possible. Yet let me say again, I do not imply that these marks are infallible. They are approximate indications — probable signs, sometimes amounting almost to certainty; but nothing more.

**1.** Those who are elected to be saved attend to the means of salvation. This is plain, because if they are ever to be saved, it must be through their attention to those means by which God saves men. Men are saved if at all *by* the agency of these means. God cannot save by merely *physical* influence; the nature of the case forbids it. Moral and physical government are entirely distinct and contrasted. The planets are not moved by motives, nor free minds by gravitation. Matter requires one form of moving power — mind another. It is simply absurd to confound the distinction between the two.

The elect, then, will attend to the truth — will hear, and having heard will think. They will, if they can, attend the places of religious worship and instruction I do not assert that every man who goes to meeting will be saved, or that all who sometimes stay away will be lost, but I speak of the general law that obtains in this matter and of the general influences that stand connected with men's salvation or damnation. As a general thing, the elect will go to meeting — will search for truth. They are indicated by their attention to these means of grace, and the non-elect for the same reason by their neglect of these means.

A personal and permanent interest in gospel truth must be awakened in the minds of the elect, for they are to be saved through the influence of this truth.

I have preached in many hundreds of congregations. I have seen hundreds of persons of whom observers could say as they saw their aspect in the house of God — “That man’s ears are opened; he is attentive and solemn; — pray for him — he will be converted.” Soon he *is* converted.

But some of you come here, all inattentive, with no serious thought or concern about God’s truth or the relation which your souls bear to that truth. Such persons are reprobated — with almost an entire certainty, — reprobate for the very reason that they would not attend to the truth and would not think on their ways. Have I not touched the case of some among you? You come into the house of God, but you treat the truth of God presented here as a reprobate would — as one whom God cannot save because He cannot get your attention. You say, “O I hope God won’t send me to hell — why should He”! What else can He do with you? He cannot get your attention when He speaks to you. Of course he cannot reach your heart, for He cannot even arrest your thoughts and put you upon noticing what He has to say.

But you say — “What is it that I have done so very bad?” What have I done, do you say? If your professor should speak to you in the recitation — and speak again, no answer — and speak again — ten times repeated, yet you deign not one answer, but go on with your amusements, reading your book or otherwise diverting your mind, treating him with the utmost contempt, could he teach you and thus do you any good? And would it be quite proper for you to ask as if in amazement — What have I done?

So are you doing, sinner, in your abuse of God by utter inattention to what He has to say to you.

A candid state of mind is a hopeful indication. It is both a fit state of mind in itself, and also an essential condition of arriving at the knowledge of the truth and of being benefited by it. Hence you may safely set this trait of mind down as one of the marks of the elect.

But the reprobate are cavilling and captious, full of subtle reasoning and sophistry. At least this is the fact with many of them.

And how is this with some of you? Are you candid and honest, or are you cavilling and captious? You know in the depths of your soul how this is, and you ought to know what these traits of mind indicate.

Again, the elect are too much taken up with the plain things of a sermon and the great duties inculcated, to be stumbled at what they do not understand. They are so much engrossed in what is good, that they naturally overlook what is objectionable.

But the reprobate will do the very opposite. They overlook the good and seize on the objectionable; they overlook the plain things *because* they teach unwelcome duties, and set themselves to cavil at the mysterious things. How often are they found stumbling at the doctrine of the Trinity, wresting and misrepresenting the scriptures!

And are not such men reprobates? Of course they are — unless they speedily repent. Of course this must be a mark of reprobation, because men are reprobated *for these very things*. In time they manifest their evilacious hearts, just as God foresaw they would.

Now how is it with you? When you hear a sermon, are you so much taken up with its great and good thoughts and its useful things that you have no heart to think of its defects; or does your mind fasten on the defective things, to the neglect of all that is useful and good? There are two classes of hearers; — one class hear as critics; the other as Christians. One class are wholly engaged in criticism and cavil; being part scholars in grammar, their attention is all arrested by some slip of the tongue or some inadvertent violation of syntax, so that they can think of nothing else through the balance of the sermon. Some read the Bible just so. They will ask — not how much of Cain's sin ought to lie on their own conscience for having hated their own brethren, but, Where did Cain get his wife? This and a thousand other caviling questions they ask just as reprobates naturally do, because it is for these every things that they are reprobated. They come sometimes to the house of God, but they take their seat far back — a great way off — perhaps in the window with their eyes abroad, or with book in hand so that they can readily divert their mind. There they read or play or whisper in the most perfect indifference and carelessness. Truth preached is to them as seen sown by the way side — trodden under foot and forbidden to vegetate.

Are not some of you not applying these things to yourselves, as already true in your own experience? Thus far in the moral pathway of your life,

you have gone in the road of the reprobate, nor have deviated from it by one single step.

Another mark of the elect is this; they search for truth, while reprobates search for error. They love it and therefore must search for it, it being a demand of their hearts. This must be a distinguishing mark, for the elect must of necessity believe the truth, else they cannot be saved; in order to believe, they must know and in order to know they must search — search in candor and as for hid treasures. Some are so earnest for the truth that they really dig and mine the bible in search for its treasures. But the reprobate are uncandid when truth is presented before them, and as for searching it out, they are much more likely to be on the scent after some foul, long rotten error. The beauty of truth has no charms for them; but you cannot say the same of the ugliness of error.

Again, the elect will believe the truth. Having studied and understood the truth, they are sure to believe and embrace it. They do so because they mean to be candid. But the reprobate may be known by the readiness with which they believe lies and the very great difficulty they find in believing any valuable moral truth. I recollect that I received a pamphlet some years since, full of mesmerism and its monstrous absurdities. I could not read it without being greatly affected with the testimony it bore to the moral state of the writer. Is it possible, said I, that such a man, of such education, of such intelligence and good sense, can get into such a relation to great moral truth as to believe this nonsense! Is it possible that he can believe such fooleries as these and yet reject the gospel as not fit to be believed!

Some men will believe anything they please. In the line of lies they can believe with great ease that Jonah could swallow a whale; but in the line of truth they cannot even believe that the whale could swallow Jonah! They cannot believe the most simple things in the gospel, however well sustained by evidence, but they can believe mesmerism and all similar nonsense, or any other absurdity which men of perverse minds and reprobate as to the truth are palming off upon our age.

Of the two classes of people morally divided on the point of being saved or not saved, the one have no time to attend to the faults of other people; — the other class scarcely find time for anything else; the one are too much engrossed in studying and obeying the demands of an enlightened

conscience to be easily diverted, while the other class are tenfold more inquisitive about other people's conscience than about their own, and commonly are quite ready to take upon themselves to keep the conscience of all the church and of the world besides — so much taken up with picking a hole in the hedge to peep at the weeds in a neighbor's garden that the weeds in their own grow unmolested till they utterly swamp their owner. O how many men of this stripe help to compose our Christian communities!

One class are so much engaged in self-improvement that they get no time to look after other people's faults, while another class are so familiar with other's faults, that they commonly hear sermons chiefly for the benefit and rebuke of their neighbors. O how long their necks become while they sit and reach over and around to see how their neighbors receive the merited castigation!

One class receive what condemns as well as what justifies; with equal readiness what exposes their own wrong as what commends the right. Not so with the other — the class of reprobates, for they receive of a sermon what seems to them to commend, but set aside promptly what does not.

The elect are often found condemning themselves even more severely than anyone else condemns them; often they are more searching, severe and straight-forward in applying the truth to themselves than others in giving it such application. The reason of this often is that they are honest and know their own faults and defects better than anybody else does. You will find them peculiarly unwilling to take credit to themselves. They say — “O my soul, come forward to this light — come up to this strong and clear light and let all thy sins be set in order before thine eyes.” O how his soul sweats with agony! He is determined to be thorough and searching in his application of the truth. He sees so much more to condemn in himself than in others that he wonders at the favorable estimate which others are wont to make of him.

Exactly the opposite is true of reprobates. They have an excuse for every offence. When they cannot actually make out anything in real defence, they yet toil hard for apologies. Instead of coming down to their knees and pleading there for mercy, they resort to special pleading in self-vindication and thus ruin their own souls.



The elect give themselves thoroughly and with great jealousy to understand the spirit of God's requirements, fearful lest they shall not admit the claims of God fully to their hearts. It by no means satisfies them that the external is blameless; — they must go deep to the heart and know that all is right there, asking continually at the door of the heart — *What is thy motive?*

Right over against these are the reprobates — reprobated *because* they take the opposite course. Their self-application of truth never goes beyond its letter. They say — “If I do about what is honest, God will accept me and I can rest on His justice” — albeit they take this term honest in a very loose and superficial sense. Hence though the outside of cup and platter are made to look decent, yet within are dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

The elect renounce and abhor their own righteousness as any ground of acceptance with God whatever. “What!” their hearts exclaim, “am I to be saved upon my own righteousness? I have no righteousness to be saved upon! Impossible that such a mode of salvation should ever reach my case!”

In truth nothing can be more abhorrent to their deep convictions. They would not trust their salvation on the goodness of the best hour of their lives.

But the reprobate are always blind — perversely and madly blind to the true spirit of God's requirements. They don't want to see their own hearts, nor would they like by any means to understand too well the spirituality of God's law.

You will see the elect most earnest and sincere to renounce themselves and their spirit of self-seeking — all their own will and their own way. They will not depend at all on their own repentance, their own righteousness, or their own faith; most utterly do they renounce self and all that pertains to it.

The reprobate cleave to their own self-interest as if it were the only possible good and this the only wise way to win it.

The elect will seize the present moment and not put off duty forever, or indeed, at all; but procrastination is the everlasting law of the reprobate.

I ought to have paused on each one of these many points, to ask you solemnly how the count stands in your own souls. Will you answer it now in the silence of your own reflection, and let conscience render an honest verdict!

The elect become honest with themselves, with God and with all men. Else they could not be saved. Without this, they must be reprobated.

The elect cry out — “Search me, O God, search me all out most thoroughly”; but do you ever find the non-elect doing this? Notice that elect child. The scaling tears flow down his cheeks; his heart is tender and full of many fears lest in the hour of temptation he should sin against his God. But here is another man; long and in vain has the Lord sought and labored to draw his soul into an honest state and bring him to self-searching.

You will find that if the elect at any time fall into mistakes and errors they are ready to renounce them. At once when they suspect they may be in the wrong they pause and say — “I will surely aim to look at the truth and search it all out. I have no fear of truth — nor dread of seeing my duty.”

But the reprobate are distinguished by their pride and self-committal. You may know them by their fear of being laughed at for doing right after having done wrong. You will see them persist in their errors and evil ways and never give them up till they go down to the depths of hell.

The elect are duly actuated by fear of God — not a servile but a filial fear, well aware that it is rational to stand in awe before the great and holy God. They do not think it becomes them to be above acknowledging that they are afraid of God’s judgments and terrors.

But the reprobate lift up their heads on high and disdain to be influenced by fear of punishment or fear of God in any form.

The elect are duly affected by the mercy of God. It has a deep and melting influence on their hearts. On the other hand the reprobate are for the most part unmoved by this influence. You will recollect I said some Sabbaths since that some are so hardened that the mercy of God has no power on

them. Instead of bowing under God's mercy, affected to penitence and tenderness thereby, they become only the more bold and presumptuous.

But the elect have the utmost fear to sin. It is not merely or chiefly the fear of being punished; they are afraid to grieve their Heavenly Father — just as a dutiful child fears to add one pang to the griefs of a mother's heart.

The reprobate, however, if they are compelled to admit the truth of the gospel, only abuse it and make the utmost use of it as an occasion for more and bolder sin.

The elect you will be likely to find in the way and use of special means of grace and favored seasons of divine influence. How many times have I seen persons who in seasons of revival, when the clouds grow big with promised rain, must be off. Away they go on some hastily projected journey, or some newly got up plan for business. In the hours of ingathering, they will not be there. Publicans and harlots will crown into the kingdom, but not they. They are out of its way. Or if they stay at home you will mark that when a mighty shower of divine effusions descends on the congregation, the sermon that was blest to scores and hundreds will be unblest to them. They do not hear as for their lives. They hear after a sort, but they go their way, and it is as if they had heard nothing at all.

It is in view of all these facts, foreseen in the divine eye, that His mind is made up. He sees that He can do nothing with them but give them over to a reprobate mind and to its inevitable results.

The elect can never be made to rest in an unsanctifying hope. They know and feel that they must have a self-purifying hope, like that of John as he describes it in his epistle — “He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as Christ is pure.” If they find they have a hope that does not induce them to purify themselves, they say at once — “This is not the hope for me”!

But the reprobate will be satisfied with the least possible evidence. The least that will suffice to allay their fears of hell will answer all their purpose. they live with little self-examination; — know that their hope is not one that purifies the heart — knows it does not lead them to break off from sin — yet since so many are seen or supposed to be in the same condition, they make up their minds to it with little difficulty.

The elect are greatly afraid of delusion; they dread it exceedingly as a real and a great evil. The Bible says of some delusions, they are so subtle that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect, assuming that this is not possible. If so it must be because through grace they can be kept watching and prayerful against every delusion. but the reprobate court it. mark how they rush into every new form of self-delusion. Averse to the truth through hatred of heart against it, they almost pray for delusion. O how greedily they hail whatever new light in the shape of mesmerism and rappings afford a place of retreat from the unwelcome blaze of Bible truth.

The elect will be on their guard against bad company. This is one of the dangers against which they must be willing to watch, or they cannot be saved and could not have been elected. I think now of the case of a young man who began to form acquaintance with another — an acquaintance at first hopeful, but ere long something occurred which aroused his fears and soon something else of the same indication, yet more startling. Suddenly my young friend paused and said — I must cut your acquaintance at once, for how can I trust myself in your society! Such a step required moral courage. It also indicated that that young man was in the way of saving his own soul, and therefore might be presumed to be one of the elect.

Right over against this I remember the case of a young man traveling with his father and other friends. I could not but notice how the father watched that son. “I must do so, said he, for I know that he is continually rushing into bad company. The moment he sees any of that class of society, their attraction becomes to him almost resistless.. He seems to love the society of young men who will debauch his principles and deprave his morals. It seems to me often that he will ruin his own soul in spite of the utmost care I can take of him.”

The elect will be afraid of bad habits, and ever on their guard against them. If at any time they have fallen under the power of temptation in this direction, they will try to recover themselves at once from the snare.

Right over against this stands the case of the reprobate, easily known by the fact that they are not afraid of bad habits, but are easily led into them, as God knew they would be, and therefore was compelled to give them over to a reprobate mind.

The elect are afraid of bad books, but the reprobate are not, but rather relish them and indulge in their perusal.

You see one class, betaking themselves to a prayer meeting, while another class wonder why anybody should go there. The latter will say, "If I have not religion enough to seek my own gratification, what's my religion good for?" About as reasonable as if the drunkard should say, "If I can't get drunk, and get safely out of it again, what's my religion good for?"

The reprobate walk evermore in a worldly way, and not in God's ways and God's counsels. The ways of the world are the ways of their choice. The elect are not satisfied with merely amiable qualities, they must have the deep fountains of the heart broken up, and it's Augean stables cleansed. The reprobate satisfy themselves with the smoothest and most plausible forms — anything that will prepare them to slide down on a glass rail road to the depths of hell.

The elect seek to mortify their pride, and often do things for this very purpose, just to crush down the hated thing, saying — I will not bear it nor spare it; I put my heel on the very head of the serpent and it shall live no longer.

But the reprobate abhor such a course, and even cultivate their pride.

In times of revival, an elect man will say — Now is my time, I must not delay a moment longer. I must seize my opportunity while yet it is called *today*. But the reprobate contrive ten thousand excuses, often self-contradictory and always senseless and vain. In point is the case of a young man in Rochester many years since, who, when the revival commenced, and he was pressed with the claims of the gospel, replied — "Shall I make myself a laughing stock among the youth of this city? Do you expect me to be so singular as to set off for the Celestial City all alone?" Ere long the masses were melted and moved. Then, pressed again with the claims of the gospel, he replied — "What! shall I go with the rabble? Do you expect me to connect myself with the masses of merely common people?" Soon the dreadful cholera came — it smote him, and in three short but dreadful hours, took him from the earth, and hurried him before that God, whose claims he had so frivolously and lightly set aside!

So with the reprobate, when the great gospel trumpet is blown, waxing louder and louder, they will not hear. Their hearts are sealed against the truth, and their doom, for this very reason, sealed for the awful judgment. They are reprobates, because they would play the fool, and, because no wisdom could be welcome to their souls.

The elect, moreover, are striving for sanctification. The reprobate, let their profession of piety be as it may, have no heart to become holy as God is holy.

The elect will persevere. Not so with the reprobate, for they are distinguished by a short-lived piety, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. Like a boat in the Niagara, above the mighty cataract, the elect will strike firmly, and ply their oars with their might, and bear away in safety; but the reprobate, give a few feeble strokes, and then give way to the furious current, and are borne along with dashing speed, over the dreadful precipice, down, down, to ruin. Perhaps they set out in their religion, only to make a little experiment, and see how they liked it. Need I tell you, these experimenters are shortly stumbled, and when the sun is up and waxes hot, they wither away.

The elect will have more and more conscience. Mark them when and where you will, they are becoming daily and yearly in their moral course, more and more conscientious, pure-minded, strict, upright, kind and generous. In their early stages, the natural qualities of character may predominate and chiefly obscure the spiritual, but as time rolls on, and the appliances of providence and grace have time to do their work, you see them more and more ripe for God's service, till at last they melt away into heaven.

But in the reprobate, you will see less and less that is hopeful. The blossoms that in early times seemed to promise fruit, will sicken, fade and drop, and soon the tree itself grows pale and sickly, and ripens for the burning.

The elect, will show sooner or later, that they *are* saved. You will see that the power of sin in their hearts is broken, and that every grace is thriving and flourishing exceedingly.

*“Great is the work, my neighbors cried,  
and owned the power divine.”*

They will not be stumbling about the doctrines of the Bible, but on the contrary will see more and more of beauty and fitness in all those great things which God has revealed of Himself and His plan of salvation. To the reprobate it falls to stumble forever at the plain truths of God's word, and the plainer and the more precious the truth, the more grievous and fatal is their stumbling. What could be a more decisive mark of a reprobate than this?

## REMARKS

**1.** Men truly decide in time their own election or reprobation. Now do not misapprehend me. Mistakes on this subject are far too common. Some suppose that God has decided man's destiny, as absolutely, and fatally, as if He had nailed it down with iron nails, and man had no power to determine or change it. Whereas, the fact is, that man as really decides his own destiny, as if God had known nothing about it.

**2.** It is simply absurd to say — "A man elected, will be saved, do what he may," for he never can be saved but by doing his duty.

**3.** It is a mere absurdity to make election a stumbling block, as many do. Suppose that God and yourself were to commence existence today, together. There is no *past* with either, and no actions done in the past, therefore, which can in the least affect the future. Now, God determines your destiny, according to your actual conduct, and your entire voluntary activities. Would it not be absurd for you to complain of His election as interfering with your final destiny, or rather, with your power to determine it by your own free choices?

If so on this supposition, then is it so as the case actually stands, for God really determines your destiny solely upon your voluntary conduct, — solely and actually as if He had never thought of it before you began to live and to act.

**4.** Ministers whose hearts are set on doing their work, cannot help watching the course of things, to see the indications that show who are the elect, and who the reprobate. If their hearts are really on saving souls, of course they will watch with most intense solicitude. Like a faithful

physician who sees his patient in peril, he nerves are on the rock, his lips quiver and turn white, for his soul is full of unutterable sympathy and anxiety; or as the lawyer with a case on hand in which life trembles in the balance, and his sympathies are wrought up to agony: so the honest man of God, who labors for souls as one who must give account, has the sympathies of his heart taxed to their utmost depth, and cannot but watch every indication, that at last his account for each or any soul will be with joy and not with grief. As he sees the evidences of election developing themselves here, or of reprobation there, his soul swells with the varied emotions of hope and of fear; and as those evidences ripen to their maturity, and he stands by the bedside of the dying Christian conqueror, why should he not shout, "Glory to God in the highest!"? The destiny of one more soul for heaven, always known to God, is now made manifest before his eyes, and why should he not give utterance to his devout thanksgivings to all conquering grace?

**5.** The evidences on both sides are oftentimes so manifestly clear that the wickedest man must confess to their sufficiency as evidence. "That man," they will say, "is certainly fitting for heaven." "That other man is surely on his way down to the depths of hell."

**6.** The more thorough the application of means, the more decisive will these developments become. When Christ traveled with His own gospel among the people of His time, working miracles and pouring the light of truth in mighty floods up on all the land, how rapidly did some develop their character as reprobates! And on the other hand, how readily did some come to the truth, to the saving of their souls. So in these days, when the means employed are full of power, and the influences are strong and earnestly applied, and men are compelled to decide one way or the other, the work of sealing destiny and of developing its evidences, goes on with utmost terrific rapidity. There is a young woman. She scarcely sets her foot down in Oberlin before she says, "This is a holy place, and God has sent me here to secure the salvation of my soul. It must be done!" But another shall come in at the same time, and come under the same influences but sets herself against the truth from the very first, and only becomes the more rapidly and terribly hardened in her sins.



7. We see what an inquisitive world this ought to be, to know, not who is first in office or foremost in wealth, but to see who develops the character of the elect and who the reprobate. With what amazing interest would angels study these indications, if human character and conduct were as open to their inspection as to ours! These things *may* be more patent to their eyes than they can be to our own.

We see why Peter said, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." How reasonable that all men should! For consider, you have the same to do, and as much to do, in determining the eternal destiny of your own soul, as if God knew nothing about it.

Again, you see the meaning of that portion of my text — "For many are called but few are chosen." The many, God calls, but few will answer. Long and loudly does He call, and they will not hear. Of course, God could not choose them to salvation.

How does the case stand with you, my hearers? You have some new evidence developed to your view this day, showing, one way or the other, what shall be your final destiny. Do you take warning, and apply the truth to yourselves? Do you find that the gospel is saving you in the sense of saving your hearts from the power of sin?

Generally the early years of life give the cast to moral character and determine final eternal destiny. The masses who are converted at all are converted early, so that you do not need to wait long for developments which are in the main decisive. Early they strike into the path which, followed through after years, lands them at their journey's end in paradise or in perdition. Mark that young man, that mere boy. Has he a conscience? Is it becoming more and more an element of power in his character? Does he fear God and hate evil? Is he attentive to the great questions of religious duty and truth? Then you may predict, almost with certainty, his future manhood and his final destiny.

But on the other hand, if you see him indisposed towards religious truth and its claims, and only waxing more and more hardened and fixed in his aversion, you cannot help saying, "Reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord hath rejected them." The Lord rejected them because he saw that they would turn away coldly and scornfully from every appeal

He could make to either their conscience or their sensibilities. Yes, even when Jesus Christ came down to throw His arms of lovingkindness all round about you, you evaded Him and would not be embraced in His loving arms. Then you sealed your final doom as a lost sinner.

Another said, "I must bid Jesus welcome to my heart — I must and will rush to the wide arms of His offered embrace, crying "*Life, Life, ETERNAL LIFE!*" and so doing, he "made his calling and election sure." And did he, think you, pay too dearly for his soul's salvation? Will he regret it when, in the light of the judgment, he shall come to see what such a salvation is actually worth?

# CHRIST TEMPTED, SUFFERING, AND ABLE TO SUCCOR THE TEMPTED

*“For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.” — Hebrews 2:18*

The connection, commencing back with the tenth verse of this chapter, presents Jesus as one of the brethren among His people and assigns reasons for His assuming human nature into union with His divine. Because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same, to the end that by His own death He might destroy Satan who had power to make death terrible, and might so deliver His people from the fear of death though otherwise under its bondage their lives long. For indeed, of the race of angels Christ did not take hold, to save them; but He did take hold of the race of man. The former, falling by sin, sank to hell, unredeemed; the latter, tempted and fallen, the Son of God rushed to rescue and save. Hence the necessity of putting on their nature, since He had undertaken to rescue and save them. Therefore He must be made in all things *like* them, “that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.”

The subject presented in our text, if discussed fundamentally will embrace the discussion of several points.

## **1.** The first respects the *nature of sin*.

Many seem to assume that temptation implies the presence of sin. They think no being can be tempted unless there be sin in his heart or constitution already, to which temptation makes its appeal. Now if this view be just, it follows that Jesus Christ had sin in His heart or constitution; a conclusion which I need not say is utterly unscriptural and revolting to reason and to fact. Hence we must look into this point.

*What then is sin?*

**(1.)** It is not something which belongs to the very nature of man — something mysteriously incorporated into his very being, so that nature is itself sinful. To assume this is the greatest nonsense. What is sin? Is it a created substance? What sort of a substance can sin be? And who must bear the blame of sin if it be a created substance? On this supposition, is it possible to avoid the conclusion that the blame of sin must attach to that creative agency which gave it existence?

**(2.)** Sin does *not consist in any involuntary state of mind*. It does not belong to the substance of the mind, nor to any activities of the mind, apart from the will. It does not pertain to any involuntary state of the mind, nor to any state or action of either its thinking or its feeling faculties. Mind thinks and mind feels; yet in neither of these, strictly speaking, does sin inhere and to neither does sin primarily belong. When the Scriptures say — “The thought of wickedness is sin,” the language is used only in the same sense in which it is said that muscular action is sin — that, for example, the muscular action of the arm wielding a club to kill a neighbor is sinful; it is simply the development of a sinful state or act of the will. The mind’s intention or will, is the sin in the case. This sin belongs to the muscles of the arm in no other sense than that those are made the instruments of sin. So the plotting and devising of the intellect to accomplish murder are only the instrumentalities which serve a depraved will or intention to murder. The sin lies not in the intellect, but in the intention.

**(3.)** Sin is very clearly explained in the Bible; and if it were not, we should know what it is, for our reason and conscience would teach us. Ten thousand Bibles could not make it plainer than our own reason and conscience make it to every reflecting mind.

Sin is violation of law, and law of course has respect to voluntary action, and to this only. The Bible does not tell us what color our hair should be, or our skin. It never assumes to legislate on such points; nor does it decree what powers of mind we shall have, or ought to have, but only *how we should use them*. This is the legitimate province of law, and to this the Bible confines itself — with no deviation.

Duty must be known in order to become duty. It is the greatest nonsense to affirm that anything can become duty before it is understood by the mind. Prof. Stuart said, “Sin is violation of known law.” But we need to go

somewhat farther back and show what this “*violation of law*” is. Law prescribes the rule of voluntary action, and prescribes this rule of course to the *will*, or voluntary faculty. The will is the law-obeying or law-disobeying faculty. In the action of the will therefore must all sin, properly speaking, lie. Sin therefore always lies back of the external acts and back also of proximate violations.

The law of God requires that the will of His subjects be given up supremely to the doing of His will. This is precisely what the law requires and what it expresses in the language — “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind.”

Sin is consecration to self — a state of mind that cares supremely for self. This is sin and this only. Muscular action is not itself sin. Strictly speaking, nothing is sin but this state of mind. Muscular action is only the development of sin in the external life.

## 2. We come next to the question of *temptation*. What is it?

Sin consists in self-interest and in the soul’s voluntary committal of itself to secure self-interest at any cost. A mind in this attitude is powerfully attracted by any object which excites its sensibilities to selfish good. This attractive power we call temptation.

Temptation is not sin, though often confounded with it. Christ was really tempted. If then the question be asked, “What is temptation?” we must answer, all those states of excited sensibility which tend to draw the soul from God.

Take the case of Eve. Her first temptation found her in a holy state of mind. It consisted in an excited appetite and in the presence of beautiful food. Yet neither of these was sin; they were only temptation. Satan moreover suggested that this food was highly useful — “a tree to be desired to make one wise;” and he more than insinuated that God had prohibited this fruit through mere jealousy, lest Adam and Eve should become wise as Gods, knowing good and evil. As if he had said, “Are you aware that God has forbidden you this fruit lest by eating it you become as wise as He is Himself?” Then he brought it near that she might see its beauty and perhaps that she might smell its fragrance; and then he extolled

its mysterious virtue to make one wise, and she had been longing for wisdom. Thus she is tempted and thus she falls! She is under the charm of the devil; is really in a charmed state — all excited, so that she scarcely knows what she is doing. Her sensibilities are effervescing most intensely — and what does she do? All this excitement of her sensibilities is not itself sin; but the steps that followed were sin. When tempted thus, she resolved to violate God's command and take and eat the forbidden fruit, then she sinned.

The Apostle said, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived was in the transgression." From this testimony and from the history it appears that the deception was practiced on Eve only, and then that she became Adam's tempter. Satan took advantage of her acute sensibilities and played upon them till his point was gained. He acted the part of a cunning devil. He knew that God had made woman a bundle of susceptibilities, and therefore he approached her on her weak side, and in the absence of her husband. Now I want you all to notice this case and study it closely, for here you may learn the nature of temptation. There stood Eve — in the presence of the forbidden fruit, her appetite for it powerfully excited; her curiosity to know if it would make her wise stimulated to great activity, the fascinations of the devil acting upon her to charm her soul into yet more burning excitement — Adam absent and she too much excited to wait for her return; there in the fatal moment she ate and *fell*. Strange to say she is so much excited that she has no sooner tasted than she runs after Adam to find him and give it to him that he may eat. The thought of guilt for her act seems not yet to have entered her mind.

Now mark this. The law addresses itself to the will; but the will is reached through the sensibility, and this is excited to intense action by temptations. Yet temptation is not sin. No matter how great the temptation if the will resists and refuses to gratify the demands of the excited sensibility.

Let it then be understood, that nothing is temptation until it awakens a sensibility which allures the mind along into, or at least towards sin. If the mind is aware of this tendency towards sin, then there is sin in the very act of indulging the heightened sensibility, for it must be wrong to give indulgence to an excitement which we know tends to draw us into sin. But

we cannot suppose that Eve had this knowledge of a tendency to sin in any form of indulgence, because to suppose this implies that she had already had some experience in sinning.

**3.** Again let it be considered, that temptations to sin are countless. On the one hand flattery; on the other abuse; for flattery tends to make us think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, and abuse irritates the sensibility and provokes to anger. Poverty tempts men to repine against God's providence, while wealth tempts to pride. Honor bestowed excited to ambition, but dishonor stirs the feeling of resentment. All the little trials which occur in the family or in the class-room, myriads in number and endlessly various in character, are temptations, but they are not sins. If the feeling is controlled and the will refuses to yield; if the soul stands firm, steadfastly bearing up against the inducement to sin, then all is well. So long as the soul stands steadfast, immovable, holding on firmly to the arm of the Lord, there is no sin.

**4.** The Bible abundantly represents Christ to have been greatly tempted. We might infer that He must have been so, from the very fact of His having human nature. Especially strong in this inference when we consider that He assumed human nature for the very purpose of being tempted, that He might know how to succor them that are tempted.

A careful study of His actual history confirms this view of His case. How often do we see Him abused in a manner which must have tempted Him to anger. No one can read His history without seeing how great His temptations often became.

Among His sorest temptations was that in the garden of Gethsemane. This awful scene of struggle came not upon Him without forewarning. He clearly anticipated its approach. He conversed about it with His disciples; before it came on it would seem that He did so for several days; and we are distinctly informed that as the dreadful agony came upon Him, He warned them of the danger and besought them to pray and watch with Him at least one hour. Some time before this, He had said, Lo, "the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me." He knows that I shall do my Heavenly Father's will.

The dread hour came on. He hastened to the garden whither He had been wont to resort for private prayer in the hours of His trial. Turning to His accompanying disciples, He said, "Tarry ye here and pray, while I go and pray yonder." He went Himself to the loved retreat and there poured out His soul in most earnest prayer. Here His agony became intensely great. It is recorded that an angel came from heaven to strengthen Him. Wonderful to tell; He who could command twelve legions of angels is now in agony and weakness, and one from those angelic legions comes in sympathy to sustain Him under the crushing weight of His burdens. O the man of sorrows! How does His heart sink under the awful agony of His temptation! Here it was that His "sweat became as it were great drips of blood, falling down to the ground."

It is perhaps impossible for us to tell precisely what this form of temptation was, but we know it must have been most fearful and terrible. It was a tremendous struggle.

Think of the illustration it gives us of the fearful power of Satan. An angel needs to come to resist the devil and give the tempted sufferer strength to overcome.

The Apostle evidently refers to this scene when he said,

"Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared."  
Hebrews 5:7.

**5.** The Bible informs us that one great object in Christ's being tempted was to teach Him by experience how to sympathize with human flesh and frailty. He would have myriads of tempted children to care for and shield against the power of temptation. How desirable then that He should Himself know what sore temptation means by experiencing Himself the same. This was the divine plan, to make Him a sympathizing and compassionate High Priest, fitted in every respect to be the refuge and the strength of His suffering saints. In fact He needed to know all those trials and temptations which men experience who are greatly tempted, yet without sin.



If the Bible had said no such thing as our text affirms, in respect to Christ's being tempted and His learning thereby how to sympathize and to succor His tempted children, even then we could not but know that God must sympathize with His suffering sons and daughters in their temptations, and so would Christ also. Every parent knows what this feeling of sympathy for a suffering child is. When they see their children suffering, how do their hearts cry out, O that I could suffer those pains myself and take them off by this means from the child I love! Now, from the very nature of benevolence, Christ must feel all this towards His children. He must feel it not only because He is benevolent but also because of the peculiar relation into which He enters with them as His redeemed children. Think how He has mingled Himself as it were with them and His interests with theirs. Is it not said, "And we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"? No fellowship has He with their sins; but with them, as His redeemed sons and daughters He has a most intense and wonderful fellowship. To redeem them from all sin and to guard them most perfectly against it — these objects lie inexpressibly near His heart. O, if He could die for us, and suffer so much under Satan's fiercest temptations — all for our sake, — no wonder He should sympathize with us most intensely when He sees us in anguish. His feelings must be keen and intense just in proportion as He sees us under the agonies of trial and temptations, and His sympathetic sorrow for us must be according to the strength of His benevolence and the depth of His great sympathy for His beloved people.

He knows now how to succor those that are tempted. From experience He has learned how succor comes to the tempted. Having been Himself strengthened in the hour of His agony, He knows how to strengthen others.

**6.** We can confide in those who have had experience, when we know the fact. In such cases, nothing is more natural than to expect sympathy and to repose confidence.

In the domestic relations, one who has never had a wife cannot sympathize with one who has had but has lost the sharer of his deepest sympathies. The anguish of the bereaved husband no man can understand by a merely theoretic investigation. No man can tell his neighbor so that he shall be able

to understand from the description merely, what this sorrow of heart is. Hence when one professes to sympathize with us, if we know he has had no experience of the sort, we know he does not understand our case. How can you, young woman, understand the sorrows of that mother who holds on her lap her dying child? You must first be yourself a mother and hold on your lap a dying child; then you can know what these heart-sorrows are, and can sympathize with those who endure this sorrow.

The same law is developed everywhere. The young convert knows that unconverted sinners cannot understand his state of mind and the trials he experiences. If he falls under the power of temptation, he knows that one who has not experienced such temptation can by no means sympathize with him. He would not go to him for sympathy, nor for counsel and aid. None except those who have known the Christian's hopes and sensibilities and temptations can enter into them with true sympathy.

In view of this great principle, we can see how fitting and beautiful is the divine economy in making Jesus our great High Priest, familiar with the Christian's trials by experience. He placed Himself in circumstances like ours that He might know what sorrow is and what sore temptations mean. He has Himself endured temptations, excitements, sorrows and persecutions. He knows in His own experience what the assaults of Satan are. The Bible says that one great object of this plan was that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in behalf of a suffering and tempted people.

**7.** Who does not know how natural it is for us to seek sympathy from those who are known to understand our case by experience. Young Christians naturally do this. They fly to those who can appreciate all their trials and enter deeply into their sympathies. This is true not only of all Christians but of all men, under all circumstances of life.

This principle in our nature gives a rich and heightened beauty to all Christ's earthly experience. When we see Him passing through all the various trials of mortal life and understand *why* He subjected Himself to all this, we cannot fail to see a manifestation of benevolence and a proof of His most abundant fitness for His work — such as would charm our souls into love and trust, and away from all unbelief. Think how He endured the trial of being unpopular, and also of being popular; how He was both

caressed and commended on the one hand; slandered and condemned on the other; how with patient step He trod the varied paths of human life, toiling and suffering even more than falls to the lot of most men — breasting the storms of affliction; closing in with every form of conflict; joining battle with the world and putting it down beneath His feet; resisting Satan's assaults and foiling him at every step. Thus onward He moved through the scenes of earthly trial, tasting each cup of human trial and sorrow, till He should know them all in their extremest form — that He might be able to succor those that are tempted.

**8.** Let us notice next some of the ways in which Christ gives succor to His people in temptation. He does this,

**(1.)** By assuring them of His presence. O what a wonderful charm and power there is in this! What a safeguard against discouragement, for whose heart can ever sink within him while he is conscious of his Savior's presence? In their seasons of sorest trials, Christians are wont to feel a thick and almost sensible darkness round about their souls; but the light of the Savior's presence scatters this away: for how can it be night to our souls when Jesus reveals His presence? When He manifests Himself as one who sympathizes with us in our trials, what a blessed charm is wrought upon us! How strong we feel to bear our burdens; how powerfully sustained under all our trials! O how congenial to every feeling of the heart! It becomes a pleasure to endure for Jesus' sake.

*“I can do all things or can bear,  
All sufferings if my Lord be there.”*

**(2.)** Christ sustains us by reminding us of what He has done and suffered for us. He brings before us the scenes of His agony, and thereby not only assures us of His true and actual sympathy with us, but also of His suffering on our behalf. I recollect being present when the limb of Mrs. C. was amputated.

It is well known here that she was extremely weak and great fears were entertained that she would not survive the operation. Efforts were made to render her insensible to pain by means of mesmeric influence, but all in vain. The hour came and the work must proceed. I sat down by her bedside, and began to talk to her about the sufferings of Christ her Savior. He suffered, said I to her, far more for you than you are suffering now.

The effect of this consideration upon her mind was truly wonderful. As long as it could be kept before her, it acted like a charm. She scarcely felt her physical pains. The surgeon said that this was better than mesmerism.

So the whole system may be in the extremest agony, but if the eye of faith can look through its tears and see Jesus, and realize how He suffered, it charms the soul away from its sorrows, and bathes it in an atmosphere of peace and joy.

**(3.)** Christ breaks the power of temptation by revealing the hatefulness of sin. If He can only get the mind's attention, and bring Himself and His deeds of love before its view, then sin is made to appear exceeding sinful and the temptation vanishes away.

Some of you know how this principle was illustrated in the case of Bro. H. and his pipe of tobacco. He had been long addicted to this indulgence, and had often resolved to break away, but to no purpose. At length as he was musing on the matter, pipe in mouth, the thought flashed on his mind: "Did Jesus die to purchase for me such a filthy indulgence as this?" In an instant the power of temptation was broken, and away went pipe and temptation together. Neither ever returned again. The charm had gone, the snare was broken, and the bird escaped on wings — to be imprisoned no more. In that one thought, Christ came with power to the soul and burst its fetters asunder.

How often is the mind in agony under the power of its temptations! It groans out in a tearless agony, as if there could be no deliverance and no power to endure much longer — till suddenly *Christ comes*, the soul bursts its fetters and is at peace. Then she sings of victory! victory! through Jesus Christ her Lord.

## REMARKS

**1.** Temptation, or at least, a strong tendency towards it, may be constitutional and probably often is so. Probably ever since the fall of the first human pair, there has been in the human constitution an increased excitability towards temptation. By this means the race are exposed to strong temptation, some more strong in one direction and some in another;

one to licentious indulgence, another to ambition, another to the abuse of power. Yet let it be strictly observed, all this tendency to temptation, however strong, is not itself sin. For however great these temptations and tendencies are, yet if they are resisted and steadfastly opposed, all the more does the soul soar aloft in the triumphs of victorious grace.

If these temptations are firmly resisted, they are not to be regarded even as calamities. Take the case of a man born with a strong tendency in his constitution towards the excitement of intoxicating drink. If he resists this temptation, he grows in moral strength and in true moral elevation of character, with every successive resistance. The original tendency is more a blessing than a curse to him.

**2.** One great design of God in sending these temptations upon us, is to augment our moral strength. Who does not know that under the discipline thus obtained, men become ten thousand times stronger than they would otherwise be? The Bible teaches us that saints in their future inheritance of glory are to be raised above most other orders of beings. Hence they are tried and proved here for the very purpose of becoming fitted for their exaltation there. Apostles begun this career of discipline, to fit them for what awaited them in the world of their exaltation. Forth abroad they went, through perils by land and sea, perils of robbers, perils of persecution, perils of scorn and hate and malice of wicked men — all this to test their fidelity to their Great Master, and prepare them to be chief officers in the future church of God, to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Often did our Lord inculcate this principle of His government: “He that is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much.” “Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things.”

Following in their footsteps, see that great company of struggling, toiling saints and martyrs. They wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. In every age the work goes on, and myriads are being trained and disciplined under the providential agencies of earth for the corresponding rewards and glories of heaven. Kings and priests shall they become under the exalted reign of their Lord.

Let none of them, therefore, complain of trials and discipline though they pass through ever so much temptation and sorrow here. You will go up at

last, praising God that He gave you a sympathizing High Priest, under whose sustaining hand, every trial was borne triumphantly and every sorrow endured with patience. As you move along the eternal hills, your brow bathed in the sunlight of heaven, and your hand bearing one of those golden harps, you will not regret that your pathway on earth lay through the fires of tribulation.

Will these young men and women be there? Shall we see you mounting those glorious hills, and sounding forth the melodies of heaven, on harps of gold? And must some of you go in the very opposite direction, hiding your heads for shame, and crying to the rocks and to the mountains, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sits upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb”? Alas, that any of you should choose such a doom when you might have the joys of the blessed just as well, *if you would!*

**3.** The sympathy of Jesus can never be over-estimated. Aye, *never*, NEVER. How deep must I let down the lead and line to fathom the depth of your sympathy for your children? A long line it must be, doubtless. But suppose you cast your line into the great deep of Jehovah’s love; where will you find its bottom? Who can mount up to its heights, or go down to its mighty depths? Had you an angel’s powers, this effort would be all in vain. And are you then in danger of over-estimating the love of Jesus Christ and His sympathy for His people? O, you have only thought as a child and formed conceptions as a mere pigmy does — yea, though your heart be all dissolved with sympathy and responsive affection.

**4.** To lack confidence in the sympathy of Christ is utter ruin to the soul. Let this confidence be wanting and suddenly you are driven away and dashed on the rocks of ruin! You have let go your anchor, and away you drift, dashing and plunging — like a ship on a lee shore and breakers close ahead under her bow.

But if your pilot is on hand, true to his work, and all is made safe through his skill and care and your confidence in him, then you may laugh at all these terrors. They can be no terrors to you. So if ye who are Christians, professedly, fail to believe in Christ, Satan will surely drive you upon the rocks, and triumph over your eternal ruin.

**5.** Faith often needs encouragement. Christ understands this perfectly. He knows that although His people believe in Him somewhat, and of course must have some faith in Him, or they cannot be His people at all, yet they often greatly need encouragement to greater faith. He knows that they need to have their hearts powerfully penetrated with the love of God and brought under the full impression of this great truth. When this impression is fully made on the heart and you come to see how much is meant in God's infinite love to lost souls and to His redeemed people, then, O then, what a wonderful relief comes to the troubled soul! Then faith finds an everlasting rock on which it may repose. The effect on the mind is as when old ocean, long tossed with the tempest and thrown into the utmost commotion, is hushed all suddenly, the clouds dispersed and the winds falling to a dead calm. Then how the old ocean sinks to rest. So does the soul when God's love is seen and faith finds its firm footing on God's everlasting promises, and those promises are seen to emanate from His unbounded love.

**6.** If Christ did not sympathize with sinners, when would they ever be converted? Sinners often get the impression that though Christ has much sympathy with His converted people, yet He has none for themselves. He may have sympathy, they say, with those who already love Him, but I am a sinner, and how can He care for me? But see. Look at the case of those very saints with whom you admit Christ now has sympathy. I put to you this simple question: Did Christ's care and compassion for them begin after their conversion, or before? If you say it began after their conversion, then I ask you, how they ever came to be converted at all? How came they to be saints? Surely you must admit that Christ sought them while they were in their sins; else they had never been found and brought into His fold. Will you not then believe that Christ cares for you, though He knows you are yet in your sins? He knows that you are lost, condemned, unable to save yourself; totally, utterly unable to make any atonement for your sins, and hence unable to rescue yourself from the terrible ruin into which your sin has plunged you. He knows too all your natural aversion of heart to come to Him for pardon; and He understands perfectly the kind of dependence on Him which you have on this account. And now, does He not care for your soul? Yes, ten thousand times more than you do for your own. Infinitely more ready is He to pour out His soul for you than you are

to shed one tear for yourself, and O how much more ready to die for you than you are to lift a finger for Him! Before your very eyes He takes His stand, with His bleeding heart all gushing out before you in love and sympathy for you, and yet you scarcely ever see it! And even now, what are you doing and of what are you thinking? Do you fall back in your seat and say to yourself — “This is a long and tedious sermon; how little interest I find in these things!” Alas, alas! that the things of salvation should be so unmeaning to you, that they should awaken so little thought or care! O, if it were possible, after you have reached your final abode and after the gates have been closed on you forever; if after that dread hour it were still possible that you might hear a voice, saying, Go back to Oberlin for one more Sabbath; once more for a single day you may take your place there among God’s people and hear the choir sing, and bow your soul in prayer for mercy and listen to the gospel offers, once more occupying the position of a sinner under reprieve with offers of mercy held out before him; if I say, all this were only possible, and it might be your privilege, would you not shout for joy and welcome it? Do you not today believe most assuredly that you would consecrate such a *day of mercy* most solemnly to the work of repentance, making sure of salvation with all your might? No doubt you would, and no doubt you now believe you would. *Then why not do so now? Now* you have that privilege. *Now* the door of mercy is just as really open to you as it could be if you were to come back from hell for one more day’s grace. But you know that the supposition I have made is utterly impracticable. You know that no sinner since the world began has ever come back to take his place again even for one hour in the house of God to seek and secure his own salvation. You know therefore that *now*, not *then*; that *here*, not *there*, is your accepted time and your day of salvation.

What, therefore, do you say now? Will you come to meet Jesus now? He reaches down His hand; will you put your hand in His, saying, I give Thee my heart? Am I entirely mistaken in assuming that some of you do say this today — that some sinners are ready to cry out, Yes, Yes, YES: thou sayest, “Seek ye My face; my heart replies, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.”

Now I want you should tell me whether you will deal honestly and truly with Jesus, my master, or whether you will not? Let me know what you will do, and what you will not do. Will you come to Jesus Christ today?



# THE CHILD-LIKE SPIRIT AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF ENTERING HEAVEN

*“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 18:3*

*“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” — Mark 10:15*

The passage from Matthew stands in the following connection: The disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

“And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Look at the question which drew forth this decisive remark from our Lord: — “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Strange question this, for holy men to ask — for men to ask, who had now been in the society of the Meek and Lowly One long enough, it would seem, to understand and to have imbibed His spirit. Our Lord wisely took advantage of the question, to propound one vastly important principle in reference to the nature of His kingdom and the consequent fitness for entering it.

In discussing the subject here presented, it will be important,

- I. TO STATE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LITTLE CHILDREN.**
- II. TO SHOW WHY THIS STATE OF MIND IS INDISPENSABLE TO SALVATION.**

I. It is important in the outset to consider attentively the fact that the case taken for illustration is a little child; not a young man or a young woman; — not one who had reached the period where little children, as they

advance in age, are wont to lose the simplicity of little ones. Let it also be carefully noted, that the characteristics of the little child, to which the Savior refers, are not, as they appear in the very young child, moral, but only natural. They serve to illustrate the moral qualities of character which are indispensable conditions of salvation, yet they are not themselves moral, for the reason that they are spontaneous, and are not developed under the action of either the intelligence or the conscience. Until both these faculties are so far matured as to act responsibly, it is a great mistake to suppose that there can be either moral character or moral action.

The language used by our Lord plainly shows that He refers to analogous and not to identical qualities. “Except ye be converted and become as little children.” He does not demand that we should become as ignorant as they — as void of enlightened conscience as they. No. Like Paul, He would say: “In malice, be ye children; but in understanding, be ye MEN.”

**Let us, then, trace the analogies between the characteristics of little children and those of Christian converts.**

**1.** In transparency or guilelessness of character. This is a most remarkable characteristic of very young children. It has been said that “children and fools always tell the truth.” The infant mind is a stranger to guile. It has not yet learned to practice duplicity; it has not learned what the thing itself is. Mark that little one; no dodging, no evasion of the truth; no desire to cover up; not yet the first idea of having anything to be covered up; — how guileless and beautiful in his transparent simplicity! No wonder everybody loves such little children. You love them for the same reason, substantially, that you love holiness. It is intrinsically lovely. Their characteristics closely resemble those of the true convert — those of the holy in heaven itself.

Do not forget that I am now speaking, not of a child who has grown forward into guile and deceit — who has begun to violate his conscience, and of course has a motive for trying to appear what he is not; not of such does the Savior speak.

**2.** Next in the list of infantile characteristics, I notice humility. By this I mean, not a sense of sin, but a willingness to be known and appreciated according to truth. The little child is in this sense humble. He feels no

repugnance to being known as he is. He has not once thought of trying to conceal his real character. He is ignorant of almost everything, and he seems very cheerfully to assume that such is the fact. Hence, he asks questions of everybody and under any and all circumstances, never anxious lest he should expose his ignorance. Indeed he expects to expose it if he has it, and deems it no harm to do so. He seems to suppose that there can be no objection to being known according to the truth in his case.

It is often very striking and instructive to see how this spirit develops itself in quite young children. It often seems as if they should scarcely find time to sleep, so earnest are they to learn the meaning of the thousand new things which they daily hear and see. You see them asking their simple-hearted questions of everybody and everywhere. Even the little children of Queen Victoria will run into the kitchen and ask questions of the humblest servants in her household, and none are so low in station that they are ashamed to expose their ignorance before them. In fact, at this unambitious age of life, they seem to have no idea of aristocratic distinctions. They are free of heart to associate with any kind-hearted children, be their color or condition in life what it may.

How unlike all this is the condition of those who have advanced in years and in sin till they are ashamed to be known, and afraid even to know themselves! Then see how artful — how studious to keep their real character in the dark! How expert in framing disguises, and how intent on keeping up false appearances! If they are ignorant on any point, perhaps they will sooner remain so than run the risk of exposing their ignorance by asking a question. How strong the contrast between them and little children, in this respect of true humility!

**3.** Little children are also confiding. The spontaneous impulse of their minds is to believe everything they hear said, and to assume that everybody speaks the truth. Until they have learned by revolting experience that there is a vast amount of falsehood and deception in the world, their simple hearts are altogether unsuspecting and trustful. So should the Christian convert be, and so in fact the real convert is, I mean, in his relations towards God. He comes into a trustful spirit, and seems spontaneously to believe every word God says. He assumes that every promise of God is sure — every declaration reliable. And this is a most

striking as well as perfectly indispensable element of true Christian character.

**4.** Little children are also affectionate. They seem naturally inclined to love. Treat them kindly, and you will not fail to win their young hearts. How easily and spontaneously their warm affections gush forth. All simple-hearted in bestowing their love, they need only see the manifestations of love towards themselves, and they give their hearts, returning love for love without stint or fear. You smile on them; they respond with full and unsuspecting hearts. So the soul of the young convert responds to all the affecting manifestations of the Savior's love, and it is his delight to mark the testimonies of God's loving-kindness, and to let his heart flow out in grateful and responsive love to such a Being!

**5.** The little child is willing to live by faith. In fact, he does live by faith altogether, and seems to think of no other way to live. He trusts his parents and friends for everything he needs, and trusts them so heartily that he has no anxieties, no solitudes. He is not restive and uneasy lest somebody should prove false, or lest some of his hopes should fail. That little one trusts his parents implicitly, as if perfectly assured that they will provide for all his wants. He knows he can do nothing, or almost nothing, towards the care of himself and the supply of his own wants; yet he feels no solitudes, but lives along day by day on simple faith.

How beautiful an illustration is this of the spirit of trustful dependence in which the young convert lives of his Savior! The Christian, as we all know, must have this spirit; he has no other way to live a real Christian life — no other way to enjoy peace of mind amid a world of wants and cares — no other way to go on from strength to strength, waxing more and more mighty through the might of Jehovah.

**6.** Yet another characteristic of the little child is a spirit of candor. He has no motive for wishing what is true to be false. Nobody cavils against the truth till he has an opposing heart. When his heart comes to dislike the truth, then he cavils. He raises senseless objections and tries to believe they have sense and weight in them. Scan his state of mind to the bottom, and you find it to be nothing else but hatred of the truth. He has an interest — at least so he thinks — in opposing the truth. But you see none of this uncandid spirit in the little child. He is easily controlled by the truth, and

seems never to think of resisting it. So of the young convert. He opens his whole heart to the truth and loves to see it revealed, let it out and condemn as it may. What has he to do with cavils against the truth? It seems to him like fighting against God Himself, and why should he be found fighting against God!

But it is time to break off from this enumeration of these beautiful and illustrative characteristics of the little child, and advance.

## **II. To show that a state of mind corresponding to these characteristics of the little child is essential to salvation.**

“Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Let it be well considered, that the qualities of character which I have specified as common to little children, are not real holiness. These little ones may not have reached the development of any moral character at all. But their spirit so closely resembles, in some respects, the spirit of the true Christian that it affords a pertinent illustration, and it is only as such that our Savior uses it. And moreover, it stands in so strong contrast with the spirit of the sinner, who gives up his soul to sinning, who violates his conscience, and who of course becomes dishonest, proud and selfish, that it seems the fittest illustration that can be found of the marked difference between those who belong to the kingdom of hell, and those who enter the kingdom of heaven.

But why, let us ask, must persons be converted and become as little children, before they can enter heaven?

**1.** Because in any other state than this, they are not honest, but on the contrary, entirely dishonest.

Look carefully into these qualities of the little child, and suppose a case in which they are not present. Here is a man whose character is not transparent, but who studiously conceals his real heart. Is not he dishonest — essentially, radically dishonest? How unfit, then, for a place in the kingdom of heaven!

Or suppose him proud, in the sense opposed to that humility which I have named as one characteristic of the little child. He does not consent, by any

means, to be known as he truly is. His whole endeavor is to put on, and keep on, a false appearance. Is not this radically dishonest? And who does not know that God can have no sympathy or fellowship with a dishonest mind?

Or again, suppose a man aspiring and ambitious. How rarely can you discover in him anything that even seems like real honesty!

Or suppose him wanting in that confiding trustful spirit which is so prominent in the little child. If you search his character to the bottom you will find that he lacks the element of substantial honesty of mind, and has learned to be distrustful of others by observing that there is nothing trustworthy in himself.

In this way, you may take up successively each element of the spirit peculiar to the little child, and you will see that the absence of these qualities and the presence of their opposites evince a dishonest state of mind, and therefore a state utterly unfit for the kingdom of heaven.

**2.** But again, the beautiful simplicity of character which shines forth in the little child must be essential to prepare us for heaven, because it is so like the spirit that fills all heaven. Did you never consider that all heaven is full of little children? Christ Himself says — “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” The kingdom of heaven is composed of such as they. Even the tallest archangels have the spirit of little children. You mistake them entirely if you think of them as high and lifted up in a vain notion of their dignity and self-consequence. On the contrary, no dear little child was ever more simple-hearted, more guileless, more transparent than they. On the testimony of our Lord Himself, we learn that whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Hence the more simple, confiding, trustful, and open-hearted, the more there is of the spirit of the heavenly world. And hence none can go there who have not these elements of spirit and character. Men must have the soul of heaven in them, or it is no place for them to dwell in. God will not mar heaven by admitting discordant elements there. Hence if we can learn what the spirit of heaven is, we learn what spirit persons must have here before they go there.

**3.** But a third reason is that this childlike state of mind is indispensable to being taught of God. The holy in heaven, and those who are becoming holy on earth, are all God's pupils. His Divine Spirit is their Great Teacher, promised and given in order to lead them into all truth. But how can God teach those who are not teachable — those who cavil against the truth — hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved?

Now we all know that the little child has a teachable spirit. He loves to be taught, and therefore his mind is all open to truth, and you can teach him anything you please. But if he advances onward to a state of mind all of pride and vanity, and withal, to a state in which his selfish and wicked heart opposes the truth, then how he changed! O, he knows so much now that you cannot teach him anything! He is wiser than any seven men, however skillful they may be in giving the reasons of things. There are some students who can never learn theology. They will forever stumble and flounder along; and the reason is, they are already too wise in their own conceits to become any wiser. Who has not had occasion to observe how surely fatal to the acquisition of knowledge is this spirit of self-conceit? How then can God teach men of such a spirit? I know God sometimes comes down to teach His people "by terrible things in righteousness," and that sometimes He does effect by hard discipline what perhaps could be done by no milder means; yet it is true as a general law of God's spiritual administration, that the "meek," and those only, "will He teach in judgement — the meek will He lead in His way." God makes His creatures bear the responsibility of maintaining a teachable spirit; and according as they do or do not maintain it may they expect to be taught or not taught of God. Hence the necessity of being converted and of becoming as a little child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

**4.** God cannot teach and cannot bless in any way those who will not confide in Him. God adapts the whole course of His discipline with His children to this world as a dark sort of state — where little comparatively can be seen with the eye, and where most things must be received with faith in the veracity and love of our Father. Hence God cannot lead us along as His children unless we confide in Him. Jesus could not do many mighty works in certain cities, because of their unbelief. He could not afford to cast His choice pearl's before swine. God cannot teach, as His

children, any class of intelligent beings in earth or heaven, unless they will be simple-hearted and confiding.

**5.** In no other spirit but that of a little child are men truly submissive to God's will, as revealed in His word or His providence. This is too obvious to need illustration. Yet all must be thus submissive, else they cannot enter heaven.

**6.** This state of mind is indispensable to peace with God. Unless men are submissive, they are not satisfied with God's ways, and how can He be pleased with theirs?

**7.** It might also be shown most clearly, that such a state of mind is indispensable to mental and spiritual peace. No one can be at rest in his own spirit unless he is simple-hearted, honest, trustful towards God — in short, unless he has in most decided moral development, those very qualities which in their natural form characterize the little child.

**8.** It scarcely need be added, in conclusion, that the state of mind of which I speak is indispensable to acceptance with God. This is made plain by the entire course of our illustrations.

I must therefore proceed to close with some

## REMARKS

**1.** This state of mind is always characteristic of young converts. If you see professed converts who have not this spirit, you may be very sure that are not converted. And even great men form no exception to this remark. The greatest men, when converted, are the most childlike. Scores of times have I heard the remark made as if with astonishment — “Such a great man appears just like a little child.” The reason was simply this: he had become truly converted, that is all. That had occurred in his case of which the text speaks: He had been converted and had become as a little child. I once heard a Doctor of Divinity spoken of as a great man — an eminently great man. I happened to know the man, and was therefore able to reply: “if you were to see him, you would find him just like a little child, as simple-hearted and as far removed from anything like vanity or pride. You might



feel yourself perfectly at ease in his presence, for he does not put on airs as if he were above his fellow men.”

Professed converts sometimes come out as they call it, in a state of great excitement, full of shouting and triumph, but are not humble and childlike. You may be almost sure there is some mistake in such cases. They have not entered by the way described by our Lord: have not been so converted as to become like little children. I once knew of a very proud man, who came into possession of this genuine gospel spirit. A friend of his who had known him in his life of sin saw him afterwards in a prayer meeting: “What! said he, would you believe it possible? I saw that man, once so proud, on his very knees, down in the midst of some of the lowest class of society, just as if he were no better than they! He prayed and they prayed and nobody seemed to think of any difference in rank between them. That man, once so full of aristocratic pride is now among the lowest of men.” Mark such cases! Christianity develops itself very rapidly too in such cases.

**2.** Selfishness in its moral and proper sense does not appear in very young children. They love their own happiness to be sure: What sentient being does not? But this is not the same thing as selfishness. If you would carefully observe the difference between the self-seeking of very young children, and the self-seeking of those whose moral agency is developed, you would discover it to be very great. The little one loves to be happy, but loves to have others happy also. He is altogether simple-hearted and guileless. But as soon as he gets away from his infantile simplicity, the fruits of sin and of guilty selfishness become apparent. Now he is all guileful. Like Adam and Eve, he hastens to sow up some fig-leaf covering and to hide himself among the trees of the garden from the searching scrutiny of both God and man. He has done something wrong; all wrong things are mean; he knows and feels it keenly; and therefore seeks to hide and cover up. Until this time he had never done anything which he wished to cover up. Now, therefore, his spirit of concealment and guile reveal his sin and selfishness. All full of fraud and treachery, he waxes worse and worse; conscious of wrong doing, and anxious to save appearances, his temptations to deceit and hypocrisy are too great for him to resist.

**3.** Selfishness is too false to be confiding. The selfish youth knows himself to be unworthy of confidence, and hence, judging others by himself, he does not naturally trust them. With no self-respect, it cannot be natural for him to trust his fellows. Unteachable also, he ought to expect to remain in ignorance. How often it happens that sinners get above becoming religious, simply because they become too self-sufficient and proud of their attainments or talents to understand a thing so simple as the gospel. They get into a state of mind in which they cannot learn the plain and humbling doctrines of the cross, and hence they are prepared for yet deeper self-deception. It would be easy to show that selfishness is the greatest self-deception. The selfish man seems to use his intellect only to deceive himself and to deceive others, his main business being to cover up his own true character and real motives. "A deceived heart hath turned them aside," saith the heart-searching word of the Lord; and nothing can be more true. It does most truly turn men aside from integrity and truth. "Deceiving and being deceived," is another daguerrotype sketch of the selfish man's history. It is but a righteous judgment that he who gives himself up to deceive others should be caught in his own snares, deceiving himself just because there is no simplicity nor honesty in him.

**4.** If children die in real infancy and before moral agency commences, it is easy to see how naturally they pass into the kingdom of heaven. I am aware that some will be stumbled at such a sentiment, for there are some who maintain that even the very marrow, blood, and bones of the infant are altogether sin. But this is not Jesus Christ's teaching. He most fully recognizes the fact that the earliest developments of the infant mind closely resemble true religion. Hence He says all men must be so changed as to become as little children; else they cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Little children live in love and walk by faith; so must all who enter the kingdom of heaven. These are the two great elements of piety. Hence the natural adaptedness of little children, (taken at a period anterior to moral agency, sin and self-righteousness,) to be removed to another state where the discipline needful in order to evolve real piety may be brought into action. If they die before they have violated conscience, how naturally will they go right on in progress towards holiness and perhaps we might say progress in holiness. God takes away their body; no temptation therefore assails them from that quarter. They have the loving-kindness of

the Lamb to lead them along and secure them from all spiritual dangers; what then shall hinder their being truly the children of God in their new abode?

Ye who have lost little children think of this. Dwell on what Christ Himself says — “Of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Before they have developed the dishonesty and fiendishness of the selfish spirit, they go in all the simplicity and guilelessness of little children into the presence of their Savior. They will not, like Adam and Eve, fly from God; there is no reason why they should. If they were selfish; if they had trampled down their conscience; if they were intent upon covering up their real character, then they would have abundant reason for flying away from Jehovah’s presence.

Precious little ones: How will Jesus gather them in His arms! How intently will He pluck the little flowers and transplant them, yet tender and lovely, into His better garden. A sense of guilt they never have had: happy for them that they are never to have it. All suddenly, from the sleep of death they awake into the society and the scenes of heaven. What an atmosphere is this to wake in, from such a state as that of the infant mind on earth!

But let that child become a sinner before its transition from earth to the eternal state — how changed the scene! Then the qualities of his character become unutterably revolting and shocking. All lustful, proud, impatient, distrustful; not one element of character fit for heaven. O, how dreadful to rush into sin and refuse to obey God! How dreadful to plunge into that gulf of depravity where nothing pure remains, but all is “earthly, sensual, devilish!”

**5.** Selfish beings are continually progressing into a state more and more offensive to God. As they come to know more of God, they become more intensely and more meanly selfish — more committed to evil, and more fatally opposed to good. Let a young man come here for education, as many have, young in years and not greatly hardened in heart; — he enters the lower classes, comparatively humble in spirit; for a season he passes along quietly and pleasantly to himself; but by and by he becomes ambitious; — then you may see some of the most detestable features of selfishness developing themselves; and perhaps when the time arrives which is to test his standing and his ambition, you may see him angry, and

almost mad, because he is not the first and foremost; almost a devil in spirit, he inwardly frets and rages, and outwardly he will often pour out the venom of his selfish and mortified spirit upon the whole surface of the society in which he moves. I have sometimes had occasion to say that I dreaded the influence of the Senior College Class. Do you ask me why? Because they are so testy, so sensitive and so ambitious. What's the matter? They have been in college till they have grown wiser in science but wickeder in heart!

This reveals one great reason why advanced students are so much less likely to be converted than those who have only just entered. The latter have much more simplicity of character, and are much less affected by that horrible ambition which is the bane and curse of so many students. My dear young men, do you know this? Are you aware that the earliest months of your residence in this school are altogether the most hopeful for your conversion, — and that as you go on farther and farther in your course, the difficulties increase, the temptations to sin multiply, and the probabilities of your conversion are exceedingly diminished! O, how does it become you to understand this, and be wise in time!

**6.** Just in proportion as persons have the spirit of little children are they hopeful subjects of converting grace. Those periods of life in which this spirit is most prominent are the hopeful seasons. Then is the time to press home the truth and bring the mind to the full decision. If you can enlighten the minds of children quite early all the better, — no matter how early, for then the obstacles you have to meet are so much less. But if you leave them to go astray from the path of duty; if they begin to violate their consciences and harden their hearts, you will find that each day and each hour augments exceedingly the difficulties in the way of their submission to God.

It is sometimes said by way of objection to the work of grace, that conversions occur most frequently among children and youth, and in this Institution, among the preparatory and not the more advanced students. What is the reason of this fact? Is it because the more advanced in learning and wisdom have found that religion is all a humbug! No, indeed; but because the mind that persists in a course of sin while it is advancing in knowledge, must be dishonest with itself. I appeal to yourselves; what

Sabbath passes over you, in which you do not play a dishonest part with yourselves and with divine truth! You hear the truth; you know it is truth; and you know it has claims upon you for your instant obedience to it; and yet you wickedly resist these claims. There is not one of you who, if he had but five minutes to live, would not cry aloud in anguish: "Pray for me, for I am a guilty sinner, on the very verge of hell!" Your cavils would vanish in a breath. I know the hearts of the young men who sometimes cavil against God's truth, for I have talked scores of times with half-fledged infidels. They know that God is holy, and that they are altogether sinful. They know these solemn truths as well as they know that they exist. It is all in vain that they try to deceive themselves or others in these matters. They cannot deceive God; and when the searching hour shall come, they will find that they have not even deceived themselves to any good purpose. They know too much, and the eternal truths of God are too well established to allow them to be at ease in their sin. I have never yet seen the first sinner, who, when about to die, needed any arguments presented to prove to him that religion is a reality — that he had broken God's law, and must repent or be lost. In that solemn hour, they all know these things too well to need any more light or reasoning on the subject.

Remember, therefore, that the reason why young persons; as they grow older and more learned, are more averse to the gospel is, not that they see more clearly the groundlessness of the Christian religion, but the reason is, they are more self-deceptive, are more dishonest, more ambitious and aspiring; that they lose the simplicity of their earlier years, and do not deal honestly with the truth which they positively know. Go to them with a personal appeal to their conscience. Say to any of them — "Are you a sinner?" "Oh, yes, I suppose so." "Do you think it right and reasonable for you to live in rebellion against your Infinite Father?" "By no means." "Will you then repent and submit to God?" "No."

Now, such a mind is altogether dishonest with itself and with acknowledged truth. In the light of their case, let me ask you all, if you do not see good and sufficient reason why Christ should say, as in our text — "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

There is a forceful pertinence and a searching power in this passage, which often develop themselves in a most striking manner in personal experience. I once knew a very proud woman, who occupied a high position in society and who meant to maintain it, but the power of truth began to reach her soul, and she began to tremble before it. She called on me at my room. I began to reason with her, hoping to aid the work which the Spirit had obviously begun. Gradually her pride began to come down. At length she fell upon her knees for prayer and humiliation before God. In my prayer for her, I was led without any particular forethought, to repeat the words of my present text. She instantly caught these words — they seemed so fitting to her case — and repeated them over after me in a whisper; then, she repeated them again and again and again, each time waxing louder and louder, until her whole soul seemed to be swallowed up in the sentiment — “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” I stopped speaking, looked round upon her, — and oh, what a change had come over her countenance! Her loftiness and pride had all come down; she was indeed a little child. Years afterwards, being in her society, I adverted to this scene. “O,” said she, “that sentiment is the glory of religion. How beautiful and fitting! I could see myself the very opposite of this, but I saw how reasonable that I should become like a little child, and I there found how blessed it is to come down and honor God on His lofty throne.”

And now, in the name of my Great Master, I say to you, “Come down and take your fitting place as children before your Great Father. Who of you will now come right down to the very spirit of a little child, saying, “I give up forever all my pride and folly, and put my trust forevermore in the name of the Lord my God?”

# ALL THINGS CONSPIRE FOR EVIL TO THE SINNER

*“Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him:  
for the reward of his hands shall be given him.” Isaiah 3:11*

*“When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity  
do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed forever.” Psalm 92:7*

*“To Me belongeth vengeance, and recompense;  
their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand,  
and the things that shall come upon them make haste.” Deuteronomy 32:35*

*“Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not,  
and their damnation slumbereth not.” 2 Peter 2:3*

From the bare reading of these passages you will see that they present a direct contrast to the great truth of our morning discourse. [This was published in our last issue.] In that it was shown that all things work together for good to those that love God. In this our text leads to the opposite truth in regard to the sinner. All things conspire together for their ruin. All tends to complete and aggravate their destruction.

This awful truth is taught throughout the Bible in a great variety of forms. I have read to you a few of the passages which affirm it; I might read many others but it cannot be necessary.

Obligation is imposed on moral agents by the light of truth. To know truth respecting duty is the condition of obligation. When moral agents are able to understand it, then the value of the Good to be sought measures the obligation to seek it. All are bound to be benevolent — in other words, to seek the good of all beings. To know that any beings need some particular form of good, and that under existing circumstances you are capable of securing to them this Good, imposes on you the obligation to secure it, which obligation is the greater by how much the greater is the good in question. Hence as knowledge increases, so does guilt increase. The more you know of your duty and of the interests that depend upon faithfully doing it, the greater your guilt if you refuse to do it. On the supposition

that the moral agent remains in sin — refusing to do known duty, then the more his knowledge increases, the greater must be his guilt.

As all events are to be made public under God's moral government, it is for His own interests as well as for the interest of His creatures that He should apprise them fully of His character and of the principles of His government, and to make all clear to finite minds, it is important that He should spread out before them somewhat fully the details of His moral administration, so as to leave nothing involved in darkness or doubt on any important subject, to any honest mind. It seems essential to the well-working of God's moral government that He should at least ultimately, illustrate His own acts so fully as to leave no ground of cavil, that every mouth may be stopped, and every candid mind in the universe be satisfied in regard to all His works and to every point in His vast administration. Who can doubt that the Great Government of the universe will vindicate His own conduct? Who can suppose that He will leave one dark point unexplained?

Hence, as all events are to be made known, both for the vindication of God's character and for the instruction of all moral agents, it follows that the destruction of the wicked will be aggravated by every accession of light to their minds. Every new revelation of God's works or ways which is made to them must conspire,

- (1.) to enlighten their minds; and
- (2.) by consequence, deepen their guilt and enhance and aggravate their doom.

This is beyond question the truth in respect to the sinner's relation to God and to His government. It presents the subject however in an abstract form. Let us therefore proceed to notice some of the particulars which illustrate this truth.

**1.** *Men will be held responsible for mercies abused.* Hence those things which most please sinners, and which they call their good things, are charged to their account, and they must be held to the strictest accountability for their use or abuse of all their good things. The sinner is charged in God's book with every breath he breathes, — with every meal he eats, — with every draught of God's water that he drinks, — with



every day's health that he enjoys, and with every night's rest. He is indeed welcome to all these good things, if he uses them as he ought to; but if he will use these blessings in the devil's service, he must give account thereof to God. Why should he not? The Bible most abundantly teaches this truth. It assumes that wicked men rob God, and that for this guilt they must be held to a strict account.

If these are facts, then sinners are getting deeply in debt. As a man who in his business never pays but runs himself more and more deeply in debt, so sinners are constantly swelling their black account with their great Benefactor. The rain and the sunshine He sends them; the food and the friends He grants them; every one of these things, used in sin and for sin, spent on their lusts and with an ungrateful heart towards the Giver, must all pass on to his book of account to be settled in the great reckoning day.

Everything therefore that now pleases the sinner so much will swell the mass of things that shall agonize him at the judgment day and throughout his eternal existence. Why do not sinners consider that a day of reckoning *will come*, and that one of the most fearful things then to be canvassed will be the long catalogue of abused mercies? These things are good in themselves, yet it is better you should never have had them, than that you should pervert them to purposes of sin and self-indulgence and ingratitude. Ah, it were better for you that you should never have been born, than that you should pervert the powers God gives you, to make yourself a guilty rebel against your Maker. Better that you should never have health than that you should use it in sin. Many of you bless yourselves that you live while others die; but if you abuse life, it were better that you had died long ago — yea better that you had never been born. Take heed how you deem yourself fortunate for having so much health; you cannot afford to have any health at all, if you abuse it in sin and lay up a fearful account to render for every hours comfort. How can you afford to *live*, while every hour's life swells your fearful debt and makes you worse and worse a bankrupt, on the great books of the final day!

Not only all these countless mercies, but all the particulars embraced under them and connected with them are to come into your account. All will prove a great curse to you if selfishly abused.

The same principle applies to the entire course of God's discipline towards you, embracing the various rebukes of His providence. The Lord, for purposes of discipline may smite your property or your person. He may give wings to your riches and a blight on your strength. Losses may check the scene of your long prosperity, or by pain and weakness the Lord may seek to impress your soul with a sense of dependence on an almighty arm. All these are measures taken for your good, but if you will not improve them they will only work out your deeper ruin. There is a sinner who has been brought down to the verge of the grave by sickness. His Heavenly Father sought by this means to induce serious thought and true repentance, but He sought in vain. The heart was made no better by this affliction. The sick man recovered through divine mercy, and he blessed himself for his restored health, but it cannot be said that he blessed his great Benefactor. He blessed himself, and thought of his good fortune, but Oh! how much better for him to have gone quick to his grave than that he should rise from his sick-bed only to have a harder heart and a blacker account to settle through all eternity with his insulted Benefactor.

Perhaps the deluded man said to himself on his recovery — Now God has punished me all I deserve and I have no more punishment to fear for my sins. Far otherwise! He has not been punished at all. These trials on earth are only chastisements, intended for moral discipline. God sent them as the most hopeful means for doing you good, but you have utterly resisted and defeated His intention; you have only converted into a curse what your Father sent upon you for a blessing.

How marvelous that wicked men should suppose that these light afflictions are the proper punishment of sin? No; these are only God's means of discipline, employed here in this life for the good of men's souls. Instead of being themselves the retribution due for sin, they are only the guarantees sent on before-hand by the Great King, involving His pledge that He *will* punish sin unless He can secure repentance. They imply God's holy abhorrence of sin; they are the incipient manifestations of the great truth that He can never overlook transgression. What! sinner, do you think God can by any means, and under any circumstances, fail to notice your sin? If He could, then you might find Him neglecting the means of moral discipline. But if on the contrary, you find Him ever wakeful to the

work of discipline, you may know that — this failing of its object, — there is another kind of notice to be taken of sin.

Suppose a parent — a father, should chasten his son with a grief that seemed to tear his very heart and deeply wound his spirit, but all is in vain; would not even you affirm that such a son ought to be punished and much the more for the pains his father has taken to save him, and for the wicked stubbornness that would not be subdued to love and duty? See that mother, wearied and worn; she has chastened her daughter, but it avails nothing; the deep agony of her heart is crushing her to the grave, and her soul weeps over the cruel abuse of a wayward daughter; now tell me, shall all this stubbornness and abuse towards a faithful and fond mother be passed over, and not be heeded?

So, sinner, of all the things for which you deserve to be punished, this is the chief. God has taken so much pains to bless you; His very heart has been moved to the center of His being, and once and again He has cried out — “How can I give thee up?” And now, all effort and pains-taking having failed, shall no account of the stubbornness and guilt which has frustrated the toil of infinite love, be made?

That sickness which your Heavenly Father sent upon you did not reclaim you from your sins. Ah, it will cost you too much to abuse not only God’s mercies but His chastisements also. To your surprise and sorrow too, you will find that God has not done all this for your good, that, when abused and resisted by you, it should go for nothing. You have not seen the end of these things yet. You came up from your sick-bed did you? Yes. And then forgot all your sick-bed vows and solemn promises of amendment? Yes! And, on you went, in your sin till you became ten fold more hardened than ever! Ah, you cannot afford to be thus chastised and to have it all result in waxing worse and worse, and in becoming only the more ripe for perdition.

All your infirmities and all your sins; also the sins of those who live near you so that you can see the course of God’s dealings with them — indeed the whole history of sin in the universe so far as known to you — all conspire to heighten your responsibility and aggravate the guilt of your sin. For, all these things serve to show you the real evil and wrong of sin; they serve to reveal God’s hatred of sin and to assure you that He must

and will punish it. Both the good and the evil deeds of all moral beings in the universe so far as you can know them, have an important bearing upon your responsibilities as a moral agent, because they affect the amount of your knowledge of sin and of God, and hence of your own personal duty.

I am aware that sinners are prone to overlook this fact. They often say — We are held responsible only for our own sins and not for the sins of others; but mark — the sins of others increase your knowledge both of God and of duty, and hence increase your moral responsibility and heighten your guilt, if in the face of so much knowledge you still persist in sinning. The good and the evil of all beings within your knowledge serve to augment your responsibility. These things are continually pouring light on your mind. So also does the entire course of your own history and experience as a sinner under God's government. You cannot eat or drink; rise up or lie down — you can be nowhere and can do nothing without having a continual stream of influence poured upon you which heightens your responsibility because it increases the knowledge of God, of sin and of duty, under which and against which you sin. All your religious privileges belong to the same class, and bear pre-eminently upon the point of your moral responsibility and consequent guilt. Did you ever own a Bible? Has some kind Christian friend given you a copy of that blessed book? *Your own Bible!* You might read it at your pleasure. It is God's own message from heaven to your soul. But Oh, how you have slighted it! Other friends have sent you messages and letters, but you have treated none of them so! You have always at least read their letters and have commonly treated their expressed wishes with due respect. But you have insulted God by treating His letters with almost total neglect! O, what will that neglected Bible testify against you! Perhaps your mother gave it to you. Her careful hand laid it safely in your trunk when you prepared to leave the home of your childhood. God was in that mother's hand, and through it He placed a copy of His word under your eye, and threw on you a double responsibility to heed it well. You said then — "I am glad that I have got a Bible." So am I — if you use it well. If you study candidly its precepts and heed them in the fear of God, tis all well; but if not, all will go ill with you, and that neglected Bible will follow you up to the judgment, fore-casting your doom and crying out, *Anathema!* ANATHEMA!! Let the despiser of God's word be ANATHEMA, forever!

And you know this would be only simple justice! You can see that it *ought* to be so!

## REMARKS

**1.** I said in the morning that all things work together for good to the Christian, and that ultimately, when he comes to see how all things have had this result, he will regret nothing he has ever done, although he may greatly blame himself for all his sins. It is often the case that Christians here learn lessons of deep experience under their sins. They are deeply affected when they see how God overrules even their sins for good to themselves and to others.

But nothing of this sort happens to sinners. They are not of those that love God, and they have no reason to expect that God will make all things work together for their good. Hence they must both blame themselves and also regret everything they have ever done. They must feel both self-blame and regret that they ever had a Bible; that they ever had a friend; that they ever had health — that they ever had existence! Alas, they will say, alas! that I was ever born! Alas! that I lived so long! Alas! that I ever had one mercy from God to abuse so guiltily! Woe is me that I had a pious mother! Ten thousand woes on my guilty soul that God ever sent me His gospel! Ah me! how have I treasured up wrath against the day of wrath!

**2.** Sinners have never any good reasons for joy. You recollect the 73rd Psalm. The Psalmist had been struck with the fact that the wicked were so prosperous and so happy. It puzzled him sorely. Long time he could not understand it, and was thereby thrown into great perplexity. But when he went into God's sanctuary, then he says, "I understood their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places; Thou castedst them down into destruction." Let the sinner only see his own case in the light shed from God's word in His sanctuary and he too will understand that he has no occasion for joy. He will see how insane are all his rejoicings. What! and shall he rejoice in that which will only work out his deeper damnation? Can any but an insane mind do this?

Some one of our children may be prosperous, but yet in sin. If so, he is only abusing the blessings God sends him, and surely this can be no matter

of joy either to him or to his parents. He cannot afford to have any of these blessings — to use in sin! Ah no! for he must pay for them at last in the bitterness of eternal yet unavailing regret. If you therefore have unconverted children or if I have, we have no occasion for joy in them, however prosperous they may be.

**3.** Sinners procure this result to themselves. It all comes, sinners, from your own wickedness — from your own voluntary and persistent impenitence and unbelief. If you would turn about and love God, all would be well for you. But if you will abuse His grace and reject His authority, all is wrong and all will work ill to your soul.

In a spirit not the most honest, you may say — Why did God give me existence at all? He knew how I should abuse it and only bring a curse on myself and curse my own existence.

You ask such questions as these perhaps, and yet you know how impious they are in their implications against your Maker? You ask, Why did God give me existence? That you might use it to His glory and to your own perfect blessedness. But you reply — What? when He knew how I should only curse myself by sin instead of blessing myself by holy obedience? Yes, certainly, none the less so, because of His foreknowledge of your course. Has God's knowledge of the course you would take at all lessened or changed your moral responsibility — the perfect freeness of your choices—the radical, essential guilt of your sin!

God gave you voluntary powers, that, on your own responsibility you might use them for your own welfare. He gave you His Son and in Him an offered salvation, that you might lay hold of everlasting life. He gave you a Bible — that you might read it and become wise unto salvation. He gave you these and a thousand other blessings, that they might be improved, and certainly you do not need to be told that if you will not improve them, you have no right to complain to God.

**4.** Sinners need not be stumbled by any calamities whatever which befall God's real children. A Christian is sick; well, what of that? Is not the Savior's arm all round about him? But he is going to die! Well, what of that? Is not heaven just before him, and his God with him all through the dark valley of the river of death? He is going to lose all his property, is he?

What then? He has got no real property except God — for long ago, his heart made a choice of God for its portion forever.

Sinners often talk as if they were stumbled to see so many calamities befalling the people of God. Let them not trouble themselves about this matter. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and they shall never lack His constant care.

**5.** All events that transpire in this world or the next, will only make the great gulf fixed between saints and sinners the deeper and the broader — will only make the saints more holy and more happy — the sinners more sinful and more wretched. The widening space between them in character and in relations to God's throne will of necessity constitute a gulf which none can ever pass over.

**6.** What an infinite folly is it to judge of things only by their relations to this life! To feel and to think of them only in view of this narrow and limited relation! Looking at things in this light only, we could not rejoice in the Christian's case; we could not pronounce him happy because he has the Almighty God for his friend. Viewing things from such a stand-point of observation, we should find everything dark and perplexing. But in the light of God's sanctuary all comes out clear. See those political, money-making men, scrambling after power or wealth; suppose they get it — what then? The more they get, so much the more have they to answer for; so much the deeper will their responsibilities, if not honestly met, sink them in perdition. Christians therefore have never any reason to envy sinners for their earthly prosperity. If they are ever tempted to do so, let them go into the sanctuary there shall they learn the sinner's awful end. Coming forth from the house of God, they will say:

*“Now I'm convinced the Lord is kind  
To men of heart sincere,  
Yet once my foolish heart repined,  
And bordered on despair.  
I grieved to see the wicked thrive,  
And spoke with angry breath, —*

*“How pleasant and profane they live,  
 How peaceful in their death!”  
 But having searched God’s word, he sings:  
 “There, as in some prophetic glass,  
 I saw the sinner sit,  
 High mounted on a slippery place,  
 Beside a fiery pit.  
 I heard the wretch profanely boast,  
 Till at Thy frown he fell;  
 His honors in a dream were lost,  
 And he awoke in hell.”*

One of our texts affirms — “Their feet shall slide in due time and the things that shall come upon them make haste.” Another declares — “Their judgment now of a long time lingereth not and their damnation slumbereth not.” “Sudden destruction cometh upon them as pangs upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.”

**7.** God’s conduct in all this is just and righteous altogether. Who can object because God holds the sinner responsible for the Bible He gives him, or for the existence with which He has endowed him? Dare you say or even think that God does wrong to hold you responsible for the Bible, for the Sabbath, for the Gospel and for all the knowledge of duty which He has placed within your reach? Is He not bound by the eternal laws of right, to hold all His creatures responsible according to the measure of the blessings He has conferred upon them? Could His moral kingdom be safe on any other principle of administration? Would the holy beings around His throne endure any deviation from these eternally and intrinsically righteous principles? Do *you* not see — for yourself — that if you persist in abusing His mercies, God will bring you to account and *must* do it, or cease to be a righteous God? It were a mal-arrangement, and a mal-administration if God were to deviate at all from the principle of holding every moral agent to the strictest accountability for all his moral conduct, according to the light he has enjoyed.

How long, sinner have you lived? During all these years, what have you done? How have you used your life up to this hour? Is it not time that you should pause and take an observation?



In the past pages of my own personal history I can see where God summoned me to answer these solemn questions. I had spent all my early life in new settlements, had enjoyed only the most scanty means of religious instruction — had never heard a prayer in my father's house, — yet one night I most vividly remember I lay a long time awake, and I asked myself — How old am I? How have I lived up to this hour? What have I done towards determining the future condition of my existence? These were questions I had never heard before; but God put them home to my soul in a way that made my flesh quiver and my bones quake. I had spent half my life — for I looked then upon the age of forty as the limit of my earthly days; I had lived out half my life, yet what had I done for God or for my own eternal well-being?

Have you, sinner, ever taken such a reckoning? Sailing along unknown seas in the voyage of life, have you ever paused to take in sails, get out your instruments, and take your bearings? Have you ever stopped, as every wise mariner does, to get out your instruments on some fair, sunny day, to find where you are and which way you must steer to gain the haven of peace and rest? Oh, some of you have never made one careful, thorough, observation to find your course and your actual position. The fair sunny days God gives you, you are too reckless to improve for so needful a purpose. Oh, sinner, there are fearful rocks of damnation close under your lee! The darkness of the tempest is gathering fast upon you; soon you will feel the mountain waves tossing your trail bark and the storm-blast will howl through your shrouds to shriek the requiem of a lost spirit! How will the vivid lightnings gleam down your masts and the thunders break in peals like the judgment trump!

Ah sinner, why did you not take your observation before your bark made these rocks of damnation, and before the storm-king was out in his fearfullest terrors, to dash your soul upon the breakers of final ruin? How can you afford to live in such mad recklessness of your soul's well-being? How can you afford to live content in sin amid such perils of damnation? O to think of your case! When I pass you in the streets, sometimes I rejoice in your joy, for you seem to be happy; but more often I weep, for I see you in your sins, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Yes, here you are in your sins, getting an education, doing the very thing which above all other things must augment your responsibility and aggravate

your guilt if you will not repent. Ah, you cannot afford to live so. Dear youth, how can you afford to go to the judgment with all the heightened responsibility of an *educated sinner*? Why will you make your very existence and all the mercies with which God has blessed this existence, a living and an eternal curse?

It need not be so. You may change the whole current of your future destiny. It may be done by simply changing the current of your present life — by simply giving your heart to God and your whole being to His service. Will you do this? How many times you have been called to decide this question — and alas! called only in vain! O, come now and make one thorough observation. See where you are and what is before you. And will you refuse to do a thing so reasonable? Ah, what a dark night is coming on! How will the dreadful tempest roar and howl around your miserable soul — the tempest of divine wrath that must break on the head of the despiser of saving mercy! And must you be thrust into prison and not be released till you have paid the uttermost farthing? Must the doom of the damned be your eternal portion? It will be so if you choose. “They that hate Me,” saith the voice of offered mercy, “*love death.*”

**8.** What a contrast is here! All things work good to the saint. Although he weeps along his pathway of life with mingled tears of penitence and joy, yet soon he passes beyond all his pains and trials. Up, up, he soars, high above all sorrow, high aloft from this vale of tears. But the sinner dances along, gaily laughing and sporting his way — God calling, rebuking and entreating; saints weeping in grief over his madness and his impending doom; all creation in agony for him, but he dashes on. See, mark the contrast! Note how it widens continually. Saints ascend upward-mounting up, up; — but sinners descend, going down, down, along the sides of the pit, amid the wailings of eternal despair.

Do you say — enough, enough, I have heard enough; you have said enough; I am persuaded, and I am ready to come; I will no more abuse my Savior — no longer slight His offered love. Come, then, you prodigal, come back to your father’s house; for there is bread enough and to spare and you need not perish with hunger. Come back with your free hearted confessions of folly and guilt; come and beg for a pittance of the crumbs

that fall from his table. Now is the day and the hour of mercy — now is the accepted time!

Need I press again on your attention the wide and awful *contrast* between saints and sinners? They live together here; the same roof shelters them; the same table spreads for them their daily bread; the same sun rises and pours its blaze of light and joy over all; the same clouds come freighted with waters of summer and distill their precious drops for all; but Oh! how unlike is the scene that lies beneath! Underneath the surface God marks in one a heart of gratitude and penitence; in another a soul tainted with selfishness and mad upon its lusts and its idols. Of course the one must go up, up, rising in the perfection of its holy character; and the other down, down, sinking under the depraving influence of its own headstrong appetites and its will, opposed to God and goodness.

And where will be the end of these courses? You know, full well! You have no need to know better than you do.

The fatal thing with you, O sinner, is that you don't make up your mind to do known duty. I thought I should, you say, but I did not. I half resolve, but fail to do it. Scores of precious opportunities you have let slip, and each one left you only the more hardened. One opportunity came and waited on you — you were not ready to embrace it, and it passed away; another came and tarried — then rose up and went its way; and yet another and another; and what shall be the end of these things? Satan loves to beguile you; and he it is who is playing this game with you, seducing you to delay till each and every opportunity shall have gone past, hopelessly and forever. Will you let him ruin your soul? You see his hand, winding his fatal chain about your neck; O how long can you be quiet under this operation! How long will you consent to be led captive by Satan at his will, when you know his object is to plunge your soul quick into the depths of hell!

# ALL THINGS FOR GOOD TO THOSE THAT LOVE GOD

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”  
— Romans 8:28*

You will observe that the apostle speaks with all confidence. He does not say — we expect, or we believe or we conjecture that all will be well for God’s friends, — but he says — *we know*. There is no doubt about it.

Let us then,

- I. INQUIRE, WHAT DOES HIS LANGUAGE MEAN?**
- II. SHOW HOW THE RESULT OF GOOD TO ALL THAT LOVE GOD IS SECURED.**
- III. NOTICE SOME PARTICULARS AS ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE GENERAL TRUTH.**
- IV. SHOW HOW WE KNOW IT TO BE TRUE.**

## I. WHAT IS THE APOSTLE’S MEANING?

Here the great question is — Shall his language be interpreted as strictly universal?

In terms, he announces a universal proposition. *All things*, he declares, work together for good to those that love God. But does he mean to affirm a proposition strictly universal?

Not all universal language should be taken in a strictly universal sense. In the scriptures we not infrequently find it necessary to modify universal language. There may be things in the text or context which forbid the universal sense; or there may be declarations in other parts of the Bible which preclude it, or the nature of the case may render the universal sense either violently improbable, or perhaps absurd, and hence may demand some modification. It should be remembered that the language of the Bible

is the language of common life, and everybody knows that in the language of common life we often affirm in the form of universal proposition when we really mean something much short of this. For example, it is common to say of a well known fact — “Everybody says so” — but our “everybody” is by no means intended to embrace all mankind.

But the language of our text I do understand to be used in the strictly universal sense, meaning that absolutely all things, present and future — all things, above and beneath — in heaven, earth, and hell — do and will conspire to the ultimate blessedness of the saints. The Bible obviously teaches this doctrine, and I know of no facts in the universe that militate against its universal application.

## II. HOW DOES THIS COME ABOUT? HOW IS THIS RESULT SECURED?

In order to see this matter in its true light we need to consider that the happiness of moral agents is conditioned on their holiness and results from it. The holy will of course be happy, and have real enjoyment in proportion to the degree in which they are holy. Still further, let it be considered that the holiness of moral agents is conditioned upon their knowledge. Every moral agent is more or less holy according as he knows more or less and is more or less conformed in heart and life to what he knows. I speak now particularly of the knowledge of God, whether obtained through His word or through His works.

Now all events are matters of knowledge, and not only all events that occur under God’s government, but God Himself is also an object of knowledge. According to the Bible, all events will ultimately be known to the saints, for the judgment day will bring them all to light. Hence we learn that ultimately the entire history of all God’s doings will be known to all His creatures. All He has ever done or shall ever do—whether in this world or in other worlds, will be open subjects of knowledge to His creatures, and will be known as fast and as far as their limited capacities will admit.

Now it is very plain that if all things, embracing all events and all the works of God, are matters of knowledge, and if moreover knowledge is a

condition of real holiness, then all the knowledge which the saints attain will be at once available to their happiness. It will go to enhance their real blessedness. Especially will this be true of all their knowledge of God and of His countless works and various ways. All things, the saints will then see, are parts of one great plan — both those which God Himself performs by His direct agency, and those which are done through His permissive agency by His creatures. It will then be seen that all things are arranged and planned for the good of His obedient children, and when this great all-controlling principle in God's administration comes to be seen in all its bearings, the knowledge of this truth cannot fail to be a source of ineffable blessedness to all the holy. God's infinite grace as the great and good Father of all His loving children, will be so revealed as to show that He makes all things work together for their good.

### III. LET US NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION TO SOME PARTICULARS AS ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE GENERAL TRUTH

It is generally supposed that what we call mercies and blessings, and what we recognize by name as God's good gifts to men, are really good things to those that love God. We can see that they are, and men universally recognize them as good.

The same is equally true of what we call judgments, and chastisements — the rebukes of God; for all these too are means of grace, and are blessed of God for the spiritual good of His children. Their only design as they come from our Father's hand is that they may work out God to His saints. He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men from caprice or from any pleasure in their pain, but only and wholly for their profit, that they may the more deeply "partake of His holiness." Under this broad principle, we know that all the losses and crosses which befall the saints — all their burdens of care and responsibility, — and all their infirmities, shall be overruled for their good. All these things will conspire to teach the saints more of God and more of themselves. By the aid of such revelations they will be able the better to appreciate God's character and plans of discipline and their own infinite obligation to His manifold grace.

Nor from the “all things” of our text can we except the sins of God’s people. They are indeed altogether blame-worthy for all their sins and none the less so for the good which God educes from them by His overruling agency. The sin of Peter was overruled of God for his good. He was a more humble and a better man as long as he lived. He better knew his own weakness, and better appreciated Christ’s tender compassion. He felt the force of the admonition — “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,” and there was none among all the original twelve to whom Christ said more emphatically — “Feed My sheep” — “Feed My lambs.”

This sin of Peter brought him into great peril. “Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat,” — and if Christ had left him to himself, he would doubtless have fallen fatally into the snare of the devil. But Christ did not leave him in this hour of his need. “I have prayed for thee,” said He, “that thy faith fail not.” Christ kept His hand and eye on him, and soon plucked him from the destroyer’s grasp. In this scene Peter learned more of the length and depth of his Savior’s grace than he had ever known before.

This is only a single case, yet it was by no means a peculiar case, and therefore it serves to illustrate the general law of God’s administration over His people.

Similar was the case of David. No thanks to him, but all thanks to God, that his sin was overruled, so as in the issue to make him a more meek, humble, penitent, and holy man.

Not only are the sins of the saints overruled to their good, but the sins of others, of sinners, and even of the most wicked. All the mistakes of our associates — their infirmities — the thousand nameless things that try us among the “all things,” which God makes subservient to the good of His people. There is a woman whose husband is a bad man. His temper is uncomfortable — his ways are adapted to make his intimate associates unhappy, and hence he causes his wife many sore trials. Yet if she loves God and makes Him the Refuge of her soul, all these little trials shall certainly work out her good both in this world and the next.

Not less so of the husband who has a bad wife. Not less so of those unhappy families in which the husband and the wife are great trials to each

other. So of parents and children. Parents may be a source of trial to their children, and it often happens that children are a source of the greatest trial to their parents. But howsoever the trials occur, the great principle of our text applies to them all. To those that love God, they shall all work together for good.

The principle also reaches and applies to all the temptations of the devil. Let him poison his darts with demoniac skill and hurl them with hellish malice, they will not ultimately harm those that sincerely love God.

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe.” The Christian has a panoply complete, wherewith he may be able to withstand all the fiery darts of the devil. And what is more to our present purpose, though wounded by these darts he shall not be slain, — though cast down he shall not be destroyed, for there is a healing, overruling hand under whose agency even the wounds that Satan inflicts shall be wrought into better health and more spiritual vitality than the saints enjoyed before. God knows how to foil Satan with his own weapons and make even his apparent temporary success react in terrible defeat and disgrace upon his own head. God knows how not only to rescue His saints but to do much more than simply to rescue them: He imbues them with new vigor and sanctifies to them their most bitter and humiliating experience.

Yet further, all events are designed to illustrate God’s true character. The whole creation is only a revelation of God, and all events that occur in it only serve to reveal more and more of God to intelligent beings. “The heavens declare the glory of God — the firmament showeth His handy-work.” How many lectures upon God are read to us by the silent stars! How many lessons are repeated to us day by day by His rising suns and nightly dews and timely showers! Where in all the works of God, whether in nature or providence, is there a thing that does not speak His praise and bear some testimony which He can bless to the souls of His saints?



## IV. WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THE SAINTS

So says Paul. *How* did he and his brethren know this to be true? Perhaps they knew it by revelations already made in God's word; or it may be that his mind rested this truth upon the general knowledge of God enjoyed. It is a matter of revelation. The Bible amply affirms this truth. And it is also a plain dictate of reason. When we come to understand what God's attributes are as affirmed by the reason, we shall see that such a God can suffer nothing to occur which shall not in some way result in good to His friends. This must be so, if it be true that God loves His friends, studies to promote their highest good — has all events under His control — had His choice in the depths of a past eternity among all possible events and could determine to cause and suffer to exist such only as should subserve the ends that lay near His heart.

It is often a matter of experience and observation in this world that things which seem freighted with destruction turn out to be full of life and salvation. For a time, all looked dark and desolate, but light and joy came out at last. Look at the case of Job. You can scarcely think of one form of grief and sorrow, which did not blend in the throng that rushed upon him as if to crush him: but he lived to see all these things work together for good to himself both for time and eternity. So in general, I remark that observation and experience will often show that this doctrine applies even to the present life and has its exemplification even here. Yet the apostle did not mean to affirm that God's plans have their full development in the present world. His affirmation contemplated a future world in which results but partially unfolded here can have their full and everlasting development.

### REMARKS

**1.** Saints will in eternity blame themselves for what they cannot on the whole regret. Seeing the results which God has educed by His overruling agency, they cannot wish they had never done those wicked things; yet surely they will none the less blame themselves for their own sins. As to

the blame of sin, no matter how much good may come from our wrongdoing, it never can affect the question of our guilt, nor its measure. Take the case of Judas. No thanks to him that his infamous treason was one of the agencies which provided a Savior for a ruined world. The good which accrued from the death of Christ changes not the intrinsic character of his sin; cannot in any measure make it less mean, less sordid, less revengeful. Hence he must blame himself as much as if no good but only evil had resulted from his betrayal of Christ. It was God alone by His own infinite wisdom and power, who overruled this sin to great good. All praise therefore to Him, and none the less blame to Judas the traitor.

**2.** Our subject shows how the saints can be perfectly happy in heaven to all eternity. For there is in many minds a point of obscurity in this matter which needs explanation. The saints will see all their past sins in heaven's clear light, and they cannot but blame themselves for every sin they ever committed. How then can they be perfectly happy?

The answer is, they will see how their sins have been overruled for good, and they will rejoice in this good which God brings out of their iniquities. In this exercise of joy, they will be deeply humble, as indeed they will have all reason to be, and their joy will be purely a joy in God, blended with everlasting adoration and praise that He had both the power and the heart to bring much good out of their own wrong doings. Every view taken by a saint in heaven of his past sins will redound in praise to God, but in deeper humiliation to himself. Yet this humiliation will by no means conflict with the saint's happiness — for he enjoys being humble — he enjoys giving *all glory and praise* to God.

**3.** God blames a multitude of things, but has no regrets. He has often expressed Himself as we do when we feel regret, but these forms of expression are shaped in accommodation to our modes of speaking, and when used by God should be interpreted in accordance with His known character and known relations. It cannot be that on the whole, under all the circumstances of the case, He really regrets the occurrence of anything that takes place. He blames the guilty author, He condemns the sin; but it has not taken Him by surprise; it is no new thing to Him, and it has not in any wise frustrated His purposes and plans for the government of the universe. Before this sin was committed, or its author existed, God saw how He

could over-rule it for good, and for so much good that on the whole He judged it better to let its author come into existence and commit this sin rather than prevent either the one or the other. Yet He blames every sin as much as if no good could be educed from it. The sinner is none the better for this development of good, through God's overruling agency. To God alone belongs all the praise, for both the good intention and the good results are His alone. But for His good hand interposing, all the results would have been evil, and the sinner's intention is of course all evil and only evil continually.

Yet while God blames both sinners and saints for all their sins, He freely forgives the believing penitent and accepts him as a son. Then He so overrules the sin as not to be agonized by anything that occurs.

We sometimes see results corresponding to this in the earthly discipline which parents exercise over their children. The parent sees that his child has sinned; at first he regrets the thing exceedingly; but having in the fear and help of God done his utmost to reclaim and improve his child, he sees his efforts crowned with the divine blessing, and he says — That sin of my dear child almost killed me, but now I see him so much changed for the better that I can no longer regret the means which have resulted in so much good.

**4.** From this it does not follow that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. For if under the very circumstances in which they sin, men would obey rather than disobey — do right rather than wrong — then yet greater good might accrue than accrues from God's overruling of the sin. But God prefers His own course to any other which He can take. Under the circumstances He always does the wisest and best thing possible to Him, and hence He has no occasion for regret. He brings out the greatest good possible to Himself. If His creatures who do in fact sin, would be persuaded to do right instead of wrong, their agency for good, concurrent with His, would educe a still augmented good.

For illustration; a father commands his son to perform some certain work. But he has good reason to believe that the son will not do it unless he himself stays at home to control the son by his presence. Yet it is so important for him to go away that he decides to go, though at the hazard of his son's disobedience. In case the son disobeys, he trusts he can subject

him to such discipline as shall bring out some good, and the good to be secured by his own presence elsewhere is too great to be sacrificed. The greatest good possible can be secured only by the concurrent agency of father and son. The father can secure the greatest good possible to himself by going away, even though his son should disobey in his absence.

**5.** But if sin were overruled so as to be at last the means of the greatest good, no thanks to the sinner. Suppose it were the case that the whole world would have been damned if Judas had not betrayed Christ, so that his sin secured the salvation of the world — no thanks to Judas for such a result, for he meant not so, neither did his heart think so. He intended no good to the world, nor to any being in it except himself. His act of betraying his friend would be none the less mean, sordid, and revengeful, for the good which in the case supposed would ensue. The good wrought out would be wholly attributable to God.

**6.** It is naturally impossible to sin benevolently. There can be no such thing as a benevolent sin. To sin with design to do good is an absurdity in terms. To say therefore that we do evil that good may come is absurd and impossible. To do evil for the sake and with the motive of securing real good is a self-contradiction. For the doing evil implies a wicked intention, and the having a good end in view implies a good intention. But to have both a good intention and a bad intention at the same instant, each determining the same act, is surely a self-contradiction. If a man intends good by his act, it is not sin. No man ever sinned in order that it might redound to the glory of God. No tyrant ever persecuted the saints of God that it might do them good. Suppose a wicked man were to say — My wife is a good woman; let me plague her now for her good. It will only make her a better woman, so let me torment her all I can. There is no way in which I can do her so much good.

He can't do any such thing! It is naturally impossible that a man should be honest in trying to do good by wickedness. This sinning benevolently is a natural impossibility.

**7.** Saints should always be in a position to fall back upon God in all their trials in this life. They should stand in such relations to God that they can rationally and naturally trust Him to shape and control all events even here so as to make them work out good in the highest degree. If they walk

humbly before God, they may know that all things shall be made to conspire for their good. Only let them truly love God and trust Him; then they need not fear the issues of any events whatever that may occur. None can occur without God's permission, nor independently of His direction. They may therefore be assured that God will shape all their bearings for the good of those that love Him.

But if professed Christians are living in sin, they have no claim on this promise and no right to expect its fulfillment to themselves. But if they are not in sin, they may like Micah cry out triumphantly — “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.”

**8.** This truth affords ground for strong consolation to the saints. Why should they ever be sad? Suppose all things do not apparently work well now. Let them still have faith in God and rest in His promises. Has He not said that all things shall work together for good to His loving friends? No wonder saints are often seen smiling through their tears, for joy lies deep in their souls, though sadness may overcloud their face. Joys and sorrows are often strangely blended in their bosom. Calamities, disappointments, bereavements befall them as they do other men, and these things are not for the present joyous but grievous; but their faith in God assures them that all will yet be well. Many things will befall them in life that burn and agonize their sensibility; but deep within are trust and faith in God and a sweet leaning upon His promises — for they know that the ground of their consolation is firm and strong as the pillars of the universe!

**9.** We may rejoice in whatever befalls any of God's real children; whether ourselves or others. Parents may rejoice in whatever befalls their godly children or friends. Many things may occur which cause tears now — yet as Christians our watchword should be — *It will surely be well for them in the latter end.* The things which give the severest shock will do most good, and those which seem most afflictive, when God has brought out all their results, may be found to be most blest to His saints. Those fearful events which seemed to come with a crash as if they would break down all the pillars of your foundation — Oh how sweet to see even those strange things so strangely overrule for the good of the saints!

**10.** Very few Christians can live a single week or even day without needing the consolation which this truth affords. Hence they ought to hold it fast, to keep it treasured in their memory — lying near their hearts — ready to be applied for consolation and for strength in every emergency.

This truth may well reconcile the saints to any and all events of divine providence. They can afford to be submissive, while they know that their Father will make all things work together for their good. They can afford to have travail and suffering, for even their most intense sorrows shall all conspire to work out good to their souls. Therefore let not unbelief deprive us of this consolation. Apart from the light of faith many things will occur that are inexplicably dark, but faith illumines and explains all.

How wonderful are God's marvellous works. Well may it be said of Him — "He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Results may lie hidden long, but they will come out at last in glorious sunlight, showing that God's hand has guided events to their results with unerring wisdom. In the light of eternity if not in the light of time, they shall see it all, and seeing it shall wonder and adore. God, they will shout aloud, hath done all things well! Then, do not allow yourselves now to be deprived of this great consolation.

But do you say — ah, if I only knew that I am a child of God, if I only knew that I really love God, then I could receive this consolation legitimately. Then I could feel that it belongs to me. Then I could say — Let come anything that God is pleased to send, for I am anchored in His love and on His promise.

Now you may be very guilty for these doubts, for surely you may be free from them altogether; but still if with all your doubtings, you are really God's child, they shall all be overruled for your good, so that in heaven you will have it to say — How wonderful are God's ways! That He should bring me out of a region, so dark and desolate, and then make all my doubts and darkness subserve some useful ends to my own soul and to His glory — that out of such materials He should bring out any good at last — how wonderful!

Finally, we can see that the volumes of glory and praise to God must be to all eternity continually accumulating. Fresh revelations each hour of His

wonderful wisdom and love must evolve from humble and holy hearts fresh accessions of praise and honor to His blessed name. Is it not delightful to think that such a God shall be thus praised and honored through eternity!

# THE SINNER'S EXCUSES ANSWERED

*“Elihu also proceeded and said, Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God’s behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.” — Job 36:1-3*

Elihu was present and heard the controversy between Job and his friends. The latter maintained that God’s dealings with Job proved him wicked. This Job denied, and maintained that we could not judge men to be good or bad, from God’s providential dealings with them, because facts show that the present is not a state of rewards and punishments. They, however, regarded this as taking part with the wicked, and hence did not shrink from accusing Job of doing this.

Elihu had previously said — My desire is that Job may be tried in regard to what he has said of wicked men. But ere the discussion closed, he saw that Job had confounded three friends, maintaining unanswerably that it was not because of any hypocrisy or special guilt that he was so signally scourged. Yet plainly even Job had not the key to explain the reason of God’s dealings with him. To him it was still mystery. He did not see that God might have been seeking to test and discipline his piety, or even to make an example of his integrity and submissiveness to confound the devil with.

Elihu purposed to speak in God’s behalf and ascribed righteousness to his Maker. It is my present object to do the same in regard to sinners who refuse to repent, and who complain of God’s ways. But before I proceed, let me advert to a fact. Some years since, in my labors as an evangelist, I became acquainted with a man prominent in the place of his residence for his general intelligence, and whose two successive wives were daughters of Old School Presbyterian clergymen. Through them he had received many books to read on religious subjects, which they and their friends supposed would do him good, but which failed to do him any good at all. He denied the inspiration of the Bible, and on grounds which those books did not in his view obviate at all. Indeed, they only served to aggravate his objections.



When I came into the place, his wife was very anxious that I should see and converse with him. I called; she sent for him to come in and see the new minister; to which he replied that he was sure he could do him no good, since he had conversed with so many and found no light on the points that so much stumbled him; but upon her urgent entreaty, he consented for her sake to come in. I said to him in the outset, “Don’t understand me as having called here to have a quarrel with you, and provoke a dispute. I only wish at your wife’s request to converse with you, if you are perfectly willing, upon the great subject of divine revelation.” He signified his pleasure to have such a conversation, and accordingly I asked him to state briefly his position. He replied — “I admit the truths of natural religion, and believe most fully in the immortality of the soul, but not in the inspiration of the Scriptures. I am a Deist.” But, said I, on what ground do you deny the inspiration of the Bible? Said he, I know it cannot be true. *How do you know that?* It contradicts the affirmations of my reason. You admit and I hold that God created my nature, both physical and moral. Here is a book, said to be from God, but it contradicts my nature. I therefore know it cannot be from God.

This of course opened the door for me to draw from him the particular points of his objection to the Bible as teaching what his nature contradicted. These points and my reply to them will constitute the body of my present discourse.

**1.** The Bible cannot be true because it *represents God unjust*. I find myself possessed of convictions as to what is just and unjust. These convictions the Bible outrages. It represents God as creating men and then condemning them for another’s sin.

Indeed, said I, and where? Say, where does the Bible affirm this?

Why, does it not? said he. No. Are you a Presbyterian said he? Yes. He then began to quote the catechism. Stop, stop, said I, that is not the Bible. That is only a human catechism. True, said he, but does not the Bible connect the universal sin of the race with the sin of Adam? Yes, said I, it does in a particular way, but it is quite essential to our purpose to understand in *what way*. The Bible makes this connection *incidental* and

not direct; and it always represents the sinner condemned as really sinning himself, and as condemned *for his own sin*.

But, continued he, children do suffer for their father's sins. Yes, said I, in a certain sense it is so, and must be so. Do you not see yourself, everywhere, that children must suffer for the sins of their parents? and be blessed also by the piety of their parents? You see this and you find no fault with it. You see that children must be implicated in the good or ill conduct of their parents; their relation as children makes tiffs absolutely unavoidable. Is it not wise and good that the happiness or misery of children should depend on their parents, and thus become one of the strongest possible motives to them to train them up in virtue? Yet it is true that the son is never rewarded or punished *punitively* for his parents' sins. The evil that befalls him through his connection with his parents is always disciplinary — never punitive.

Again, he said, the Bible certainly represents God as creating men sinners, and as condemning them for their sinful nature. No, replied I; for the Bible defines sin as voluntary transgression of law, and it is absurd to suppose that a *nature* can be a voluntary transgressor. Besides, it is in the nature of the case impossible that God *should make a sinful nature*. It is in fact doubly impossible, for the thing is a natural impossibility, and if it were not, it would yet be *morally* impossible that He should do it. He could not do it for the same reason that He can not sin.

In harmony with this is the fact that the Bible never represents God as condemning men for their nature, either here or at the judgment. Nowhere in the Bible is there the least intimation that God holds men responsible for their created nature, but only for the vile and pertinacious abuse of their nature. Other views of this matter, differing from this, are not the Bible, but are only false glosses put upon it usually by those whose philosophy has led them into absurd interpretations. Everywhere in the Bible men are condemned only for their voluntary sins, and are required to repent of these sins, and of these only. Indeed, there can possibly be no other sins than these.

Again, it is said, the Bible represents God as being *cruel*, inasmuch as He commanded the Jews to wage a war of extermination against the ancient Canaanites.

But why should this be called cruel? The Bible expressly informs us that God commanded this because of their wickedness. They were too awfully wicked to live. God could not suffer them to defile the earth and corrupt society. Hence He arose in His zeal for human welfare, and commanded to wash the land clean of such unutterable abominations. The good of the race demanded it. Was this cruel? Nay, verily, this was simply benevolent. It was one of the highest acts of benevolence to smite down such a race and sweep them from the face of the earth. And to employ the Jews as His executioners, giving them to understand distinctly why He commanded them to do it, was putting them in a way to derive the highest moral benefit from the transaction. In no other way could they have been so solemnly impressed with the holy justice of Jehovah. And now will any man find fault with God for tiffs? None can do so, *reasonably*. But the Bible allows slavery.

What? The Bible allow slavery? In what sense allow it and under what circumstances? And what kind of slavery. These are all very important inquiries if we wish to know the certainty and the meaning of the things we say.

The Bible did indeed allow the Jews, in the case of captives taken in war, to commute death for servitude. When the customs of existing nations put captives taken in war to death, God authorized the Jews in certain cases to spare their captives and employ them as servants. By this means they were taken out from among idolatrous nations and brought into contact with the worship and ordinances of the true God.

Moreover, God enacted statutes for the protection of the Hebrew servant, which made his case infinitely better than being cut off in his sins. And who shall call this cruel! Jewish servitude was not American slavery, nor scarcely an approximation toward it. It would require too much time to go into the detail of this subject here. All that I have stated might be abundantly substantiated.

Again, it is objected God is unmerciful, vindictive, and implacable. The gentleman to whom I have alluded said — I don't believe the Bible is from God when it represents Him as so vindictive and implacable that He would not forgive sin until He had first taken measures to kill His own Son.

Now it was by no means unnatural that, under such instructions he had received, he should think so. I had felt so myself. This very objection had stumbled me. But I afterwards saw the answer so plainly that it left nothing more to be desired. The answer indeed is exceedingly plain. It was not an implacable disposition in God which led Him to require the death of Christ as the ground of forgiveness. It was simply His benevolent regard for the safety and blessedness of His kingdom. He knew very well that it was unsafe to forgive sin without such a satisfaction. Indeed, this was the strongest possible exhibition of a forgiving disposition, to consent to the sacrifice of His Son for this purpose. He loved His Son, and certainly would not inflict one needless pang upon Him. He also loved a sinning race, and saw the depth of that ruin toward which they were rushing. Therefore He longed to forgive them, and to prepare a way in which He could do so with safety. He only desired to avoid all misapprehension. To forgive without such atonement as would adequately express His abhorrence of sin, would leave the intelligent universe to think that He did not care how much any beings should sin. This would not do.

Let it be considered also that the giving up of Jesus Christ was only a voluntary offering on God's part to sustain law, so that He could forgive without peril to His government. Jesus was not in any sense *punished*; He only *volunteered* to suffer for sinners that they might be freed from the governmental necessity of suffering. And was not mercy manifested in this? Certainly. How could it be manifested more signally?

But, says the objector, God is unjust, inasmuch as He requires impossibilities on pain of endless death.

Does He, indeed? Then *where*? In the law, is it, or the Gospel? In these taken together we have the aggregate of all God's requirements. In what part, then, of either law or Gospel do you find the precept contained which requires impossibilities? Is it in the law? But the law says only—*"Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;"* not with another man's heart, but simply with thine own; only with *all* thine own heart, not with more than all. Read on still further: "and with all thy strength." Not with the strength of an angel — not with the strength of any other being than thyself, and only with such an amount of strength as you actually

have for the time being. The demands of the law, you see, exactly meet your ability; nothing more and nothing else.

Indeed, said he, this is a new view of the subject. Well; but is not this just as it should be? Does not the law carry with it its own vindication in its very terms? How can any one say that the law requires of us impossible service — things we have no power to do? The fact is, it requires us to do just what we can and nothing more. Where, then, is this objection to the Bible? Where is the impossibility of which you speak?

But, resumed he, is it not true that “no mere man since the fall has been able wholly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed?”

Ah, my friend, that’s catechism, not Bible; we must be careful not to impute to the Bible all that human catechisms have said. The Bible only requires you to consecrate to God what strength and powers you actually have, and is by no means responsible for the affirmation that God requires of man more than he can do. No, verily, the Bible nowhere imputes to God a requisition so unreasonable and cruel.

No wonder the human mind should rebel against such a view of God’s law. If any human law were to require impossibilities, there could be no end to the denunciations that must fall upon it. No human mind could possibly approve of such law. Nor can it be supposed that God can reasonably act on principles which would disgrace and ruin any human government. But, resumed he, here is another objection. The Bible represents men as unable to believe the Gospel unless they are drawn by God, for it reads — “No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent Me draw him.” Yet sinners are required to believe on pain of damnation. How is this?

To this the reply is, first, the connection shows that Christ referred to drawing by means of teaching or instruction; for to confirm what He had said, He appeals to the ancient scriptures — “It is written, They shall all be taught of God.” Without this teaching, then, none can come. They must *know* Christ before they can come to Him in faith. They cannot believe till they know what to believe. In this sense of coming, untaught heathen are not required to come. God never requires any to come, who have not been

taught. Once taught, they are bound to come, may be and are required to come, and are without excuse if they refuse.

But, replied he, the Bible does really teach that men cannot serve the Lord, and still it holds them responsible for doing it. Joshua said to all the people, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an holy God."

Let us see. Joshua had called all the people together and had laid before them their obligation to serve the Lord their God. When they all said so readily and with so little serious consideration that they would, Joshua replied—"Ye cannot serve the Lord for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." What did he mean? Plainly this — Ye cannot serve God, because you have not heartily abandoned your sins.

You cannot get along with a God so holy and so jealous, unless you give up sinning. You cannot serve God with a selfish heart. You cannot please Him till you really renounce your sins altogether. You must begin by making to yourselves a new heart. Joshua doubtless saw that they had not given up their sins and had not really begun to serve God at all, and did not even understand the first principles of true religion. This is the reason why he seemed to repulse them so suddenly. It is as if he would say — Stop; you must go back and begin with utterly putting away all your sins. You cannot serve a holy and jealous God in any other way, for He will not go along with you as His people if you persist in sinning against Him.

It is a gross perversion of the Bible to make it mean that men have no power to do what God requires. It is true indeed, that in this connection it sometimes uses the words can and can not, but these and similar words should be construed according to the nature of the subject. All reasonable men construe thus intuitively in all common use of language. The Bible always employs the language of common life and in the way of common usage. Hence it should be thus interpreted.

When it is said that Joseph's brethren hated him and *could not* speak peaceably to him, the meaning is not that their organs of speech could not articulate kind words; but it points us to a difficulty *in the heart*. They *hated* him so badly they could not speak pleasantly. Nor does the sacred historian assume that they could not at once subdue this hatred and treat

Joseph as brother should treat brother. The sacred writers are the last men in the world to apologize for sin on this wise.

There is the case of the angels sent to hasten Lot out of guilty Sodom. One said, “*Hasten* thee, escape thither, for I can not do anything until thou be come thither.” Does this mean that the Almighty God had no power to overwhelm Sodom so long as Lot was in it? Certainly not. It meant only that it was His purpose not to destroy the city till Lot was out. Indeed, all men use language thus in common life. You go into one of our village stores and say to the merchant, Can you lift a ton of your goods at once? No. Can you sell me that piece of cloth for a shilling a yard? No. Does this “*can*” mean the same as the other? By no means. But how is it that you detect the difference? How is it that you come to know so readily which is the physical *cannot* and which the *moral*? The nature of the subject tells you.

But, you say, the same word ought always to mean the same thing. Well, if it ought to, it does not, in any language ever yet spoken by man. And yet there is no difficulty in understanding even the most imperfect of human languages if men are honest in speaking and honest in hearing, and will use their common sense. They intuitively construe language according to the nature of the subject spoken of.

The Bible always assumes that sinners can not do right and please God *with a wicked heart*. It always takes the ground that God abhors hypocrisy — that He can not be satisfied with mere forms and professions of service when the *heart* is not in it, and hence that all acceptable service must begin with making a new and sincere heart.

But here is another difficulty. Can I make to myself a new heart?

Yes, and you could not doubt but that you could, if you only understood what the language means and what the thing is.

See Adam and Eve in the garden. What was their *heart*? Did God create it? No; it is not possible that He should, for a heart in this sense is not the subject of physical creation. When God made Adam, giving him all the capacities for acting morally, he had no heart good or bad until he came to act morally. When did he first have a moral heart? When he first waked to moral consciousness and gave his heart to God. When first he saw God

manifested, and put confidence in Him as his Father, and yielded up his heart to Him in love and obedience. Observe, he first had this holy heart because he yielded up his will to God in entire consecration. This was his first holy heart.

But at length the hour of temptation came, alluring him to withdraw his heart from God and turn to pleasing himself. To Eve the tempter said — “Hath God indeed said — Ye shall not surely die?” Ah, is that so? Then he raised the question either as to the fact that God had really threatened death for sin, or as to the *justice* of doing so. In either case it raised a question about obedience and opened the heart to temptation. Then that fruit came before her mind. It was fair and seemed good for food. Her appetite enkindles and clamors for indulgence. Then, it was said to be fitted to “make one wise,” and by eating it she might “be as the gods, knowing good and evil.” This appealed to her curiosity. Yielding to this temptation and making up her mind to please herself, she made herself a new heart of *sin*; she changed her heart from holiness to sin, and fell from her first moral position. When Adam yielded to temptation, he made the same change in his heart; he gave himself up to selfishness and sin. This accounts for all future acts of selfishness after life.

Adam and Eve are again brought before God. God says to Adam — Give me thy heart. Change your heart. What! says Adam, I cannot change my own heart! But God replies, How long is it since you have done it? It is but yesterday that you changed your own heart from holiness to sin; why can't you change it back?

So in all cases. Changing the ruling preference, the governing purpose of the mind, is the thing, and who can say, I cannot do that. Cannot you do that? Cannot you give yourself to God?

The reason you cannot please God in your executive acts, is that your governing purpose is not right. While your leading motive is wrong, all you do is selfish, because it is all done for the single object of pleasing yourself. You do nothing for the sake of pleasing God, and with the governing design and purpose of doing all His holy will; hence all you do, even your religious duties, only displease God. If the Bible had anywhere represented God as being pleased with your hypocritical services it would be proven false, for this is perfectly impossible.



But you say, the Bible requires me to begin with the inner man — the heart — and you say you cannot get at this; that you cannot reach your own heart or will to change it.

Indeed, you are entirely mistaken. This is the very thing that is most entirely within your power. Of all things conceivable, this is the very thing that you can do most certainly—that is most absolutely within your power. If God had made your salvation turn upon your walking across the room, you might not be able to do it; or if upon lifting your eyelids or rising from your seat, or any of the least movement of your muscles, you might be utterly unable to do it. You could *will* the motion required, and you could try; but the muscles might have no power to act. You often think that if God had only conditioned your salvation upon some motions of your muscles, it would have been so easy; if He had only asked you to control the *outside*, but oh, you say, how can I control the *inside*? The inside is the very thing you can move and control. If it had been the outside, you might strive and groan till you die, and not be able to move a muscle, even on pain of an eternal hell. But now inasmuch as God only says, “Change your will,” all is brought within your control. This is just the thing you always can do; you can always move your will. You can always give your heart, at your own option. Where, then, is your difficulty and objection? God requires you to act with your freedom; to exercise the powers of free voluntary action that He has given you. He asks you to put your hand on the fountainhead of all your own power, to act just where your central power lies — where you ALWAYS HAVE POWER so long as you have a rational mind and a moral nature. Your liberty does not consist in a power to move your muscles at pleasure, for the connection between your muscles and your will may be broken, and at all events is always necessary when your body is in its normal state; therefore God does not require you to perform any particular movement of the muscles, but only to *change your will*. This, compared with all other things, is that which you can always do, and can do more surely than anything else.

Again, considering volitions as distinct from ultimate purposes, and as standing next before executive acts, it is not volitions that God requires, but He lays His requisition directly upon the *ultimate purposes*. The ultimate purposes being given, these subordinate volitions follow naturally and necessarily. Your liberty, therefore, does not, strictly speaking, lie in

these subordinate volitions — such as the volition to sit, to walk, to speak. But the ultimate purpose controlling all volition, and relating to the main object you shall pursue, as, for example, whether you shall in all things strive to please God, or, on the other hand, strive to please yourself; this being the precise point wherein your liberty of free action lies is the very point upon which God lays His moral requisitions. The whole question is, will you please God, or please yourself. Will you give your heart to Him, or give it to your own selfish enjoyment?

So long as you give your heart to selfish pleasure and withhold it from God, it will be perfectly natural for you to sin. This is precisely the reason why it is so natural for sinners to sin. It is because the will, the heart, is set upon it, and all they have to do is to carry out this ruling propensity and purpose. But, just change this governing purpose, and you will find obedience equally natural and equally easy in all its executive acts. It will then become natural to please God in everything. *Now* pleasing yourself is natural enough. Why?

Because you are consecrated to pleasing yourself. But change this purpose; make a new and totally opposite consecration; reverse the committed heart, and let it be for God and not for self; then all duty will be easy for the same reason that all sin is so easy now.

So far is it from being true that you are unable to make your heart new, the fact is you would long ago have done it if you had not resisted God in His efforts to move you to repentance. Do you not know that you have often resisted God's Spirit? You know it well. So clear were your convictions that you *ought* to live for God, you had to resist every appeal of your own conscience, and march right in the face of known duty, and press your way along directly against God. If you had only listened to the voice of your reason, and to the demands of your conscience, you would have had a new heart long ago. But you resisted God when He tried to persuade you to have a new heart. O, sinner, how strong you have been to resist God! How strong to resist every consideration addressed to your intelligence and to your reason! How strangely have you listened to the considerations for sinning: O, the miserable petty things — tell me, what were they? Suppose Christ should question you, and ask — What is there in earth that you should love it so well? What in sin that you should prize it above

My favor and My love ? What are those little indulgences — those very small things that always perish with the using? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Most utterly contemptible. You have been holding on to sin with no reasonable motive for so doing. But O, consider what motives you have fought against and resisted — motives of almost infinite force! Think of the motives resulting from God's law — so excellent in itself, but so dreadful in its penalties against transgressors; and then think also of God's infinite love in the Gospel; how He opened the life-tides of His great heart, and let blessings flow with fulness like a God! Yet consider how, despite of this love, you have abused your God exceedingly. You have gone on as if the motives to sin were all-persuasive, and as if sin's promises of good were more reliable than God's. When God spread out before you the glories of heaven, made all attractive and delightful in the beauties of holiness, you coolly replied—Earth is far better! Give me earth while I can have it, and heaven only when I can have earth no longer! O, sinner, you would have been converted a long time ago if you had not opposed God and trodden under foot His invitations and His appeals.

O, what a thing is this moral agency! How awful its power, and how momentous, therefore, must be its responsibilities. When God is pouring forth influences in waves of light and power, with a kind of moral omnipotence, you resist and withstand all! As if you could do anything you pleased despite of God! As if His influence were almost utterly powerless to move your heart from its fixed purpose to sin!

Does it require great strength to lay down your weapons? Indeed, this is quite a new thing; for one would suppose it must rather require great strength to resist and to fight. And so you put forth your great strength in fighting against God, and would fain believe that you have not got strength enough to lay your weapons down; O, the absurdity of sin and of the sinner's apology for sinning!

But you say — I must have the Holy Ghost. I answer, Yes; but only to overcome your voluntary opposition. That is all.

After I had gone over this ground with my friend, as I have already explained, he became very much agitated. The sweat started from every pore; his feelings overcame him; he dropped his head down upon his knees, buried in intensest thought and full of emotion. I rose and went to

the meeting. After it had progressed awhile he came in; but O, how changed! Said he, “Dear wife, I don’t know what has become of my infidelity. I ought to be sent to hell! What charges I have been making against God! And yet with what amazing mercy did my God bear with me and let me live!” In fact, he found he had been all wrong and he broke all down and became as a little child before God.

And you, too, sinner, know you ought to live for God, yet you *have* not; you know that Jesus made Himself an offering to the injured dignity of that law which you violated, yet you have rejected Him. He gave Himself a voluntary offering, not to suffer the penalty of the law, but as your legal substitute; and shall He have done all this in vain? Do you say — “O, I’m so prejudiced against God and the Bible!” What, so prejudiced that you will not repent? How horrible! O let it suffice that you have played the fool so long and erred so exceedingly. It has been all wrong! At once return and devote yourself to God. Why should you live to yourself at all? You can get no good *so!*

Come to God — He is so easily pleased! It is so much easier to please Him than to please and satisfy yourself. The veriest little child can please Him. Children often have the most delightful piety, because it is so simple-hearted. They know what to do to please God, and, meaning honestly to please Him, they can not fail. No matter how simplehearted they are, if they mean to please God, they surely will.

And cannot you at least do so much as honestly to choose and aim to please God?

# THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried: and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” — Luke 16:19-31

A PARABLE is a little anecdote or a case of supposed history, designed to illustrate some truth. A simple and striking mode of illustration — it makes no attempt at reasoning; indeed, it takes the place of all reasoning by at once revealing truth to the mind. In general, parables *assume* certain truths — a thing which they have an ample right to do, for some truths need no proof; and in other cases a teacher may speak from his perfect

knowledge, and in such a case, there can be no reason for demanding that he stop to prove all he asserts.

In the case of parables it is often interesting to notice what truths they do assume. This is especially true of the parables of Christ; for none were ever more rich by virtue both of the truths directly taught and also by virtue of the truths they assume. I may also remark here that truths are taught in Christ's parables both directly and incidentally. Some one great truth is the leading object of the illustration, yet other truths of the highest importance may be taught incidentally, not being embraced in his direct design.

The passage which I have read to you this morning, is probably a parable, though not distinctly affirmed to be so. The nature of the case seems to show this; although these very circumstances might have all actually occurred in fact and in the same order as here related.

In discussing the passage, I propose,

- I. TO NOTICE SOME TRUTHS THAT ARE ASSUMED IN IT;**
- II. TO PRESENT SOME THAT ARE INTENTIONALLY TAUGHT.**

**1.** Christ assumes in this passage the direct opposite of annihilation. He assumes that men are *not* annihilated at death, nor indeed ever. For he speaks of things that take place immediately after death. The men who lived on earth live beyond death, and receive according to the things they have done here in the body. It was no part of his direct object to *affirm* this doctrine; yet his statements imply it. Being himself *the Great Teacher*, it is not without reason that he should assume the fundamental truths that pertain to man's future existence under God's moral government.

**2.** He assumes that the state into which both good and bad men pass at death is one of real and intense *consciousness*. This of course denies the assumption that this state is an unconscious one. You are aware that some who do not hold to annihilation, yet hold to unconsciousness in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. This doctrine, whether applied to saints or sinners, is entirely set aside by our Saviour's teachings in this narrative.

3. He assumes that the righteous and the wicked recognise each other after death. The rich man knew both Abraham and Lazarus. Abraham knew him. They all respectively knew each other. The statements represent the colloquy to have been held between the rich man and Abraham. Abraham, though long since in heaven, knew both this rich man and Lazarus. It was not our Lord's design directly to affirm this, yet he obviously implies it.
4. It is also assumed that they are acquainted with each other's state and history. All these matters were entirely familiar to their minds.
5. It is fully assumed that at death the righteous go immediately to a state of bliss and the wicked to a place of torment. This lies out undeniably on the face of the passage.

## II. I AM NEXT TO NOTICE SOME OF THE TRUTHS DISTINCTLY AND DIRECTLY *TAUGHT IN THIS PASSAGE*

1. That at death angels conduct the righteous to their place of blessedness. It is expressly said of Lazarus that he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Dogs were his companions here up to his death: angels immediately thereafter. When the dogs could minister to his wants no longer, angels stepped in and took his case in charge. They bore him away to the home of the blessed.

We may infer that this is the common employment of angels. Paul in Hebrews 1:12 strengthens this position, in his question, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

2. Saints after death are sensible of no want. They have nothing left to desire. They are sensible of wanting nothing that can be needful to their highest happiness. In this life they may have had their cup filled with bitterest grief; but at death, this cup is removed forever away, and quite another cup is placed to their lips — forever. Lazarus had his evil things in this world: poverty, pain, sores, and want were his portion here; but, after death, he knew these things no more at all. They passed away for ever.

**3.** On the other hand, sinners after death are full of want, and have no good at all. The rich man asked for only the very smallest favour. He *had* fared sumptuously every day; but now he is reduced *so low* he can only beg for one drop of water to cool his tongue. He asks for only so much as might adhere to the tip of one's finger when taken from the water. You have seen persons lie under a burning fever — prostrate, parched, can't say a word, can only beckon for water — water — one drop to cool their burning tongue. See the man dying; — he tries to move a little, towards the water; ah, he fails; he sinks back in his bed for the last time, and the burning fever has used up all his strength. You who have suffered from fever know what this means — to have a consuming fire shut up within you. Here mark. The Great Teacher makes the rich man cry out, "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Why did he not ask for an ocean of water, or a pail-full at least, or a pitcher-full? Why restrict himself to the least drop? Plainly he knew himself to be placed *beyond all good*, He knew this was the utmost he could ask, and even this is denied him! What could our Lord have designed but to teach this? How irresistibly is this taught and with what overpowering force! What remarkable facts are these! How obviously and how forcibly is the truth taught here that saints at death pass into a state all joyful, but the wicked into one of unutterable torment!

**4.** We learn the state of mind in which the wicked are. This man asks for only the very slightest mitigation. He says not one word about *pardon*; this he knows to be impossible. How small the boon he dares to ask! How very small, if he could have had it, would have been the boon of one small drop of water on a tongue tormented in flame. Yet he does not dare to ask for anything beyond this; — nor even this of God! He knew and he most deeply felt that he had cast off God, and God in turn had cast off him. He could not think of speaking to God. He could venture to speak only to Abraham; and this solitary Bible case of prayer to saints in heaven surely affords no very plausible foundation for the Romish practice. This rich man had not the least hope of release from his woe. He did not ask so great a boon as this. Deep in his soul he felt that such a request was for ever precluded.

It is remarkable, too, that, though the boon he did ask was so trifling and his need so great, yet even this pittance was denied him. Abraham gave



him plainly to understand that this was impossible. Son, said he, remember that thou in thy lifetime hast received thy good things; thou hast had thine *all*; there are no more for thee to enjoy!

**5.** Besides this, there is a great gulf fixed — parting forever the saved from the damned: we cannot go to you if we would; you cannot come to us, however much you may desire it. Most plainly does Christ teach in this representation that the state of both the righteous and the wicked is fixed, fixed forever, and forever changeless. There can be no passage open, therefore, as some would fain have it, from one world to the other. They who are in heaven can never get to hell to help the suffering ones there if they would; and, on the other hand, the miserable in hell can never get to heaven. What less than this could the Saviour have intended to teach — that each class enter at death upon another state which is to each alike unchangeable? The righteous cannot pass the great gulf to hell; the wicked, cannot pass it to heaven. Once heaven's gate was open to even the sinner on his repentance. Now it is open to him no more. He has passed away from the world where his moral state can be changed. He has entered on one where no change can reach him any more at all forever.

**6.** The wicked dread to have their friends come to them in this place of torment. You see this feeling most distinctly manifested in this parable. The reason of the feeling is obvious. They are still human beings, and therefore it can be no joy to them to have their earthly friends come into their place of woe. They have human feelings. They know they can look for no alleviation of their own woe from the presence of their friends. They know that if those friends come there as they did they can never escape; therefore they beg that those friends may never come. Therefore this rich man prays that Abraham would send Lazarus to his five brethren, to testify to them, lest they also come into that place of torment.

**7.** The state of mind that rejects the Bible would reject any testimony that could be given. This is plainly taught here, and can be proved. It can be proved that the testimony of one who should rise from the dead is no better or stronger than that of the Bible. Paul said he had been caught up to the third heaven, but men would not believe him. Or take the case of Lazarus, raised beyond all question from the dead. We are not told what he taught, nor is it said that his instructions made any special impressions on

the living unbelievers of that generation. Those of you who have read the history of William Tennant — a co-labourer with Whitfield and Edwards, know how he apparently died; how after death he went to heaven; how he, too, like Paul, saw there unspeakable things which no man could utter; how he returned again, and lived several years as one who had seen the glories of heaven; but was this stronger evidence than the Bible itself? Did it surpass in strength of demonstration the teachings of Moses and of the prophets? Yet more, did it surpass the force and evidence with which Jesus spake, and also his apostles? No, verily. When unbelief has taken possession of the mind, you may pile miracle on miracle; men will not believe it. Suppose ever so many should rise from the dead. Men who reject the Bible would not believe their testimony. They would insist either that they had not been really dead, or that, if they had been, they did not bring back a reliable report from that other country. They would make a thousand objections, as they do now against the Bible, and with much more plausibility than now. Now, they only know their objections are really unfounded; then they would have more plausible objections to make, and would be sure to give them credit enough to refuse to repent under their teachings. They would not be persuaded even then.

**8.** The estimation in which God holds men may not be learned from their outward circumstances. His favour cannot be inferred from the trappings of wealth; nor is it precluded by any amount of poverty. These external things neither prove nor disprove God's approbation of the hearts and the life of men.

**9.** The righteous need not envy rich sinners. Lazarus did not envy the rich man. He saw that he was petted for his great wealth, but pitied rather than envied him. He doubtless understood that this man was having his good things in this world. So good men, if they have faith, understand that those rich and wicked men are receiving all their good things in this world; therefore are far from being objects of envy.

**10.** The former poverty of the righteous poor will give a keener relish to the joys of heaven. Think of the abject poverty of this man — wandering about with no home, no place even to lay his head. So multitudes in Eastern countries may be seen lying around the city walls like the swine of the streets. I saw them in Malta when I was there, and in Sicily also. They

had no home to go to, no resources against a sick or stormy day. So Lazarus lived; and it was from such a life and such scenes that he was transferred to the royal palace of Jehovah. Take the case of some poor beggar lying helpless outside the palace-walls of Queen Victoria. Suppose him suddenly taken up and exalted to the highest honours of the palace itself. How would his joy intoxicate his brain — too much for flesh and blood to bear! So poor saints passing from the dunghill on earth to the golden palaces of heaven. It is well they lose their nerves in the change, for surely nerves of flesh could not bear so great a change. See Lazarus, sick and sore, perhaps putrid — licked by dogs; but he reached at length the crisis of his sorrows, and all suddenly the mortal coil drops, and his spirit takes wings — angels receive him; he soars away, and heaven opens wide its gates of pearl to make him welcome! Sometimes when I have stood and seen the Christian die — have seen him struggle and pant and gasp and pass away, I have said, What a wonderful change is this! See how that eye grows glassy and dark; then it closes; it sees no more of earth, but all suddenly it opens on the glories of the upper world, to be closed no more for ever!

**11.** But to have the luxuries of this life superseded by the poverty and woe of hell — how awful! This rich man had royal wealth. We are told that he fared sumptuously every day — not only on special occasions, but every day! Every day, too, he was clad in purple and fine linen; but now how wonderful the contrast! Nothing is said of the burial of Lazarus; perhaps he had none worth noticing; but this man had a funeral. It was a noticeable fact. Perhaps thousands gathered round his remains to do him honour — but where is he? Lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments! What a change! From his table and his palace, to hell! Lazarus passed from his sores and beggary to heaven; the rich man, from his pomp and pride and feasting, to hell. As the great poverty of Lazarus, so set off in contrast with heaven, must have given great edge and keenness to the joys of that world, so, on the reverse scale, how dreadful the contrast which this rich man experienced! If we always get clearer and stronger views by contrast, surely we have a picture drawn here that is adapted to teach us awful truth and force it home on the soul with telling power.

**12.** If it be true that angels convey saints to heaven, as we are taught both here and elsewhere in God's word, then it is not irrational to suppose that

what many saints say in their dying hours of the things they see, is strictly true. Gathering darkness clouds the senses, and the mind becomes greatly spiritual, as their looks plainly show. Those looks — the eye, the countenance, the melting whisper, these tell the story better than any words can do it; indeed, no words can describe those *looks* — no language can paint what you can stand by and see and hear — a peace so deep and so divine; this shows that the soul is *almost* in heaven. In all ages it has been common for some dying saints to hear music which they supposed to be of heaven, and to see angels near and around them. With eyes that see what others cannot see, they recognise their attending angels as already come. “Don’t *you* hear that music?” say they. “Don’t you see those shinning ones? they come, they come!” But attending friends are yet too carnal to see such objects and to hear such sounds; for it is the mind, and not the body, that has eyes. It is the mind that sees, and not the body. No doubt, in such cases, they do really see angelic forms and hear angelic voices. The Bible says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.” How gloriously do these closing scenes illustrate this truth!

**13.** If this be true of saints, then doubtless wicked spirits are allowed to drag the wicked down from their dying beds to hell. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that they, too, really see awful shapes and hear dreadful sounds. “Who is that weeping and wailing? Did I not hear a groan? Is there not some one weeping as if in awful agony? Oh, that awful thing! take him away, *take him away!* He will seize me and drag me down; take him away, *away!*”

So the wicked are sometimes affected in their dying moments. There is no good reason to doubt that these objects seen and sounds heard, by saints and sinners in their last earthly moments, are realities. You who have read Dr. Nelson’s book on infidelity, cannot but have noticed especially what he says of the experience of persons near death. These things passed under his observation chiefly while he was a physician, and while yet an infidel himself. Dying sinners would cry out, “Oh, that awful creature! take him away, away! why don’t you take him away?” Ye who know Dr. Nelson, must have known that he did not say these things at random. He did not admit them without evidence, or state them without due consideration.

**14.** We are left to infer the character of this rich man from his worldly-mindedness. Christ did not seem to deem it necessary to state that he was a wicked man, but left this to be inferred from his self-indulgent life. He needed only to say of him that he lived for *self-gratification*; that he used his wealth for himself only, and not for the good of man, or for the glory of God. This explained his character sufficiently.

People act very much in this world as if they supposed poverty would disqualify them for heaven. They would seem to hold the exact opposite of the truth. Christ said, "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and yet, who seems to have the least fear of losing heaven by means of the snare of wealth? How wonderful is the course that men pursue, and indeed a great many Christian men are pursuing! A Christian mother, writing to me from New York, said, "All, even Christians, are giving themselves up to making *money*, money, MONEY! They are wholly given up to stocks, and banks, and getting rich." There is a great deal of this spirit all over the country, and even here. But look at it in the light of this parable and of our Saviour's assumption in regard to the character of this rich man, and what a fearful state is this to live and to die in!

**15.** What can Universalists say or believe when they read such passages as this? What miserable shifts they must make to interpret these words! I recollect when I tried and wanted to be Universalist, and for this purpose went to their meetings and heard their arguments, I said to myself, "For very shame, I could never use such arguments; no, not for the shame of admitting and avowing such absurdities!" What can be more absurd than to resort to such sophistry and special pleading to set aside statements so clear and direct to the point as these in this chapter!

God is giving to all sinners — to you sinners in this place — a great many rich gifts. What use are you making of them? What are you doing with these gifts? What are you doing with these things which God comes down each day to bring to you? Are you cavilling, to prevent Christ from saving you if you can? Many act as if they meant to avoid being saved if by any means they can. You act just like reprobates. But I must explain myself. I often meet with persons whose spirit makes me believe they are reprobates. You know that all things are eternally present to the mind of

God. He saw how these sinners would treat the gospel. He saw they would repel and hate Christ — would not love his service nor accept the offers of his great salvation. He saw all this in his past eternity: therefore He reprobated them; therefore He gave them over to their own hearts' lusts. Those things which God saw in the depths of his eternity, we only see as they boil up upon the surface of actual present life. You see them resist the Spirit; you see them cavil and fight against God's truth; you know they are fighting against God. So strongly does the conviction fasten on the minds of Christians in some cases, that they cannot pray for those who they are assured are reprobates. Said a very pious woman, "For ten years, I have not prayed for that son". Why? She saw that he was set against God, and she could not pray for him. It is indeed an awful thing to find such cases in Christian families. Nobody can tell the agony of a parent's heart to see a son setting at naught all the claims and all the mercies of God, and working his dismal way obstinately down to the depths of an eternal hell. Some of you before me today, know that you have children who give awful evidence of being reprobate! Hear that man across the street sighing as he moves along. What is the matter? He is in agony for a hardened, reprobate son.

You call at a neighbour's door; you ring the bell; the mother comes. You see the tear in her eye; she can scarcely speak. What is the matter? She has a son, and she fears he is a reprobate. All his conduct heightens the awful fear that he is given over of God.

But let those who have not gone so far, take warning. Some of those whom you have mocked and reviled, you may by-and-by see in glory. They may be in Abraham's bosom, and *you afar off!* You may cry to them for help, but all in vain. Will they rush to your help? No. You see your father, your mother, afar off in that spirit land, — you think they will fly to succour you, and bring you at least one drop of water, — they used to do so many a time when you were in pain. Ah! many a time has that mother watched over your suffering frame, and rushed to your relief; but will she do so now? "My son, hear this: there is no passing from this place to that. You once lived in my house and lay in my bosom, but I cannot bring you one drop of water now!" And has it come to this? Must it come to this Ah, yes, *it must come to this!*

Christian parents, one word to you. Suppose you conceive of this as your case. You see one of your children crying, “Oh, give me one drop of water to cool my burning tongue!” I know what Universalists would say to this. They say, “Can a parent be happy, and see this? And do you think a parent is more compassionate than God?”

But in that hour of retribution, those Christian parents will say even of the sons and daughters they have borne, “Let them perish, they are the enemies of God and of his kingdom! Let them perish, since they *would* not have salvation They must perish, for God’s throne must stand, and ought to stand, though all the race go down to hell!”

# LOSING ONE'S FIRST LOVE

*“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love.” — Revelation 2:4.*

This passage occurs in a part of this Epistle which Jesus dictated and John wrote to the Church of Ephesus, “These things saith He who holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”

Christ says many good things of this Church. They had been jealous for the truth; they had found some to be liars and could not bear such; they had borne and had had patience. Christ always loves to say all the good He can of His people. The faults which He sees in them do not by any means blind His eyes to their good qualities.

Nor on the other hand, could their good things shut His eyes to their evil. “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love”

The word “*somewhat*” is in italics, indicating that there is no corresponding word in the original. The sense is given better without it. “I have *it* or *this* against thee, that thou hast left thy first love.” The leaving of their first love is exactly the thing He has against them. This is what He means to say; and not this other thing — that He has a *somewhat* — a *little* objection to them because they had left their first love.

Mark the solemn threatening. “Repent; else I will come unto thee quickly and remove the candlestick out of his place; — that is — will annihilate the Church itself.

Discussing this subject I shall inquire:

- I. WHAT THE FIRST LOVE OF A CHRISTIAN IS;**
- II. HOW IT EVINCES OR MANIFESTS ITS EXISTENCE;**
- III. HOW IT MAY BE KNOWN WHETHER PERSONS HAVE LEFT THEIR FIRST LOVE.**
- IV. SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SIN.**



## I. FIRST LOVE INVOLVES SINCERE DEVOTION OF HEART TO GOD

Of course it includes all that such devotion implies; — confidence in God; sympathy with His benevolence; in short, it implies just what is implied when a wife is truly devoted to her husband and when true benevolence underlies all.

## II. IT MANIFESTS ITSELF IN AN INTENSE INTEREST IN HIS WORD

Think how much interest husbands and wives take in each other's letters. You who have been separated from each other know this well and can understand even a brief allusion. Or take the case of children who are absent from dear home; you know how they prize letters from those they love and from those in whom they confide. So in the very nature of the relation sustained by Christians towards their heavenly Father, they must be intensely interested in His letters — His written words. These letters come from One we love supremely and trust implicitly; from One in whom we take a lively and affecting interest. Of course we shall have a desire to read them. We shall study them intently, and oftentimes with tears.

2. Again, this first love will manifest itself in an intense love for the ordinances of God's house. It will beget a lively interest in all the scenes and places where God is wont to meet the soul; where so to speak, *He has an appointment* to meet His people to bless them. How sweetly the Sabbath rises on one who is in his first love! This, he says, is one of my best and most blessed days; my own *Lord's* day and I may surely meet Him this day according to His own arrangement. How sweet the worship of God's house! All incomprehensible to those who never relish it! How can they expect to understand what they never experienced? I well remember how my own mind was impressed on the first Sabbath after my conversion. I had been in that congregation for some time; I had led the choir — had taken the same sort of interest that other sinners do. But now my heart was so drawn out to God that I wanted to keep my eyes shut all

the day. I thought how I had led the choir without any real devotion. Indeed I had so much to think of, I felt that I could not open my eyes to have my mind diverted to external objects at all. The worship and ordinances of God's house were sweet beyond expression.

**3.** This first love manifests itself also in a cheerful obedience. He is perfectly joyful in its obedience. Weary of sinning, turning away from all transgression with deep unutterable loathing, he is prepared to run in the way of God's commands with all the heart. You know how we fear to displease those we love, how we supremely dread to offend those whom we love supremely. So the young convert has a conscience tender in the extreme, and sensitive to the least approach towards sin. He not only fears to sin himself, but he is deeply grieved at the sins of others. Are we not always grieved when our dear friends are absent?

**4.** First love implies great zeal for the cause and honor of God. With most intense care, he will refrain from whatever might dishonor God. On the other hand he will feel a great interest in the prosperity of God's cause. You will see him manifest the most lively joy in the prosperity of Zion and the most pungent grief in her calamities. All wakeful to the interests of religion — all jealous of everything that may injure those interests — full of care if anything threatens to go wrong — you will see in all those ways that his *heart* is in the cause of his Lord.

It will also manifest itself in self-denying labors for God and for souls. He will not count it a grievous thing to toil and deny himself for His Savior. You may always count upon his being ready to perform the most self-denying service with all cheerfulness.

The world will lose its dominion over his soul. His heart will set very loosely on worldly things, instead of being engrossed and absorbed in those interests. He will esteem them as of very little importance. Other things of far more absorbing interest are blessing his soul.

Again, this first love of converts will develop itself in intense desire for the salvation of sinners. It will be a love *for souls*; — a deep interest also in humanity in general. How strongly is the heart drawn out towards fellow-beings, in warm desire for the happiness of all mankind.

Especially you may see this love manifested towards *enemies*. If a convert in his first love has any enemies, you will see a more striking development of this love towards them than anywhere else. If his bosom burns with first love, he will surely love his enemies with a feeling of tenderness and forbearance very unlike what is often seen in such a world as this. Persons almost always think they may speak as reproachfully as they please of their enemies. But not so does the convert in his early love feel. He is ready to say — I may have been mistaken. That man whom I thought so hostile to me may sin much less than I had supposed. I will at least make for him all the apology I honestly can.

Again, this true love to God will manifest itself in the absence of a spirit of self-seeking. These persons are really devoted to God and not to self. Hence you will observe they are not continually making self the chief end of their efforts.

On the contrary, they are full of intense interest in the conversion of sinners, and in all efforts bearing directly on the great end. You will hear them asking — How did the meeting of inquiry appear? What is the state of the prayer meeting? Was the Spirit of the Lord there? Were any souls converted to God? Were any convicted of sin? If a meeting of inquiry is appointed, they are asking — Who will go? Are there not some whom I can persuade to attend? If they see any indication of a revival, they are all awake. I recollect the case of a young convert whom I knew for several years. He made progress rapidly in grace himself, but the Church kept running down. At length some indications of a revival appeared. A young man arose in a prayer-meeting to say that his soul was borne down beneath a burden of sin. This young man could scarcely refrain from shouting and crying — Bless the Lord, for here are tokens of another revival! This was a living manifestation of his first love, living yet and burning in his soul.

### III. EVIDENCES OF HAVING LEFT ONE'S FIRST LOVE

Being very much engrossed in worldly business. Seest thou a man in this state of mind? He is getting away from his first love. Sinking more and

more deeply into the scenes and the spirit of business, his attention becomes more and more withdrawn from spiritual things, and soon he finds that when he does return to them, it is with decidedly abated interest. He may try to make himself think he is doing his business for the Lord; but let him beware lest even so it ensnare his soul and draw him from his first love.

Again, a legal spirit takes possession of his mind. He begins to do his service as a duty and not from love to God. They fall to *duty-doing* as they call it and make this their business. Their labors for God and the devoted affections of their soul do not flow out spontaneously, prompted by deep love which boils up so fervently that their spirit naturally longs for communion with God as its daily food. The living Christian loves to bathe his soul in such communion with God. But the man who has left his first love only presses himself into duty-doing as a thing he may not neglect.

Another evidence is an antinomian spirit. Whatever faith they have does not work by love. They may suppose they rely on Jesus Christ, but their faith lacks the distinctive spiritual feature, for it does not inspire true love, nor does it co-operate along with love in begetting active and cheerful obedience to God's law.

The meaning of the term *Antinomian* is — *against law*. You will often see Antinomians hold the Bible and the Sabbath very loosely. They have a slovenly way of getting on in religion. Their faith in Christ, instead of quickening their souls to love and to labor, serves only to make them feel vastly easy about everything of a spiritual nature. They trust in Christ in just such a way as makes them reckless about doing much to honor God or benefit man. They can do almost anything and yet never allow themselves to doubt that all is well.

While first love continues there will always be a careful discharge of duty and an equal care to maintain first love in its unabated warmth and power. It sometimes happens that when first love declines, duty-doing is kept up, with the heart *out*. This is but a sorry service to offer to God, when the affections of the heart are dropped out.

When persons have left their first love, they are often more anxious to obtain comfort in religion than to be reinstated in communion with God, so

as to have power with Him and a holy heart. Once they knew the comfort of public worship and of secret devotion. Now they know very little indeed about comfort, except as they find it in the hope that they shall yet be restored to see again the light of their Savior's face. When they lived near the Lord, how often were their hearts borne aloft as if enraptured with heavens' own music. But let their love die away, and with all their musical taste and cultivation, they get but little indeed of the rapture of soul they once found in Zion's songs. Now all their joys are in the music; they have lost all else.

In general you will find that if first love is lost, there will be a manifest loss of interest in whatever respects religion. On going to labor in a new field, I have had occasion to rebuke the leading men sharply for the small concern felt to provide things necessary for the comfort of the people and the success of the efforts to be made. If they had been about to have a public auction, they would have had due notice given — the room comfortable — all things in order. But here it is only a religious meeting; let anybody take care of its business. Little does it concern them, though the windows be broken — the wood exhausted, or too green to warm the room. Their first love has gone and with it their lively interest in the work of saving souls. If full of love and interest, they would inquire — Who were there? Was there prayer in that meeting? Was anything done? Are there signs of Zion's reviving?

But exactly over against this, if first love has declined, they ask no questions on such points, though they will be ready enough to ask questions on matters of business or pleasure. Oh, how many times you may see which way the wind blows by the flying feathers. You may learn where a man's heart is by noticing what it is that interests him most. If he can be more interested in a party of pleasure or an excursion ride, or in a political meeting, than he is in efforts to save souls and honor God, you may read his spiritual state at once. If the heart is true with God, nothing is to him like the solemn assembly, the season of prayer, and the communion his soul finds with God. In the spirit of the world, persons will go to a party of pleasure and never think the service long though it stretch onto 10, 11, 12, or 1 o'clock in the night. It is never too long for them. But oh, how long the meetings are, when there is nothing to entertain them, nothing to enjoy, but God!

The same loss of first love is manifested often by conformity to the world, You may detect this in many ways. When a young lady begins to backslide, she will begin to put on ornaments, jewelry, and costly attire. These things are natural indications of the state of the heart.

Again you will see them taking more interest in other books than in the Bible, especially in books of a worldly sort. They prefer worldly to spiritual conversation. They entirely forget to pray for others than themselves, or than their nearest friends who are a part of themselves.

Yet all these are only a part of the manifestations of this loss of first love. But we must pass now to speak,

#### IV. OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING ONE'S FIRST LOVE

He will be brought again under the dominion of old sins and propensities. Grace declining, sin will rise and reassert its sway. Strangely he will find himself returning, as the Scripture hath it, "like a dog to his vomit." Where he had thought himself washed, he finds himself again "wallowing in the mire."

He will also have a sense of guilt, in place of that sweet peace of mind which he once enjoyed. Self-condemned, he can no longer feel a sweet assurance of acceptance and favor with God. His present religion is formal, and he cannot but see and know that it is. Hence he is thrown into serious and distressing doubts whether he were ever a child of God. Distrustful of himself it is but natural that he should become distrustful of others, and ultimately uncharitable and severe in his judgments.

He ceases to be prevalent in prayer. He loses his hold on God; fails of obtaining sensible access to the throne of grace, and not improbably will begin to query whether anybody prays acceptably and whether prayer avails anything ever.

There will be for many reasons a constant tendency to self-delusion. Many a backslider wraps himself all round about with delusions. He says — It is true I don't *feel* much, and I know my chief interests are absorbed

in earthly things; yet still I think I am supremely devoted to God. The fact is if you have left your first love, you have opened the door for every form of delusion. You are not making one particle of real progress in religion. All is movement in the wrong direction.

Thus are the consequences of losing your first love fearfully disastrous.

## REMARKS

- 1.** Those who have left their first love are a *great stumbling block to all their acquaintance*. They scandalize religion, misrepresent the gospel, and do just those things which most effectually shut the gate of heaven against immortal souls.
- 2.** A state of backsliding of heart is *most odious to God*. There is nothing He more abominates than the forms and pretensions of godliness where the heart is gone. It is the instinct of human nature to abhor hypocrisy; how then must God abhor it? It never deceives Him. He sees through it, even as if it had no covering.
- 3.** It is withal a most dangerous state. It is dangerous because like all forms of sin, it tends to perpetuate itself; dangerous because it is insulting to God; dangerous because it abuses and grieves the Holy Spirit. If Christ would threaten to annihilate the church at Ephesus, despite of their many good qualities, unless they would repent of losing their first love, what may the individual Christian professor expect who falls into the same sin and provokes the same indignation?
- 4.** Those who have never had a first love will not understand what I have been saying. They may suppose they do, but they do not and will not. But if you have known what a first love is and have not left it, you may in some measure understand; yet only those who have once had a first love and have left it can be supposed to know the full reality of these things. *Your* experience covers the whole ground.
- 5.** It is time this subject were brought home to your hearts and consciences. What is your state? Are you willing to make sacrifices? Do you love to make them for Christ and His cause? Have you retained even

the religion you once had? Some of you, I know have made progress. You can say — “How little I knew at first, compared with what I know now, of the height and depth and breadth of the love of God! On looking back, I can see how much of my first zeal was merely an animal excitement. Since those days, I think I have learned to live more truly upon God.”

Still let me ask — Where are you now? Have you measured the depth of the love of God, in your own experience of its power? Have you known successively one and another of Christ’s offices by receiving Him in them so as to taste and see their richness and their adaptation of your wants? Have you in this sense known the exceeding great and precious promises of God? Do you say — Talk to me no more of my “*first love;*” that was only an infant’s love; God has shown me broader things and deeper far — even the great depths of His love. He has made me see that there is no end to the vastness and richness of His spiritual blessings. He has shown me indeed that in my Father’s house is bread enough and to spare, so that I never need suffer from hunger.

If this be truly your state, you will experience real and deep grief over those who wander from their way and decline in their spiritual life. Your heart will be bowed in sorrow that they should fall so sadly and dishonor the Savior’s name so grievously.

But some of you *ought* to see that these delineations of the state and guilt of losing your first love, apply to yourselves. You may, perchance, be very slow to admit this; while all your acquaintances see it, you may be blind to the glaring facts; yet as I said, you *ought* to see it and ought to be alarmed. It is high time that you were deeply concerned and crying out from the depth of your declension — Where and how shall I find God? How can I regain my first love? Can I ever be forgiven? Shall my soul ever know again the joy of pardoned sin and of deep peace in God, my Savior?

One word to those who have recently expressed hope in Christ. How is it with you? Where are you? Are you planting your feet more and more firmly upon the Rock of Ages? Are you learning to take hold by faith of the arm that “bears creation up?” That arm can surely sustain God’s children well. You need not fear while undergirded with Almighty strength. If underneath you are these “everlasting arms,” you cannot fall or falter. “Even the youth shall faint and be weary and the young man shall utterly



fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

# JEHOVAH'S APPEAL TO SINNERS AND BACKSLIDERS

*“O My people, what have I done unto thee?  
And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against Me.” — Micah 6:3*

This is indeed a most striking passage. God Himself appeals to His backslidden people to say what He has done to them that can any way justify their course of conduct towards Him. The connection shows that this is addressed to sinners and backsliders — to those who had been His professed people, but who had grievously departed from Him. “Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord’s controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with His people, and He will plead with Israel.” The Gentile nations having gone after other gods and all His own chosen people having grievously revolted, where could He get a candid hearing of His case among all the race of men? How affecting in this point of light is this summoning the case before the “mountains” and the “strong foundations of the earth?” Inanimate nature is not blinded by depravity; has not gone into apostasy from its Maker. Let the case come before the mountain, and let the hills hear the pleadings and render their verdict. “Hear what the Lord saith; arise (O sinner), contend thou before the mountains and let the hills hear thy voice.”

The case then, comes on for hearing, and the Lord opens with summoning His people to testify against Him and show what He has done, or wherein He has wearied them. Upon you, sinners, does your Maker call, as subjects of His moral government. He has given you the existence you now enjoy, and has liberally provided for the supply of your physical and social wants. He calls on you to bear witness against Him if you can; if you have anything to say in bar of the judgment which His law has threatened against all who violate it. If you have any charge to bring against Him, it shall be duly considered. He lets you have the full benefit of a candid hearing. He even asks you to bear witness against Him if you can. Nothing can be farther from His heart than to do you any injustice. Indeed He is not happy to have even an erroneous impression left on your mind that you have been wronged in any way. If such an impression is there,

come forward and reveal it; bring forward your strong reasons and let the case be examined and debated.

Now therefore let me speak in God's behalf to those who make no profession of love to God. Let us take up this matter as between your own souls and your Maker. Let us enter into all the important particulars. Has God injured you in any way? What have you to say against His administration? I want to put these questions specially *to you*. You refuse to acknowledge the Lord Jehovah as your God and Father. You *ought* not to do this without having some reasons in your mind for it. Probably you have something in your mind which you regard as a reason. What is it? Why do you grieve your Heavenly Father's heart? Have you a reason? If so, what is it? Has He done you wrong in any way? Has He required you to love Him without good cause? Has He required you to repent when He had no good reason for this requirement? Has He wronged you by the implication that you have sinned and therefore *ought* to repent? Or has He wronged you by implying that you *can* repent?

I want you to understand that God is *present*. You may suppose Him to sitting here, and that you can *see* Him. He comes down here to discuss and investigate this subject, and give you the fairest possible opportunity to vindicate yourself. He comes and asks of you your reason for not loving and obeying Him. Will you reply, "Lord, Thou knowest I have no good reason for loving Thee"? And has He indeed forfeited your confidence, so that you have no good reason to confide in Him? Has He required you to trust in Him, while yet He has given you no good reasons for so doing?

He requires you to submit unqualifiedly to His supreme authority; is there any good reason why you should not? Has He required too much of you? Do you say — "He is so exacting! He requires so much and withal so rigidly! How can I ever meet it?"

If now you were to meet God face to face, would you say so? Or would you enter this complaint against Him? Or would you insist that the penalties He affixes to the violation of His law are too severe? But are you a fit judge in your own case? Besides, have you any *good reason* for objecting to the penalty, or is it merely a *feeling*, an impression on your mind, that it will be hard to bear it?

But consider again. Has not your God cared for you? Can you say, Lord, Thou hast not cared for my immortal soul? Will you say — “O Lord God, Thou hast brought me into being, Thou hast made me immortal and hast placed me in a most delicate and critical position where my soul may be utterly and forever lost; and having done all this, Thou hast not cared for this immortal soul of mine? Altogether happy in Thyself, Thou has not cared for me, a poor dependent being, destined to live forever, and moreover to have its destinies soon fixed, past all change.” Or will you say, “If He has cared for me, He has given me no evidence of it”? Will you say, “Lord, I can see no token of Thy love; not any at all. If Thou hast cared for me, I have no evidence of it. I can see no manifestations that show it”? Is this what you have to say? And have you quite forgotten how “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” for its redemption; and shall this go for nothing?

Or has God been *impatient with you*? Has He been severely impatient, so severely as to repel you from all confidence and trust? Can you justly say, “O my Heavenly Father, Thou hast so repelled me, and hast so fretted and wearied me, how can I ever approach Thee? Thou hast been so hard and cruel withal.”

But in what way has He been cruel? Wherein has He wearied you? Has He done you no good? Can you think of no way in which He has blessed you? Look all round about you and make up an inventory of your enjoyments; then say, is there no hand of God in these things?

Or will you say, “All God has done for me hast cost Him nothing”? Will you say this? Do you regard it as nothing that He should give up His Son to death for you? Has He made you no offers of *mercy*? And does mercy cost nothing? Do you claim it as of right yours? Or can it be exercised without risks and hazards to the great interests of the government? If special provision is made in this case to obviate these risks, then you should at least inquire whether this provision did not cost something.

Look now at this whole subject. Has God in no way tried to overcome your aversion? Has He not sought to melt your heart by kindness? Say now as in His very presence — Has He refused to open before you the gate of Mercy? Has He locked its doors and thrown the key away? Or on the other hand, has He offered to save you on the very lowest possible

terms? Is it the case that He has only required on your part your full consent to be saved? And will you look up into His face and tell Him that even this is asking too much?

Again, has He not given you time? Have you not had time enough; days and months and years enough to consider this subject fully as you need to do, and to decide it wisely and for your own eternal well-being? Have you not also had ample opportunity to get instruction? Has not the sanctuary opened its doors before you and made you welcome to come in and hear the words of life? Have you not had Sabbaths, many and precious, inviting you to serious thought upon your ways? What more could you have had done for you that you have not had? You cannot say you have not been urged to repent and accept of mercy. Yet you may be disposed to complain that you have been urged too much. You have often felt that you were urged unreasonably. Indeed this is precisely one of the points of this investigation. God asks you, "Wherein have I wearied thee?" What ground of complaint can you find against Me for being in earnest to secure your salvation? What better could I do, or what should I do, for your eternal well-being?

Thus stands the matter at issue as between Jehovah and those who profess no allegiance to His law or gospel.

**2.** We come now to press similar questions upon the attention of those who have professed to know and love Him, but have left their first love and have backslidden from their God.

It is a most remarkable fact that persons of this class are exceedingly slow to admit it and say — I am the man! They would not justify backsliding; they know it cannot be justified. As for themselves, they are not guilty. We find this most serious difficulty, lying across our path in the onset as we attempt to apply this subject to the case of real backsliders. It is precisely for this reason that the appeal which God made to His backslidden people is likely to have so little useful application to you. How is it you get into such an attitude that you cannot be reached? The moment you hear any thing that would open your case to your own view, you repel it.

But this must not be! You must consent to see your case as it is, and on God's behalf I must plead with you.

What has God done to you? How do you account for this, that you are so backslidden from God? Suppose a young bride, not married longer than some of you have been professedly united to Jesus Christ, should give signs of great alienation of heart from her husband. You are that husband, and sitting down by her side you kindly inquire, "What have I done? What is the reason of this too obvious coldness in your affections towards me? It is sometimes said that persons soon after marriage become remiss in those little attentions which sustain affection and hence that love grows cold. Has this been my fault towards you?" So you might debate and inquire in a case between yourself and your bride.

So God debates and inquires with you. What has He done towards you? Has He been remiss in those little attentions which are the life of love? When each day He spreads your table and fills your cup with earthly good, does He not show His kind remembrance of you? And when He provides day by day your spiritual bread, and evermore fulfills His promise to manifest Himself to those who keep His commandments and show forth their love, does He not show Himself mindful of you, — most tenderly so?

Or has He required too much self-denial of you, or of such sort as would really injure you? Has He taken away your friends arbitrarily, with no good reasons? Has He smitten you and drawn blood from your heart unfeelingly, as if He did not care how much pain He caused you? Has He taken away your property or your children in a hard and apparently unfeeling way? If you dare to think so, tell Him so. Say, "O, Lord, didst Thou not cut down my husband or my wife, reckless of the pain and the agony it would cost me?" Did he die hard, in great pain and racking torture? And was this done on God's part without consideration? Nay, was it not all mercy and kindness on His part? Has He not told you that He never does afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men for His own pleasure?

Perhaps you have found it impossible to get the comforts and necessities of life, and you are therefore tempted to doubt whether God does fairly by you. You are prone to think that perhaps God does not mean to provide

for you. But have you forgotten that even His dear Son when He came to dwell among men had no where to lay His head? I found a sister once who made this excuse for backsliding. She found no sympathy in the church, and therefore turned to the world. And will you also say, “God takes no notice of me, and therefore I will cast Him off?”

Or again, has God manifested towards you unreasonable jealousy? Has He been too particular in regard to giving you permission to enjoy the world? Has He imposed on you unreasonable restraints? Has He been suspicious without reason, and disposed evidently to cut you off from reasonable enjoyments? Do you believe this?

Or has He attempted to govern you by authority rather than by love? Parents, you say, never get the love of their children by dint of mere authority; and do you on this ground complain of God that He has required too much and has seemed to expect to gain your love by mere requisitions? Are you disappointed, and do you find on better acquaintance that God is not what you expected? Sometimes in earthly relationships persons find themselves mistaken. Many a one has said this mournfully, “I have been mistaken; I am sorely disappointed; I am utterly undone!” So some of you are disappointed — perhaps — are you? Is not religion what you supposed it to be? Is it not as good as you expected? Does it fail to meet your wants as you expected it would? A man once said to me after I had been presenting the fulness of gospel salvation, “Either the Gospel is not what it pretends to be, or I do not know anything about it.” Doubtless in all such cases the latter supposition is the fact; the man knows nothing about the true gospel by actual experience. How is this with you?

But let me ask you again — Wherein has God forfeited your confidence? Tell Him, tell Him, if you can. If such be the fact, He allows you to tell Him so. He says, “Testify against Me.” I never shall forget the forbearance and kindness with which He treated me when I ventured to tell Him how troubled I was to believe His word. I was pleading for the gift of the Holy Ghost, on the strength of the promise in Luke 11. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” I was

pleading this promise, and it seemed to me that I had been asking for this bread of life a long time and yet did not obtain it. I therefore said, "O Lord, I am a father, and I love to give to my children anything and everything that they ask and that I think will be a real good to them. I give them such good things, and do not give them occasion to ask and tease me over and over. Now, Lord, how is this matter as between me and Thee?" When I ventured to plead thus with God, He did not rebuke me, by any means, but this He did; He showed me that the fault was wholly in myself, and He let me know what I must do. He bore with me most tenderly and most graciously; and so, my hearers, will He surely do with you. Suppose someone here in this house should say, "I have used all the means of salvation, yet I am not saved. I have done all my part faithfully; but God has dealt hardly with me, and I can trust Him no longer. I thought once that I would and did give Him my heart, but I take it back."

On what grounds do you say this? What has God done, or what has He failed to do, that you should thus complain of Him, and break friendship and withdraw confidence? Perhaps you will say, "I have not found Him a sufficient portion. Before I turned from my sins to God I was told that He would be a sufficient portion for my soul, but I have tried it and have not found it so. My heart has not been satisfied and therefore I return to the world again to make that my portion."

And must you then say that Christ is an unfaithful lover for your soul, so that you must go after other lovers? Does He withhold all proper manifestations of affection? Do you go to Him imploring some token of His friendship, and does He sternly withhold any and all such manifestations? He has said, "Seek and ye shall find." Do you seek honestly and humbly and yet find nothing? He has said also, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, loveth Me, and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him." He has surely said, "And ye shall seek for Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Are you prepared to deny the truth of these promises? Can you testify against God that you have sought thus and have not found?

Again, has He been hard-hearted when you have confessed your guilt before Him? When you have come into His presence deeply humbled, and your bleeding heart has poured out its confessions and sorrows, has He



quite certainly turned His ear away? He has promised to hear, to forgive and to restore, and will you say He has not done so? Can you say that while He has promised always to hear and to forgive, He yet has not done so? Now weigh this matter well, and be very sure that your own heart has been truly humbled before your God for all your sins.

Or have you found some friends more to your liking and such as more fully meet your wants? Will you say, "I must give my heart to some better friend than God?" And *do you really think so?*

Or are you sick of His love and does your heart therefore demand some change? Have you had the gospel until it has ceased to interest you, and has become an old story? Is this your case? Have you gained anything at all by transferring your affections to somebody else? Have you obtained better friends, more peace of mind, or more satisfaction? On the other hand, have you not lost something of substantial value? Have you not lost your own self-respect? When you look into your own face, do you not instinctively say, "That is the face of a hypocrite?" Have you not lost that sweetness of temper which you had in your first love? Do not your acquaintances see that something is wrong with you? Have you not such a sense of guilt that you dread everything that may enforce conviction? Are you not oppressed with a sense of shame? Do you not inwardly know that you are altogether hypocritical in your religion? Can you honestly draw near to God and tell Him how much you love Him? Or, on the other hand, is it not true that desire has fled; that every vestige of true affection has perished from your heart, and that the whole of your religion is mere hypocrisy? Do you not feel that you have acted most unreasonably and cruelly? Have you not acted madly? Has not your course in leaving your first love been one of moral insanity and infatuation? Have you not been compelled to say of yourself, "I have had not reason, I have acted like a lunatic; God knows I have played the fool and have erred exceedingly?" Have you not done as a treacherous wife who madly goes after other lovers and forsakes the covenant of her God and the plighted love of her vows? And are you not evermore going from bad to worse, getting still farther and farther from God, more and more grieving the Spirit by your course of dealings with God? Are you not doing more and more things which you will hate to confess and yet which you must confess, or never turn acceptably to God? Are you not wandering from God, and still

building up walls of separation to obstruct your return? And worse still, if possible, are you not laying stumbling-blocks before others?

Let all these points be deeply pondered. Are you prepared to come before God and table your complaints against Him, and show that in all the points at issue between your soul and Him, the fault is wholly on His side?

## REMARKS

Do you think anybody ever treats you as badly as you treat God? Was ever anyone so abusive to you as you have been to your Maker and to your Redeemer? If God were to summon all His creatures before Him, could He find one among them all, who has treated Him so badly as you have? Must you not say, “All the evil I have ever received from all creatures together is as nothing compared with the treatment I have shown to God?”

Considering His nature and His resources, how wonderful that He should permit us to live and treat Him so! He who abhors sin and meanness so intensely, and who has withal such power to punish, or even to annihilate us, how wonderful that He should still prolong our days and still pour out blessings upon us!

When men are once convinced of duty to God, to procrastinate is most abominable. It is not only violating conscience deliberately, but it is deliberately insulting God! What can be more provoking? What can more surely bring down on the soul the fearful wrath of the Most High?

God does not exact of us what He refuses to do Himself. When He asks us to do our duty, He always holds Himself responsible to do His. If He has done wrong He is willing to stand rebuked before the universe. We see this truth lying out upon the very face of our text.

By a law of necessity sinners know they have no excuse for sin. If anyone should really and honestly suppose that he had a good excuse for what might be called sin, it could not be sin in him under those circumstances; for real sin is never that which men do for good reasons and which they

suppose they *ought* to do. Sin lies in the intention. It is not an intention to do right and to do what ought in the actor's view to be done, but an intention to do what is seen to be wrong.

To live in a backslidden state is most disgraceful. What should we say of a wife who should forsake her husband and go off into down right whoredom? Yet this is the very figure which God uses to express the guilt and shamefulness of His people's backslidings from Him. You may read a vivid delineation of this sin under this figure in Hosea 2, and often in the prophet Jeremiah. Who that reads these passages and considers for a moment what intense feelings of abhorrence and detestation are naturally excited by this sin can fail to get a strong impression of God's abhorrence of backsliding? Yet He invites you to return, and gives you many most precious assurances that on your return you shall again be welcomed to His confidence and love. So God does; but I suppose a wife to have proved a harlot while her husband had borne a blameless character and course towards her. Suppose a wife to have been utterly treacherous to her vows, giving herself up to most shameful conduct, going on from step to step in depravity and crime till she becomes a filthy prostitute — on the street; suppose that while in this forlorn and wretched state, her husband should come to her and say, "I have come to do you good, to clothe and feed and bless you, and take you with your consent again to my house and home and heart;" would not this be a wonderful scene? Has human nature often manifested such tenderness and such forgiveness of wrongs?

But you will perhaps say, "I am not so degraded and debased as that. I can yet take care of myself and I can not admit that the case you have supposed presents my case fairly." Whereas, the fact is that you are almost infinitely worse than she is who has only played the harlot in her earthly relations and as towards a husband. The great God had consented to take you into a similar relation to Himself, and you have disowned *Him!*

The parable of the prodigal son may be applied both to the unconverted sinner and to the backslider. To either and to both, God is a father if they will return and seek His face. You may see in the parable how God feels towards everyone in whom He sees the spirit of true penitence and confession.

And now, how long ere you will turn your footsteps towards the house and home of your Father above? Hear what He says, “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.” Will you yield the controversy now, or will you still persist in your course of sin and folly? Let the case be settled. Either come on and table your charges against your God, and make out your case if you can, or forever withdraw them, and turn once for all to seek the face of your injured God in penitence and prayer. Come back if you pretend to come at all, not to play the hypocrite again, but to devote yourself henceforth and forever to the love and service of your God. Come and say, “Here, Lord, are all my powers. I give to Thee all Thou hast ever given me, withholding nothing. Here am I, and here is all I am and have; take all my powers and use them up in most divine economy in Thy service forever. Nothing that I can do is too much for me to desire to do.”

*“Had I ten thousand hearts to give,  
Lord, they should all be Thine.”*

# GOD'S LOVE FOR A SINNING WORLD

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*  
— John 3:16

SIN is the most expensive thing in the universe. Nothing else can cost so much. Pardoned or unpardoned, its cost is infinitely great. Pardoned, the cost falls chiefly on the great atoning Substitute; unpardoned, it must fall on the head of the guilty sinner.

The existence of sin is a fact everywhere experienced, everywhere observed. There *is* sin in our race everywhere and in awful aggravation.

Sin is the violation of an infinitely important law — a law designed and adapted to secure the highest good of the universe. Obedience to this law is naturally essential to the good of creatures. Without obedience there could be no blessedness even in heaven.

As sin is a violation of a most important law, it cannot be treated lightly. No government can afford to treat disobedience as a trifle, inasmuch as everything — the entire welfare of the government and of all the governed — turns upon obedience. Just in proportion to the value of the interests at stake is the necessity of guarding law and of punishing disobedience.

The law of God must not be dishonored by anything *He* shall do. It has been dishonored by the disobedience of man; hence, the more need that God should stand by it, to retrieve its honour. The utmost dishonor is done to law by disowning, disobeying, and despising it. All this, sinning man has done. Hence, this law being not only good, but intrinsically necessary to the happiness of the governed, it becomes of all things most necessary that the law-giver should vindicate his law. He must by all means do it.

Hence, sin has involved God's government in a vast expense. Either the law must be executed at the expense of the wellbeing of the whole race, or

God must submit to suffer the worst results of disrespect to His law — results which in some form must involve a vast expense.

Take for example any human government. Suppose the righteous and necessary laws which it imposes are disowned and dishonored. In such a case the violated law must be honored by the execution of its penalty, or something else not less expensive, and probably much more so, must be endured. Transgression must cost happiness, somewhere, and in vast amount.

In the case of God's government it has been deemed advisable to provide a substitute — one that should answer the purpose of saving the sinner, and yet of honoring the law. This being determined on, the next great question was — *How shall the expense be met?*

The Bible informs us how the question was in fact decided. By a voluntary conscription — shall I call it — or donation? Call it as we may, it was a voluntary offering. Who shall head the subscription? Who shall begin where so much is to be raised? Who will make the first sacrifice? Who will take the first step in a project so vast? The Bible informs us. It began with the Infinite Father. He made the first great donation. He gave His only begotten Son — this to begin with — and having given Him first, He freely gives all else that the exigencies of the case can require. First, He gave His Son to make the atonement due to law; then gave and sent His Holy Spirit to take charge of this work. The Son on His part consented to stand as the representative of sinners, that He might honour the law, by suffering in their stead. He poured out His blood, made a whole life of suffering a free donation on the altar — withheld not His face from spitting, nor His back from stripes — shrunk not from the utmost contumely that wicked men could heap on Him. So the Holy Ghost also devotes Himself to most self-denying efforts unceasingly, to accomplish the great object.

It would have been a very short method to have turned over His hand upon the wicked of our race, and sent them all down quick to hell, as once He did when certain angels "kept not their first estate." Rebellion broke out in heaven. Not long did God bear it, around His lofty throne. But in the case of man He changed His course — did not send them all to hell, but devised a vast scheme of measures, involving most amazing self-denials and self-sacrifices, to gain men's souls back to obedience and heaven.

*For whom was this great donation made? "God so loved the world,"* meaning the whole race of men. By the "world" in this connection cannot be meant any particular part only, but the whole race. Not only the Bible, but the nature of the case, shows that the atonement must have been made for the whole world. For plainly if it had not been made for the entire race, no man of the race could ever know that it was made for himself, and therefore not a man could believe on Christ in the sense of receiving by faith the blessings of the atonement. There being an utter uncertainty as to the persons embraced in the limited provisions which we now *suppose* to be made, the entire donation must fail through the impossibility of rational faith for its reception. Suppose a will is made by a rich man bequeathing certain property to certain unknown persons, described only by the name of "the elect." They are not described otherwise than by this term, and all agree that although the maker of the will had the individuals definitely in his mind, yet that he left no description of them, which either the persons themselves, the courts, nor any living mortal can understand. Now such a will is of necessity altogether null and void. No living man can claim under such a will, and none the better though these elect were described as residents of Oberlin. Since it does not embrace all the residents of Oberlin, and does not define which of them, all is lost. All having an equal claim and none any definite claim, none can inherit. If the atonement were made in this way, no living man would have any valid reason for believing himself one of the elect, prior to his reception of the Gospel. Hence he would have no authority to believe and receive its blessings by faith. In fact, the atonement must be wholly void — on this supposition — unless a special revelation is made to the persons for whom it is intended.

As the case is, however, the very fact that a man belongs to the race of Adam — the fact that he is human, born of woman, is all-sufficient. It brings him within the pale. He is one of the *world* for whom God gave His Son, that whosoever would believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

The subjective motive in the mind of God for this great gift was *love*, love to the world. God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for it. God loved the universe also, but this gift of His Son sprang from love to our world. True in this great act He took pains to provide for the interests of the universe. He was careful to do nothing that could in the least let

down the sacredness of His law. Most carefully did He intend to guard against misapprehension as to His regard for His law and for the high interests of obedience and happiness in His moral universe. He meant once for all to preclude the danger lest any moral agent should be tempted to undervalue the moral law.

Yet farther, it was not only from love to souls, but from respect to the spirit of the law of His own eternal reason, that He gave up His Son to die. In this the purpose to give up His Son originated. The law of His own reason must be honored and held sacred. He may do nothing inconsistent with its spirit. He must do everything possible to prevent the commission of sin and to secure the confidence and love of His subjects. So sacred did He hold these great objects that He would baptize His Son in His own blood, sooner than peril the good of the universe. Beyond a question it was love and regard for the highest good of the universe that led Him to sacrifice His own beloved Son.

Let us next consider attentively the *nature* of this love. The text lays special stress on this — God *so* loved — His love was of such a nature, so wonderful and so peculiar in its character, that it led Him to give up His only Son to die. More is evidently implied in this expression than simply its greatness. It is most peculiar in its character. Unless we understand this, we shall be in danger of falling into the strange mistake of the Universalists, who are forever talking about God's love for sinners, but whose notions of the nature of this love never lead to repentance or to holiness. They seem to think of this love as simply good nature, and conceive of God only as a very good-natured being, whom nobody needs to fear. Such notions have not the least influence towards holiness, but the very opposite. It is only when we come to understand what this love is in its nature that we feel its moral power promoting holiness.

It may be reasonably asked, If God so loved the world with a love characterized by greatness, and by greatness only, why did He not save all the world without sacrificing His Son ? This question suffices to show us that there is deep meaning in this word *so*, and should put us upon a careful study of this meaning.

**1.** This love in its nature is not *complacency* — a delight in the character of the race. This could not be, for there was nothing amiable in their character.



For God to have loved such a race *complacently* would have been infinitely disgraceful to Himself.

**2.** It was not a mere emotion or feeling. It was not a blind impulse, though many seem to suppose it was. It seems to be often supposed that God acted as men do when they are borne away by strong emotion. But there could be no virtue in this. A man might give away all he is worth under such a blind impulse of feeling, and be none the more virtuous. But in saying this we do not exclude all emotion from the love of benevolence, nor from God's love for a lost world. He had emotion, but not emotion *only*. Indeed, the Bible everywhere teaches us that God's love for man, lost in his sins, was paternal — the love of a father for his offspring — in this case, for a rebellious, froward, prodigal offspring. In this love there must of course blend the deepest compassion.

**3.** On the part of Christ, considered as Mediator, this love was *fraternal*. “He is not ashamed to call them *brethren*.” In one point of view, He is acting for brethren, and in another for children. The Father gave Him up for this work and of course sympathizes in the love *appropriate* to its relations.

**4.** This love must be altogether *disinterested*, for He had nothing to hope or to fear — no profit to make out of His children if they should be saved. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of God as being selfish, since His love embraces all creatures and all interests according to their real value. No doubt He took delight in saving our race — why should He not? It is a great salvation in every sense, and greatly does it swell the bliss of heaven — greatly will it affect the glory and the blessedness of the Infinite God. He will eternally respect Himself for love so disinterested. He knows also that all His Holy creatures will eternally respect Him for this work and for the love that gave it birth. But let it also be said, He knew they would not respect Him for this great work unless they should see that He did it for the good of sinners.

**5.** This love was *zealous* — *not* that cold-hearted state of mind which some suppose — not an abstraction, but a love deep, zealous, earnest, burning in His soul as a fire that nothing can quench.

**6.** The sacrifice was a most self-denying one. Did it cost the Father nothing to give up His own beloved Son to suffer, and to die such a death? If this be not self-denial, what can be? Thus to give up His Son to so much suffering — is not this the noblest self-denial? The universe never could have the idea of great self-denial but for such an exemplification.

**7.** This love was particular because it was universal; and also universal because it was particular. God loved each sinner in particular, and therefore loved all. Because He loved all impartially, with no respect of persons, therefore He loved each in particular.

**8.** This was a most *patient* love. How rare to find a parent so loving his child as never to be impatient. Let me go round and ask, how many of you, parents, can say that you love all your children so well, and with so much love, and with love so wisely controlling, that you have never felt impatient towards any of them — so that you can take them in your arms under the greatest provocations and love them down, love them out of their sins, love them into repentance and into a filial spirit? Of which of your children can you say, Thank God, I never fretted against that child — of which, if you were to meet him in heaven, could you say, I never caused that child to fret? Often have I heard parents say, I love my children, but oh, how my patience fails me! And, after the dear ones are dead, you may hear their bitter moans, Oh, my soul, how could I have caused my child so much stumbling and so much sin!

But God never frets — is never impatient. His love is so deep and so great that He is always patient.

Sometimes, when parents have unfortunate children — poor objects of compassion — they can bear with anything from them; but when they are very wicked, they seem to feel that they are quite excusable for being impatient. In God's case, these are not unfortunate children, but are intensely wicked — intelligently wicked. But oh, His amazing patience — so set upon their good, so desirous of their highest welfare, that however they abuse Him, He sets Himself to bless them still, and weep them down, and melt them into penitence and love, by the death of His Son in their stead!

9. This is a *jealous love*, not in a bad sense, but in a good sense — in the sense of being exceedingly careful lest anything should occur to injure those He loves. Just as husband and wife who truly love each other are jealous with ever wakeful jealousy over each other's welfare, seeking always to do all they can to promote each other's true interests.

This donation is already made — made in good faith — not only *promised*, but actually *made*. The promise, given long before, has been fulfilled. The Son has come, has died, has made the ransom and lives to offer it — a prepared salvation to all who will embrace it.

The Son of God died not to appease vengeance, as some seem to understand it, but under the demands of law. The law had been dishonored by its violation. Hence, Christ undertook to honour it by giving up to its demands His suffering life and atoning death. It was not to appease a vindictive spirit in God, but to secure the highest good of the universe in a dispensation of mercy.

Since this atonement has been made, all men in the race have a right to it. It is open to every one who will embrace it. Though Jesus still remains the Father's Son, yet by gracious right He belongs in an important sense to the race—to everyone; so that every sinner has an interest in His blood if he will only come humbly forward and claim it. God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world — of whomsoever would believe and accept this great salvation.

God gives His Spirit to apply this salvation to men. He comes to each man's door and knocks, to gain admittance, if He can, and show each sinner that he may now have salvation. Oh, what a labour of love is this!

This salvation must be received, if at all, *by faith*. This is the only possible way. God's government over sinners is moral, not physical, because the sinner is himself a moral and not a physical agent. Therefore, God can influence us in no way unless we will give Him our confidence. He never can save us by merely taking us away to some place called heaven — as if change of place would change the voluntary heart. There can, therefore, be no possible way to be saved but by simple faith.

Now do not mistake and suppose that embracing the Gospel is simply to believe these historical facts without truly receiving Christ as your

Saviour. If this had been the scheme, then Christ had need only to come down and die; then go back to heaven and quietly wait to see who would believe the facts. But how different is the real case! Now Christ comes down to fill the soul with His own life and love. Penitent sinners hear and believe the truth concerning Jesus, and then receive Christ into the soul to live and reign there supreme and for ever. On this point many mistake, saying, If I believe the facts as matters of history it is enough. No! NO! This is not it by any means. “With *the heart* man believeth unto righteousness.” The atonement was indeed made to provide the way so that Jesus could come down to human hearts and draw them into union and sympathy with Himself — so that God could let down the arms of His love and embrace sinners — so that law and government should not be dishonored by such tokens of friendship shown by God toward sinners. But the atonement will by no means save sinners only as it prepares the way for them to come into sympathy and fellowship of heart with God.

Now Jesus comes to each sinner’s door and knocks. Hark! what’s that? what’s that? Why this knocking? Why did He not go away and stay in heaven if that were the system, till men should simply believe the historical facts and be baptized, as some suppose, for salvation. But now, see how He comes down — tells the sinner what He has done — reveals all His love — tells him how holy and sacred it is, so sacred that He can by no means act without reference to the holiness of His law and the purity of His government. Thus impressing on the heart the most deep and enlarged ideas of His holiness and purity, He enforces the need of deep repentance and the sacred duty of renouncing all sin.

## REMARKS

**1.** The Bible teaches that sinners may forfeit their birthright and put themselves beyond the reach of mercy. It is not long since I made some remark to you on the manifest necessity that God should guard Himself against the abuses of His love. The circumstances are such as create the greatest danger of such abuse, and, therefore, He must make sinners know that they may not abuse His love, and cannot do it with impunity.

**2.** Under the Gospel, sinners are in circumstances of the greatest possible responsibility. They are in the utmost danger of trampling down beneath their feet the very Son of God. Come, they say, let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours. When God sends forth, last of all, His own beloved Son, what do they do? Add to all their other sins and rebellions the highest insult to this glorious Son! Suppose something analogous to this were done under a human government. A case of rebellion occurs in some of the provinces — The king sends his own son, not with an army, to cut them down quick in their rebellion, but all gently, meekly, patiently, he goes among them, explaining the laws of the kingdom and exhorting them to obedience. What do they do in the case? With one consent they combine to seize him and put him to death!

But you deny the application of this, and ask me, Who murdered the Son of God? Were they not Jews? Aye, and have you, sinners, had no part in this murder? Has not your treatment of Jesus Christ shown that you are most fully in sympathy with the ancient Jews in their murder of the Son of God? If you had been there, would any one have shouted louder than you, Away with Him — crucify Him, crucify Him? Have you not always said, Depart from us-for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways?

**3.** It was said of Christ that, Though rich He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich. How strikingly true is this? Our redemption cost Christ His life; it found Him rich, but made Him poor; it found us infinitely poor, but made us rich even to all the wealth of heaven. But of these riches none can partake till they shall each for himself accept them in the legitimate way. They must be received on the terms proposed, or the offer passes utterly away, and you are left poorer even than if no such treasures had ever been laid at your feet.

Many persons seem entirely to misconceive this case. They seem not to believe what God says, but keep saying, *If, if, if* there only were any salvation for me — if there were only an atonement provided for the pardon of my sins. This was one of the last things that was cleared up in my mind before I fully committed my soul to trust God. I had been studying the atonement; I saw its philosophical bearings — saw what it demanded of the sinner; but it irritated me, and I said — If I should become a Christian, how could I know what God would do with me? Under this

irritation I said foolish and bitter things against Christ — till my own soul was horrified at its own wickedness, and I said — I will make all this up with Christ if the thing is possible.

In this way many advance upon the encouragements of the Gospel as if it were only a peradventure, an *experiment*. They take each forward step most carefully, with fear and trembling, as if there were the utmost doubt whether there could be any mercy for them. So with myself. I was on my way to my office, when the question came before my mind — What are you waiting for ? You need not get up such an ado. All is done already. You have only to consent to the proposition—give your heart right up to it at once — this is all. Just so it is. All Christians and sinners ought to understand that the whole plan is complete — that the whole of Christ — His character, His work, His atoning death, and His ever-living intercession — belong to each and every man, and need only to be accepted. There is a full ocean of it. *There* it is. You may just as well take it as not. It is as if you stood on the shore of an ocean of soft, pure water, famishing with thirst; you are welcome to drink, and you need not fear lest you exhaust that ocean, or starve anybody else by drinking yourself. You need not feel that you are not made free to that ocean of waters; you are invited and pressed to drink — yea, to *drink abundantly!* This ocean supplies all your need. You do not need to have in yourself the attributes of Jesus Christ, for His attributes become practically yours for all possible use. As saith the Scripture — He is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. What do you need ? Wisdom ? Here it is. Righteousness ? Here it is. Sanctification ? Here you have it. All is in Christ. Can you possibly think of any one thing needful for your moral purity, or your usefulness which is not here in Christ? Nothing. All is provided here. Therefore you need not say, I will go and pray and try, as the hymn, —

*“I’ll go to Jesus tho’ my sin  
Hath like a mountain rose,  
Perhaps He will admit my plea;  
Perhaps will hear my prayer.”*

There is no need of any *perhaps*. The doors are always open. Like the doors of Broadway Tabernacle in New York, made to swing open and fasten themselves open, so that they could not swing back and shut down

upon the crowds of people thronging to pass through. When they were to be made, I went myself to the workmen and told them by all means to fix them so that they must swing open and fasten themselves in that position.

So the door of salvation is open always — fastened open, and no man can shut it — not the Pope, even, nor the devil, nor any angel from heaven or from hell. There it stands, all swung back and the passage wide open for every sinner of our race to enter if he will.

Again, sin is the most expensive thing in the universe. Are you well aware, O sinner, what a price has been paid for you that you may be redeemed and made an heir of God and of heaven? O what an expensive business for you to indulge in sin!

And what an enormous tax the government of God has paid to redeem this province from its ruin! Talk about the poor tax of Great Britain and of all other nations superadded; all is nothing to the sin-tax of Jehovah's government — that awful *sin-tax* ! Think! how much machinery is kept in motion to save sinners! The Son of God was sent down — angels are sent as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; missionaries are sent, Christians labour, and pray and weep in deep and anxious solicitude — all to seek and save the lost. What a wonderful — enormous tax is levied upon the benevolence of the universe to put away sin and to save the sinner! If the cost could be computed in solid gold what a world of it — a solid globe of itself! What an array of toil and cost, from angels, Jesus Christ, the Divine Spirit, and living men! Shame on sinners who hold on to sin despite of all these benevolent efforts to save them! Who instead of being ashamed out of sin, will say — Let God pay off this tax; who cares! Let the missionaries labour, let pious women work their very fingers off to raise funds to keep all this human machinery in motion; no matter: what is all this to me? I have loved my pleasures and after them I will go! What an unfeeling heart is this!

Sinners can very well afford to make sacrifices to save their fellow sinners. Paul could for his fellow sinners. He felt that he had done his part toward making sinner, and now it became him to do his part also in converting them back to God. But see there — that young man thinks he cannot afford to be a minister, for he is afraid he shall not be well supported. Does he not owe something to the grace that saved his soul from hell?. Has he

not some sacrifices to make, since Jesus has made so many for him, and Christians too, in Christ before him — did they not pray and suffer and toil for his soul's salvation? As to his danger of lacking bread in the Lord's work, let him trust his Great Master. Yet let me also say that churches may be in great fault for not comfortably supporting their pastors. Let them know God will assuredly starve them if they starve their ministers. Their own souls and the souls of their children shall be barren as death if they avariciously starve those whom God in His providence sends to feed them with the bread of life.

How much it costs to rid society of certain forms of sin, as for example, *slavery*. How much has been expended already, and how much more yet remains to be expended ere this sore evil and curse and sin shall be rooted from our land! This is part of God's great enterprise, and He will press it on to its completion. Yet at what an amazing cost; How many lives and how much agony to get rid of this one sin!

Woe to those who make capital out of the sins of men! -Just think of the rumseller — tempting men while God is trying to dissuade them from rushing on in the ways of sin and death! Think of the guilt of those who thus set themselves in array against God! So Christ has to contend with rumsellers who are doing all they can to hinder His work.

Our subject strikingly illustrates the nature of sin as mere selfishness. It cares not how much sin costs Jesus Christ — how much it costs the Church, how much it taxes the benevolent sympathies and the self-sacrificing labors of all the good in earth or heaven; — no matter; the sinner loves self-indulgence and will have it while he can. How many of you have cost your friends countless tears and trouble to get you back from your ways of sin? Are you not ashamed when so much has been done for you, that you cannot be persuaded to give up your sins and turn to God and holiness?

The whole effort on the part of God for man is one of suffering and self-denial. Beginning with the sacrifice of His own beloved Son, it is carried on with ever renewed sacrifices and toilsome labors — at great and wonderful expense. Just think how long a *time* these efforts have been protracted already — how many tears, poured out like water, it has cost — how much *pain* many forms this enterprise has caused and cost — yea, that



very sin which you roll as a sweet morsel under your tongue! God may well hate it when He sees how much it costs, and say — O do not that abominable thing that I hate!

Yet God is not unhappy in these self-denials. So great is His joy in the results, that He deems all the suffering but comparatively a trifle, even as earthly parents enjoy the efforts they make to bless their children. See them; they will almost work their very hands off; — mothers sit up at night to ply their needle till they reel with fatigue and blindness; but if you were to see their toil, you would often see also their joy, so intensely do they love their children.

Such is the labour, the joy, and the self-denial of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in their great work for human salvation. Often are they grieved that so many will refuse to be saved. Toiling on in a common sympathy, there is nothing, within reasonable limits, which they will not do or suffer to accomplish their great work. It is wonderful to think how all creation sympathizes, too, in this work and its necessary sufferings. Go back to the scene of Christ's sufferings. Could the sun in the heavens look down unmoved by such a scene? O no, he could not even behold it — but veiled his face from the sight! All nature seemed to put on her robes of deepest mourning. The scene was too much for even inanimate nature to bear. The sun turned his back and could not look down on such a spectacle!

The subject illustrates forcibly the worth of the soul. Think you God would have done all this if He had had those low views on this subject which sinners usually have?

Martyrs and saints enjoy their sufferings — filling up in themselves what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ; not in the atonement proper, but in the subordinate parts of the work to be done. It is the nature of true religion to love self-denial.

The results will fully justify all the expense. God had well counted the cost before He began. Long time before He formed a moral universe He knew perfectly what it must cost Him to redeem sinners, and He knew that the result would amply justify all the cost. He knew that a wonder of mercy would be wrought — that the suffering demanded of Christ, great as

it was, would be endured; and that results infinitely glorious would accrue therefrom. He looked down the track of time into the distant ages — where, as the cycles rolled along, there might be seen the joys of redeemed saints, who are singing their songs and striking their harps anew with the everlasting song, through the long, *long*, eternity of their blessedness; — and was not this enough for the heart of infinite love to enjoy? And what do you think of it, Christian? Will you say now, I am ashamed to ask to be forgiven? How can I bear to receive such mercy? It is the price of blood, and how can I accept it? How can I make Jesus so much expense?

You are right in saying that you have cost Him great expense — but the expense has been cheerfully met — the pain has all been endured, and will not need to be endured again, and it will cost none the more if you accept than if you decline; and moreover still, let it be considered Jesus Christ has not acted unwisely; He did not pay too much for the soul's redemption — not a pang more than the interests of God's government demanded and the worth of the soul would justify.

O, when you come to see Him face to face, and tell Him what you think of it — when you are some thousands of years older than you are now, will you not adore that wisdom that manages this scheme, and the infinite love in which it had its birth? O what will you then say of that amazing condescension that brought down Jesus to your rescue! Say, Christian, have you not often poured out your soul before your Saviour in acknowledgment of what you have cost Him, and there seemed to be a kind of lifting up as if the very bottom of your soul were to rise, and you would pour out your whole heart. If anybody had seen you they would have wondered what had happened to you that had so melted your soul in gratitude and love.

Say now, sinner, will you sell your birthright? How much will you take for it? How much will you take for your interest in Christ? For how much will you sell your soul? Sell your Christ! Of old they sold Him for thirty pieces of silver; and ever since, the heavens have been raining tears of blood on our guilty world. If you were to be asked by the devil to fix the sum for which you would sell your soul, what would be the price named? Lorenzo Dow once met a man as he was riding along a solitary road to fulfil an appointment, and said to him — Friend, have you ever prayed

No. How much will you take never to pray hereafter? One dollar. Dow paid it over, and rode on. The man put the money in his pocket, and passed on, *thinking*. The more he thought, the worse he felt. There, said he, I have sold my soul for one dollar! It must be that I have met the *devil!* Nobody else would tempt me so. With all my soul I must repent, or be damned forever!

How often have you bargained to sell your Saviour. For less than thirty pieces of silver! Nay, for the merest trifle:

Finally, God wants volunteers to help on this great work. God has given Himself, and given His Son, and sent His Spirit; but more labourers still are needed; and what will you give? Paul said, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Do you aspire to such an honour? What will you do — what will you suffer? Say not, I have nothing to give. You can give yourself — your eyes, your ears, your hands, your mind, your heart, all; and surely nothing you have is too sacred and too good to be devoted to such a work upon such a call! How many young men are ready to go? and how many young women? Whose heart leaps up, crying, Here am I, send me?

# WHERE SIN OCCURS GOD CANNOT WISELY PREVENT IT

*“It is impossible but that offenses come;  
but woe unto him through whom they come!” — Luke 17:10*

AN “offence” as used in this passage, is an occasion of falling into sin. It is anything which causes another to sin and fall.

It is plain that the author of the offence is in this passage conceived of as *voluntary* and as *sinful* in his act; else the woe of God would not be denounced upon him.

Consequently the passage assumes that this sin is in some sense necessary and unavoidable. What is true of *this sin* in this respect is true of all other sin. Indeed any sin may become an *offence* in the sense of a temptation to others to sin, and therefore its necessity and unavoidableness would then be affirmed by this text.

The doctrine of this text, therefore, is that *sin*, under the government of God, *cannot be prevented*. I purpose to examine this doctrine; to show that, nevertheless, sin is utterly inexcusable as to the sinner; then answer some objections, and conclude with remarks.

**1.** When we say it is impossible to prevent sin under the government of God, the statement still calls for another inquiry, viz.: Where does this impossibility lie? Is it on the part of the sinner, or on the part of God? Which is true; that the sinner can not possibly forbear to sin, or that God can not prevent his sinning?

The first supposition answers itself, for it could not be sin if it were utterly unavoidable. It might be his misfortune; but nothing could be more unjust than to impute it to him as his crime.

But we shall better understand where this impossibility does and must lie, if we first recall to mind some of the elementary principles of God’s government

Let us, then, consider that God's government over men is moral, and known to be such by every intelligent being. By the term *moral*, I mean that it governs by motives, and does not move by physical force. It adapts itself to mind, not to matter. It contemplates mind as having intellect to understand truth, sensibility to appreciate its bearing upon happiness, conscience to judge of the right, and a will to determine a course of voluntary action in view of God's claims. So God governs mind. Not so does He govern matter. The planetary worlds are controlled by quite a different sort of agency. God does not move them in their orbits by motives, but by a physical agency.

I said, all men know this government to be moral by their own consciousness. When its precepts and its penalties come before their minds, they are conscious that an appeal is made to their voluntary powers. They are never conscious of any physical agency coercing obedience.

God's government implies in man the power to will, or not to will; to will right, or to will wrong; to choose or to refuse the great good which Jehovah promises. It also implies intelligence. The beings to whom law is addressed are capable of understanding it. They have also, as I have said, a conscience, by which they can appreciate and must affirm its obligations.

You need to distinguish broadly between the influence of motive on mind and of mechanical force upon matter. The former implies voluntariness; the latter does not. The former is adapted to mind and has no adaptation to matter, the latter equally is adapted to matter, but has no possible application to mind. In God's government over the human mind, all is voluntary; nothing is coerced as by physical force. Indeed, it is impossible that physical force should directly influence mind. Compulsion is precluded by the very nature of moral agency. Where compulsion begins, moral agency ends. If it were possible for God to force the will as He forces the moon along in her orbit, to do so would subvert the very idea of a moral government. Neither praise nor blame could attach to any actions of beings, so moved. Persuasion, brought to bear upon mind, is always such in its nature that it *can* be resisted. By the very nature of the case, God's creatures must have power to resist any amount of even His persuasion. There can be no power in heaven or earth to coerce the will, as

matter is coerced. The nature of mind forbids its possibility. And if it were possible, it would still be true that in just so far as God should coerce the human will, He would cease to govern morally.

God is infinitely wise. Men can no more doubt this than they can doubt their own existence. He has infinite knowledge. He knows everything — i.e., all objects of knowledge; and knows them all perfectly. He is also infinitely good, His will being always conformed to His perfect knowledge and always controlled by infinite benevolence.

His infinite goodness implies that He does the best He can, always, and everywhere. In no instance does He ever fail to do the very best He can do, so that He can appeal to every creature and say — What more can I do to prevent sin than I am doing! Indeed, He does so appeal to every intelligent mind. He made this appeal through Isaiah to the ancient Jews — “ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?”

Every moral agent in the universe knows that God has done the best He could do in regard to sin. Do not you know this, each one of you? Certainly you do. He Himself, in all His infinite wisdom, could not suggest a better course than that which He has taken. Men know this truth so well, they never can know it better. You may at some future day realize it more fully when you shall come to see its millions of illustrations drawn out before your eyes; but no demonstration can make its proof more perfect than it is to your own minds to-day. Now sin does, in fact, exist under God’s government. For this sin, God either is or is not to blame. Every man knows that God is not to blame for this sin, for man’s own nature affirms that He would prevent it if He wisely could. Certainly if He was able wisely to prevent sin in any case where it actually occurs, then not to do so nullifies all our conceptions of His goodness and wisdom. He would be the greatest sinner in the universe if, with power and wisdom adequate to the prevention of sin, He had failed to prevent it. Let me here note, also, that what God can not do wisely, He can not (speaking morally) do at all. For He can not act unwisely. He can not do things which wisdom forbids. To do so would be to undefine Himself. The supposition would make Him cease to be perfect, and this were equivalent to ceasing to be God. Or thus:

If He were to interpose unwisely to prevent a sinner from sinning, He would sin Himself. I speak now of each instance in which God does not, in fact, interpose to prevent sin. In any of these cases, if He were to interpose unwisely to prevent sin, He would prevent a man from sinning at the expense of sinning Himself. Here, then, is the case. A sinner is about to fall before temptation, or in more correct language, is about to rush into some new sin. God can not wisely prevent his doing so. Now what shall be done? Shall He let that sinner rush on to his chosen sin and self wrought ruin; or shall He step forward, unwisely, sin Himself, and incur all the frightful consequences of such a step? He lets the sinner bear his own responsibility. Why should not He? Who would wish to have God sin?

This is a full explanation of every case in which man does in fact sin and God does not prevent it.

And this is not conjecture, but is logical certainty. No truth can be more irresistibly and necessarily certain than this. I once heard a minister say in a sermon — “It is not irrational to suppose that in each case of sin, it occurs as it does because God can not prevent it.” After he retired from the pulpit, I said to him — Why did you leave the matter so? You left your hearers to infer that perhaps it might be in some other way; that this was only a possible theory, yet that some other theory was perhaps even more probable. Why did you not say, This theory is certain and must necessarily be true?

Thus the impossibility of preventing sin lies not in the sinner, but wholly with God. Sin, it should be remembered, is nothing else than an act of free will, always committed against one’s conviction of right. Indeed, if a man did not know that selfishness is sin, it would not be sin in his case.

Once more, sin is always committed against and in despite of motives of infinitely greater weight than those which induce to sin. The very fact that his conscience condemns the sin is his own judgment on the question, proving that in his own view the motives to sin are infinitely contemptible when put in the scale to measure those against the sin in question. Every sinner knows that sin is a willful abuse of his own powers as a moral agent — of those noblest powers of his being in view of which he is especially said to be made in the image of God. Made like God with these exalted attributes, capable of determining his own voluntary activities intelligently

if he will; in accordance with his reason and his conscience if he will; he yet in every act of sin abuses and degrades these powers, tramples down in the very dust the image of God enstamped on his being, and with the capacities of becoming an angel, makes himself a fool. Clothed with a dignity of nature akin to that of his Maker, he chooses to debase himself to the level of brutes and of devils. With a face naturally looking upwards; with an intelligence that grasps the great truths of God; with a reason that postulates and affirms the great necessary principles involved in his moral duties and relations; with capacities which fit him to sit on a nation's throne; he yet says — Let me take this glorious image of God and debase it in the dust! Let me cast myself down, till there shall be no lower depth of degradation to which I can sink!

Sin is in every instance a dishonoring of God. This every sinner must know. It casts off His authority, spurns His advice, maltreats His love. Truly does God Himself say — “A son honoreth his father and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear?”

What sinner ever supposed that God neglects to do anything He wisely can do to prevent sin? If this be not true, what is conscience but a lie and a delusion? Conscience always affirms that God is clear of all guilt in reference to sin. In every instance in which conscience condemns the sinner, it necessarily must, and actually does, fully acquit God.

These remarks will suffice to show that sin in every instance of its commission is utterly inexcusable. We are next to notice some *objections*

**1.** “If God is infinitely wise and good, why need we pray at all? If He will surely do the best possible thing always and all the good He can do, why need we pray?”

I answer. Because His infinite goodness and wisdom enjoin it upon us. Who could ask a better reason than this? If you believe in His infinite wisdom and goodness, and make this belief the basis of your objection, you will certainly, if honest, be satisfied with this answer.

But again I answer. It might be wise and good for Him to do many things if sought unto in prayer, which He could not wisely do, unasked. You can



not, therefore, infer that prayer never changes the course which God voluntarily pursues.

**2.** Objecting again, you ask why we should pray to God to prevent sin, if He can not prevent it? If under the circumstances in which sin exists, God can not, as you hold, prevent sin, why go to Him and pray Him to prevent it?

I answer. We pray for the very purpose of changing the circumstances. This is our object. And prayer does change the circumstances. If we step forward and offer fervent, effectual prayer, this quite changes the state of the case. Look at Moses pleading with God to spare the nation after their great sin in the matter of the golden calf. God said to him—"Let Me alone that I may destroy them, and I will make of thee a great nation." Nay, said Moses, for what will the Egyptians say? And what will all the nations say? They have long time said, The God of that people will not be able to get them through that vast wilderness; now therefore, what will Thou do for Thy great name? "Yet now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."

This prayer, coming up before God, greatly changed the circumstances of the case. For this prayer, God could honorably spare the nation — it was so honorable for Him to answer this prayer.

**3.** Yet further objecting, you ask — "Why did God create moral agents at all if He foresaw that He could not prevent their sinning?"

I answer. Because He saw that on the whole it was better to do so. He could prevent some sin in this race of moral agents; could overrule what He could not wisely prevent, so as to bring out from it a great deal of good, and so that in the long run, He saw it better, with all the results before Him, to create than to forbear; therefore, wisdom and love made it necessary that He should create. Having the power to create a race of moral beings — having also power to convert and save a vast multitude of them, and power also to overrule the sin He should not prevent so that it should evolve immense good, how could He forbear to create as He did?

**4.** But if God can not prevent sin, will He not be unhappy? No; He is entirely satisfied to do the best He can, and accept the results.

**5.** But Some will say — Is not this “limiting the Holy One of Israel?” No. It is no proper limitation of God’s power to say that He can not do anything that is unwise. Nor do we limit His power when we say — He can not move mind just as He moves a planet. That is no proper subject of power which is in its own nature absurd and impossible.

Yet these are the only directions in which we have spoken of any limitations to His power.

But you say, Could not God prevent sin by annihilating each moral agent the instant before he would sin? Doubtless He could; but we say if this were wise He would have done it. He has not done it, certainly not in all cases, and therefore it is not always wise.

But you say, Let Him give more of His Holy Spirit. I answer, He does give all He can wisely, under existing circumstances. To suppose He might give more than He does, circumstances being the same, is to impeach His wisdom or His goodness.

Some people seem greatly horrified at the idea of setting limits to God’s power. Yet they make assumptions which inevitably impeach His wisdom and His goodness. Such persons need to consider that if we must choose between limiting His power on the one hand, or His wisdom and love on the other, it is infinitely more honorable to Him to adopt the former alternative than the latter. To strike a blow at His moral attributes, is to annihilate His throne. And further, let it be also considered, as we have already suggested, that you do not in any offensive sense limit His power when you assume that He can not do things naturally impossible, and can not act unwisely.

Let these remarks suffice in the line of answer to objections I know that you who are students will say that this must be true. You are accustomed to notice the action of your own moral powers. You have a moral sense, and it has been in some good degree developed. You know it is utterly impossible that God should act unwisely. You know He must act benevolent]y, always doing the best thing He can do. He has given you a nature which affirms, postulates, intuits these truths. Else there could be no conscience. The presence and action of a conscience implies that these

great truths respecting the moral nature of God are indisputably affirmed in your soul by your own moral nature.

I address you, therefore, as those who have a conscience. Suppose it were otherwise. Suppose all that we call conscience—the entire moral side of your nature — should suddenly drop out, and I should find myself speaking to a shoal of moral idiots — beings utterly void of a conscience! How desolate the scene! But I am not speaking to such an audience. Therefore I am sure that you will understand and appreciate what I say.

## REMARKS

**1.** We may see the only sense in which God could have purposed the existence of sin. It is simply negative. He purposed not to prevent it in any case where it does actually occur. He does not purpose to make moral agents sin; not, for example, Adam and Eve in the garden, or Judas in the matter of betraying Christ. All He purposed to do Himself was to leave them with only a certain amount of restraint — as much as He could wisely impose; and then if they sin, let them bear the responsibility. He left them to act freely and did not positively prevent their sinning. He never uses means to make men sin. He only forbears to use unwise means to prevent their sinning. Thus His agency in the existence of sin is only *negative*.

**2.** The existence of sin does not prove that it is the necessary means of the greatest good. Some of you are aware that this point has been often mooted in theological discussions. I do not purpose now to go into it at length, but will only say that in all cases wherein men sin, they might obey God instead of sinning. Now the question here is — If they were to obey rather than sin, would not a greater good accrue? We have these two reasons for the affirmative:

(1), that by natural tendency, obedience promotes good and disobedience evil: and

(2), that in all those cases, God earnestly and positively enjoins obedience. It is fair to presume that He would enjoin that which would secure the greatest good.

**3.** The human conscience always justifies God. This is an undeniable fact — a fact of universal consciousness.. The proof of it can never be made stronger, for it stands recorded in each man’s bosom.

Yet a very remarkable book has recently appeared — “The Conflict of Ages “ — which is obviously built upon the opposite assumption, i.e., that the human conscience does unqualifiedly condemn man; but except under the light of this peculiar theory, does in fact condemn God. This theory, adopted professedly to vindicate God as against the human conscience, holds that there was a pre-existent state in which we all lived and sinned, and *there* forfeited our title to a moral nature, unbiased toward sinning. *There* we had a fair probation. *Here*, if we suppose this to be the commencement of our moral agency, we do not have a fair probation, and conscience therefore does not, and in truth can not justify God except on the supposition of a pre-existent state.

The entire book, therefore, is built on the assumption of conflict between the human conscience and God. A shocking assumption! A brother remarked to me of this that it seemed to him to be the most outrageous and blasphemous indictment against God that could be drawn. Yet the author intended no such thing. He is undoubtedly a good man, but, in this particular, egregiously mistaken.

The fact is, conscience does always condemn the sinner and justify God. It could not affirm obligation without justifying God. The real controversy, therefore, is not between God and the conscience, but between God and the *heart*. In every instance in which sin. exists, conscience condemns the sinner and justifies God. This of itself is a perfect and sufficient answer to the whole doctrine of that , book. It knocks out the only and whole foundation on which it is built. If that book be true, men never should have had a conscience until that book was published, read, understood, and believed. No man should ever have been convicted of sin until he came to see that he had existed in a previous state and began his sinning there.

Yet the facts are right over against this. Everywhere in all ages, with no deference to this book, and no disposition to wait for its tardy developments — everywhere and through all time the human conscience has stood up to condemn each sinner and compel him to sign his own

death-warrant, and acquit his Maker of all blame. These are the facts of human nature and life.

**4.** Conversion consists precisely in this: the heart's consent to these decisions of the conscience. It is for the heart to come over to the ground occupied by the conscience, and thoroughly acquiesce in it as right and true. Conscience has a long time been speaking; it has always held one doctrine, and has long been resisted by the heart. Now, in conversion, the heart comes over, and gives in its full assent to the decisions of conscience; that God is right, and that sin and himself a sinner are utterly wrong.

And now do any of you want to know how you may become a Christian ? This is it. Let your *heart* justify God and condemn sin, even as your *conscience* does. Let your voluntary powers yield to the necessary affirmations of your reason and conscience. Then all will be peaceful within because all will be *right*.

But you say, I am trying to do this! Ah, I know it to be the case with some of you that you are trying to *resist* to your utmost. You settle down, as it were, with your whole weight while God would fain draw you by His truth and Spirit. Yet you fancy you are really trying to yield your heart to God. A most unaccountable delusion!

**5.** In the light of this subject we can see the reason for general judgment. God intends to clear Himself from all imputation of wrong in the matter of sin before the entire moral universe. Strange facts have transpired in His universe, and strange insinuations have been made against His course. These matters must all be set right. For this He will take time enough. He will wait till all things are ready. Obviously He could not bring out His great trial-day till the deeds of earth have all been wrought — till all the events of this wondrous drama have had their full development. Until then He will not be ready to make a full expose of all His doings. Then He can and will do it most triumphantly and gloriously.

The revelations of that day will doubtless show why God did not interpose to prevent every sin in the universe. Then He will satisfy us as to the reasons He had for suffering Adam and Eve to sin and for leaving Judas to betray his Master. We know now that He is wise and good, although we do not know all the particular reasons for His conduct in the

permission of sin. Then He will reveal those particular reasons, as far as it may be best and possible. doubt He will then show that His reasons were so wise and good that He could not have done better.

**6.** Sin will then appear infinitely inexcusable and odious. It will then be seen in its true relations toward God and His intelligent creatures, inexpressibly blameworthy and guilty.

Take a case. Suppose a son has gone far away from the paths of obedience and virtue. He has had one of the best of fathers, but he would not hear his counsels. He had a wise and affectionate mother, but he sternly resisted all the appeals of her tenderness and tears. Despite of the most watchful care of parents and friends, he *would go* astray. As one madly bent on self-ruin, he pushed on, reckless of the sorrow and grief he brought upon those he should have honored and loved. At last the issues of such a course stand revealed. The guilty youth finds himself ruined in constitution, in fortune, and in good name. He has sunk far too low to retain even self-respect. Nothing remains for him but agonizing reflections on past folly and guilt. Hear him bewail his own infatuation. "Alas," he cries, "I have almost killed my venerable father, and long ago I had quite broken my mother's heart. All that folly and crime in a son could do, I have done to bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. No wonder that having done so much to ruin my best friends, I have plucked down a double ruin on my own head. No sinner ever more richly deserved to be doubly damned than myself."

Thus truth flashes upon his soul and thus his heart quails and his conscience thunders condemnation. So it must be with every sinner when all his sins against God shall stand revealed before his eyes, and there shall be nothing left for him but intense and unqualified self-condemnation.

**7.** God's omnipotence is no guaranty to any man that either himself or any other sinner will be saved. I know the Universalist alarms it to be. He will ask — Does not the fact of God's omnipotence, taken in connection with His infinite love, prove that all men will be saved? I answer, No! It does not prove that God will save one soul. With ever so much proof of God's perfect wisdom, love, and power we could not infer that He would save even one sinner. We might just as reasonably infer that He would send the whole race to hell. How could we know what His wisdom would

determine? How could we infer what the exigencies of His government might demand? In fact, the only ground we have for the belief that He will save any sinner is not at all our inference from His wisdom, love, and power; but is wholly and only His own declarations as to this matter. Our knowledge is wholly from revelation. *God has said so*; and this is all we know about it.

Yet further I reply to the Universalist, that God's omnipotence saves nobody. Salvation is not wrought by physical omnipotence. It is only by moral power that God saves, and this can save no man unless he consents to be saved.

**8.** How bitter the reflections which sinners must have on their death-bed, and how fearfully agonizing when they pass behind the veil and see things in their true light. Did you ever think when you have seen a sinner dying in his sins what an awful thing it is for a sinner to die? You mark the lines of anguish on his countenance; you see the look of despair; you observe he can not bear to hear the word of the awful future. There he lies, and death pushes on his stern assault. The poor victim struggles in vain against his dreaded foe. He sinks, and sinks, his pulse runs lower, and yet lower; look in his glassy eye; mark that haggard brow there, he breathes not; but all suddenly he stares as one affrighted; throws up his hands wildly, screams frightfully; sinks down and is gone to return no more! And where is he now? Not beyond the scope of thought and reflection. He can see back into the world he has left. Still he can *think*. Alas, his misery is that he can do nothing but think! As said the prisoner in his solitary cell: I could bear torture or I could endure toil; but O, to have nothing to do but think! To hear the voice of friend no more — to say not a word — to do nothing from day to day and from year to year but to *think!* that is awful. So of the lost sinner. Who can measure the misery of incessant self-agonizing thought? Now, when at any time your reflections press uncomfortably and you feel that you shall almost go deranged, you can find some drop of comfort for your fevered lips; you can for a few moments, at least, fall asleep, and so forget your sorrows and find a transient rest; but oh! when you shall reach the world where the wicked find no rest — where there can be no sleep — where not one drop of water can reach you to cool your tongue. Alas, how can your heart endure or your hands be strong in that

dread hour! God tried in vain to bless and save you. You fought Him back and plucked down on your guilty head a fearful *damnation*”

**9.** What infinite consolation will remain to God after He shall have closed up the entire scenes of earth! He has banished the wicked and taken home the righteous to His bosom of love and peace. I have done, says He, all I wisely could to save the race of man. I made sacrifices cheerfully; sent my well-beloved Son gladly; waited as long as it seemed wise to wait, and now it only remains to overrule all this pain and woe for the utmost good, and rejoice in the bliss of the redeemed forevermore.

There are the guilty lost. Their groans swell out and echo up the walls of their pit of woe; it is to the holy only so much evidence that God is good and wise and will surely sustain His throne in equity and righteousness forever. It teaches most impressive lessons upon the awful doom of sin. There let it stand and bear its testimony, to warn other beings against a course so guilty and a doom so dreadful!

There, in that world of woe, may be some of our pupils, possibly some of our own children. But God is just and His throne stainless of their blood. It shall not mar the eternal joy of His kingdom, that they would pull down such damnation on their heads. They insisted they would take the responsibility, and now they have it.

Sinner, do you not care for this today? Will you come to the inquiry meeting this evening to trifle about your salvation? I can tell you where you will not trifle. When the great bell of time shall toll the death-knell of earth and call her millions of sons and daughters to the final judgment, you will not be in a mood to trifle! You will surely be there! It will be a time for serious thought — an awful time of dread. Are you ready to face its revelations and decisions ?

Or do you say, Enough, ENOUGH! I have long enough withstood His grace and spurned His love; I will now give my heart to God, to be His only, forevermore.



# THE WANTS OF MAN AND THEIR SUPPLY

*“He began to be in want.” — Luke 15:14*

*“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness.  
for they shall be filled.” — Matthew 5:6*

THE parable of the prodigal son is intended to illustrate the case of the sinner, coming to himself, opening his eyes to his true condition, and feeling himself destitute, empty, and wretched.

Man, as he stands revealed to himself in consciousness, is a wonderful being. By the earliest teachings of consciousness he finds himself to be a duality, consisting of body and soul. Farther revelations made in consciousness show him to be in some respects a tri-unity. For example, he has three classes of mental attributes, sensibility, intellect, and will. Still further, and yet more important in its bearings, he finds himself a tri-unity, inasmuch as he has three sides to his nature, — one related to the material universe around him; another to all objects of thought and knowledge; and still another, related to God and to duty.

**1.** He has first a *body*, and, through this, peculiar relations to the world he lives in. He has appetites for food, and numerous wants that terminate on the physical universe. These wants crave their appropriate supplies, and cannot be satisfied with anything else. In the order of time, these are earliest developed. They are few in number, — that is, they *may* be, — and those which are real are so. This class alone cease at death. Yet while they exist, they must be supplied.

Another fact deserving notice in reference to this class of wants is that man immediately assumes the existence of the objects to which his physical wants are correlated. The infant assumes this by instinct. There is no need that you should prove to man that these objects exist. He assumes this, and has only to inquire where they may be found. By a necessity of his nature he assumes their existence, and sets himself forthwith to search for them.

2. In the next place, let it be noticed that man has also an intellectual nature. He is made capable of knowledge, and has also an intense desire to know. These are real wants of his being. God has provided for their supply in the illimitable ocean of truth which invests him on every side. God has also breathed into his soul a spirit of inquiry, and acting out its deep impulses, he must inquire into the truth and reason of things. It is curious to notice the difference between children and other animals. If you had never seen an infant before, and were to study his developments for the first time, you would be forcibly struck with these remarkable traits. The little one begins to notice, and to look inquiringly, almost as soon as it begins to look at all. See him fix his eyes upon his little hands, as if he would ask, What are these ? He looks into his mother's eye as if he would ask a thousand questions, long before he can utter a word. But you can find no such manifestations of thought and inquiry in the kitten and the lamb. Give them enough to eat and scope for rest and play, and they are satisfied. They will never seem to ask you the reasons of things. Nay more, you cannot awaken within them a spirit of inquiry by any appliances you can employ. It is not in them, and you cannot get it in.

But the infant is a philosopher by birth. He has intellectual wants lying in his very nature, and he cannot be satisfied without their supply. He must know the reasons of things. This is the true idea of philosophy. The lower animals will lie down perfectly satisfied without knowing the reasons of things, or anything more about things than just suffices to meet their animal wants. But man, even from infancy, has wants pressing upon him in this direction, and he rouses himself, like a lion from his lair, to grasp the good his inner being craves in this direction. He cannot be satisfied without. He finds himself related to the whole universe of matter, and oh, what a world is opened to him for inquiry and knowledge! How naturally he looks up and abroad! It is not easy for the horse or the ox to look up. Their eye is prone; but man's is outward and upward. Man is made for inquiry.

It is this spirit of inquiry which leads so many young people to this place. They come here to get knowledge. How they hang on our lips, and press on us for the reasons of things, as if they could not be satisfied till they have penetrated to the bottom of every subject.

Men assume that there is an explanation of everything. They assume that these innate demands for knowledge were created, not to be denied — not to remain ungratified, but to be gratified. Hence they grasp after knowledge, searching for it as for silver, and as if they deemed it more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold. What young man or young woman has not felt such curiosity excited, as to extort the cry, *I must know: I must find out the facts on this subject, and the reasons of the facts besides!*

**3.** Thirdly, man has yet another side to his nature—the moral and spiritual department, correlated to God, to his attributes and law, and to great questions of duty and destiny. Man learns from consciousness that he has such a side to his being — such a department in his nature. Hence he inquires after God. He raises questions about right and wrong, and asks to know the nature of virtue and vice. Often he finds in himself a great uneasiness of which he cannot well divine the cause. It puts him upon pressing these inquiries into his responsibilities and his mission in this state of his existence.

Let it now be especially observed that man instinctively assumes the existence of those things which stand related to each of these three sides of his nature. The infant begins to feel after his food with no thought of question as to the fact of there being food provided for his wants. When intelligence opens, the same assumption is made, that there are verities to be known, and the reasons why these things are so rather than otherwise. In like manner, when the eyes of the moral man begin to open, he assumes his own immortality, and assumes also the existence of a God. This is, indeed, the true account of his knowledge of this truth. Some have supposed that the idea of God in the human mind is wholly a thing of education. It is so in the same sense in which much of our intellectual knowledge is. There are many things about God which we need to learn from His word and from His works. But no man needs to have it demonstrated to him that there *is* a God, any more than a child needs to have it proved that there is food provided for him in the physical world, or the adult, that there are things to be known. The great cardinal truths pertaining to the existence of God, accountability, and duty, are assumed as readily and surely as men assume that there are truths correlated to their intelligence, or supplies in nature for their animal wants. It is of no use to

say that some men are atheists, and therefore this doctrine cannot be true. Some men have, by speculation, befooled themselves into the belief (so they say) that there is no physical universe. But they believe in its existence none the less, and crave the good it proffers, and cannot live without it. Each one of these philosophers, although he may deny the existence of any physical universe, and declare there is no such thing as matter, yet expects his dinner at the appointed hour, and needs it for his comfort full as much as if he had not denied the existence of any such thing. So these atheists only know there is a God, although they say, "*in their heart,*" there is none.

It is vastly difficult for any man to feel at ease while he is resisting the constitutional demands of any department of his nature. "*Alas!*" said a young and ambitious lawyer, who was driving his business and his books and his briefs, — "*alas!*" said he, "what is the matter with me! I try to study, and cannot. I try to be happy, but I am not. What do I want? Wherein is the lack that, with all I have, yet leaves me so wretched?"

It was this strain of inquiry which led him to see that he needed God for his portion, and could not find a paradise without Him.

Men need not wait for the proof of their immortality, or for proof of the necessity of virtue as a means for happiness. They know these things by a spontaneity of their moral nature. They know that holiness is a great want of their moral nature. How plainly do they see and know that they need such a being as God, to love and to obey, to trust and to adore!

I appeal to these students. If you have cultivated the habit of self-study, you have learned that you cannot find out yourself without finding God. Tracing out the problems of your own existence reveals to you your Maker. An irresistible conviction will force itself upon you that there is a God, and that you have everything to hope from His favor, and everything to fear from His frown. A view of yourself and of your own spiritual wants will show you that nothing else can supply your need but God. Have you not already found that the more you study, and the more you cultivate the habit of reflection, the less you can make yourself happy without God? Most of you find it impossible to enjoy yourselves in sin as you were wont to do before you gave yourselves to thought and reflection. The higher you ascend in the grade of moral and intellectual

culture, the more intensely will you feel the want of moral culture and moral enjoyments. It is impossible for you to rise as a man without feeling a growing demand for the presence and influence of God as your Father and Friend.

Commonly, as the human mind opens to surrounding objects, and as its powers successively develop themselves, attention is first turned to physical wants, and next to intellectual. In one or the other of these pursuits, or in both, man is wont to become so engrossed as mainly to overlook the moral side of his nature. Yet the wants of his moral being will develop themselves, often in such a way at first as to make him exceedingly wretched, while yet he does not see what ails him, and quite fails to comprehend the reason of his unhappiness. No amount of knowledge or purely mental culture can make him happy. On the contrary, the more he knows the more he wants, and the more intensely dissatisfied he becomes with himself.

The objects that supply his bodily wants are at hand. He meets them on every side, and in abundance. So, also, pushing his efforts for this end, he finds ample materials for supplying his intellectual wants. He finds enough for mind to feed upon — enough to exercise his faculties, and interest him in studious thought and earnest research.

So, also, with his moral and spiritual wants. These have their correlated objects. God is all around him. In the kingdoms of nature he sees the handiwork of an intelligent, designing Maker; and in the ways of providence, he cannot help seeing the agency of a kind and beneficent Father. As his natural eye gives him the material world, so his spiritual eye would give him God in everything — were it not for the blinding influence of a bad heart. This fearfully darkens his vision to those great spiritual truths he so much needs to know. While he might be advancing hour by hour in the knowledge of God and of spiritual truth, going down into the great depths of sympathy with God, he finds, instead, a fearful conflict between his depraved impulses and his conscience, under the influence of which, truth gains but a slow access to his soul. Moreover, the moral side of his nature being latest developed, he often becomes so engrossed with sensual or intellectual pursuits, that he scarce has any power left for effective thought upon moral subjects. How fearfully some give way to

worldly interests and claims, and others also to intellectual pursuits, some of you must know but too well.

Yet those moral wants you have neglected will some day arise and make their demands heard. It is well if they assume this urgency while yet their supply is possible. The prodigal son was a case of one who felt the pressure of these wants. He said, "I must go home to my father ". David entered on record his testimony, "My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ". "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" The mind thus becomes deeply conscious of cravings and aspirations which have God for their object, and which nothing but God can supply. If you examine the nature of these wants, you find them in part social. The mind craves communion with other minds. It thirsts for society, and wisely concludes that no society, no fellowship with other minds, can in any wise compare with communion with God. Perhaps he has tried the fellowship of mortals, and found it still unsatisfying. Hence he craves the richer, far richer, fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. He longs to rise above communion with the finite to hold communion with the Infinite. Weary of drawing instructions from erring man, he thirsts for the pure fountains of knowledge as they flow from the Infinite Intelligence. Conscious that he must himself exist for ever, he craves the acquaintance and sympathy of his eternal Maker and Father. As he comes to know something of his great and glorious Friend, he feels that he needs an eternity in which to study God in his multiform and wonderful works and ways. And when he comes to breathe the atmosphere of purity which invests the glorious Presence,

How intensely does he long for deliverance from all moral corruption! Oh, how does his soul thirst for an ever-growing conformity to God! The language of holy men on the sacred page is exceedingly strong on these points, as we may see from David's Psalms and Paul's Epistles. The latter declares, "Yea, doubtless, 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 and be found in Him" No one can read these strong utterances of feeling, desire, and purpose, without seeing that the mind may develop itself with

amazing intensity in this direction. There is scope and occasion for its utmost energies and aspirations.

## REMARKS

**1.** He must be wretched who neglects to supply his physical wants. He must pay the stern penalty of his neglect, as he will soon learn to his sorrow. Each organ of the body needs its appropriate development, exercise, and nutriment. He who should disregard the laws of his constitution in respect to the proper supply of these constitutional demands will find, ere long, that the penalty of such neglect is fearful and sure.

In like manner, if he stultifies himself and takes no pains to inquire after truth and knowledge; if he never troubles himself to know, and denies to his intellectual nature all its just demands, he must be far more wretched than a brute can be. But let a man neglect all spiritual culture and training, he becomes far more wretched still. Physical demands cease with the death of the body; the spiritual must continue during his entire existence, stretching on and still on for ever, and probably for ever increasing.

**2.** How cruel for a man to consider himself as merely a brute! Giving himself up to a groveling life, regardless of his spiritual nature and even of his intellectual nature also, what a wretch he must be! Ye who are students know how to pity and how to despise him! — You can understand what he loses, for you know what satisfaction is taken in finding out the reasons of things. But see the mere animal who never looks abroad, never raises an inquiry. Why does he not set himself to study and think? Why not cast his thoughts abroad for knowledge? Why does he live a fool and a dunce, when he might be a *man*?

**3.** How cruel to treat anybody else as a mere animal! This is the most cruel thing you can do towards a fellow-being. You deny the existence of those great qualities which constitute him a man. You feed him as you would a horse, withholding all aliment for his intelligent mind. You feed him and your horse, each for the same reason; — you want to keep him in working order to serve your selfish purposes. You regard all knowledge beyond what your horse needs as only so much injury to him. Holding your slave

as his master, do you send him to school? Never. Do you teach him to read? Never. Do you provide him any means of instruction? No. In the same manner you shut down the gate upon his moral nature. You close up the windows of his soul and keep it as utterly dark as possible to the light of heaven. You tighten the thumb-screws down on every inlet of knowledge, so that he shall never know that he is anything more or other than a beast! Is not this horrible? What, then, shall we say of the man who does just this upon himself!

**4.** The more a man develops his intellectual faculties, yet neglects moral culture, the more miserable he becomes. It is striking to see how wretched the most highly cultivated men become. During all the latter years of his life, Daniel Webster was never seen sober, but he was wretched. While in his senses, his mind was deep in sorrow. Look in upon Congress and see there the great men of our land and of other lands; not a man of them is happy without piety and sound moral culture. Go and ask Byron if his gigantic mind and almost superhuman genius, made him an angel of bliss. Ask him if he found this world a paradise. Perhaps no man ever cursed his fellow-beings more intensely, or enjoyed less in their society, than he. All such men, with high intellectual culture, make themselves wretched because they leave their moral powers in a state of utter wreck and distortion. There is no escape from this result. High intellectual culture must inevitably develop the idea and the claims of God. Let them turn their inquiries which way they will, they find God, and must feel more or less convicted of obligation to love and obey them. Repelling these obligations, it is impossible that they can be otherwise than wretched. I alluded to the case of a young lawyer who asked, “*What* makes me so unhappy? I feel myself thoroughly wretched, and surely I can see no reason for it.” The secret was this: all his life long he had neglected God; his studies had more and more brought God to view, and his sensibilities, under the action of conscience, had become exceedingly acute. How could he be otherwise than wretched! He might not see the reason of his unhappy state; yet, if he had well considered the laws of his moral nature, he would have found the reason lying there. Many of you begin to find the same results in your experience, and you must realize them more and more if you remain alienated in heart from God while yet your intelligence is more and more revealing God and His rightful claims on your heart.



**5.** Neglecters of God are not well aware either of the cause or the degree of their wretchedness. The wants of their physical nature are all met. They are fed and clad, and have every comfort that their physical system craves. Their social wants, too, are met. They have friends and society. They have also cultivated taste and any desired amount of objects for its gratification. There is a library and books in plenty. There are works of art from the masters in every profession. What more could they need? Yet they are wretched. What is the matter? How many thousand times has this inquiry been made, What can be the matter with me? I have everything heart can wish, or the eye desire, — books, teachers, unbounded sources of information, — yet I am unhappy; what does ail me

I can tell you what. There is another side of your nature, more important than all the rest, and more craving, yet you shut off all its demands, and deny its claims. You have a conscience, yet you resist its monitions. You have desires correlated to God, yet you deny them their appropriate gratification. No fact is more ennobling to human nature than this, that man has desires correlated to God even as he has to his fellow-men, so that he can no more be happy without God than he can be without the sympathy and society of man. We all understand this law of human nature. We see man thirsting for companionship with his fellow-man, longing for society, and we cannot fail to see and to say that man is so constructed in his very nature that he must have society. Deprive him of it and he is wretched. Now, the striking fact is that man has an equally strong demand in his very constitution for sympathy and fellowship with God. Unless this too be supplied, he cannot be happy.

Suppose you were to meet a man as ignorant of his physical wants as most men are of their spiritual. He does not understand that he must have food for his stomach, clothes for his body, heat to warm him in the winter frosts. Ah! you would see the reason of his misery? Strange he does not know enough to supply his wants!

Or suppose him equally ignorant of his intellectual wants. He starves his soul of knowledge. Lean and barren, he seems to be panting for something higher and better, yet unaware both of the nature of this craving and of the proper source of supply. How easily could you tell him that “for the soul to be without knowledge is not good”!

So there is also a moral side to man's nature, and he can never be supremely happy till he becomes morally perfect. He struggles to get out of his moral agony; feels as if he should die if he cannot get out from under this moral load. Who has not felt this loathing of his abominable self, because he did not and would not search after God! Never did any man long for food or water more intensely than the man who suffers himself to attend to the inner voice of his moral being, and thirsts after God.

**6.** Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst, for when they cry unto God to be filled, He will fill them. Let them cry unto God for bread and water; does He not hear their cry? Ah, verily, — He hears the young ravens when they cry, and the young lions when they roar and suffer hunger; and the infant voices of His intelligent creation are not less sure to come up into His ear. Does He not love to supply these wants which grow out of the nature He gave them? Indeed He does. He spread out the fair earth and its rich fields of lovely green. He meant to fill the earth with supplies for man and beast, yea, for every living thing.

In like manner, of the mental wants of His intelligent creatures. He loves to meet these with open hand; loves to excite the spirit of inquiry and then supply to us the means of gratification. The things we need to know He loves to teach us.

But our moral and spiritual wants, He is infinitely more ready to supply. Does not your inner heart say, Verily, this must be so? It is so. No sooner does the soul go forth after God, than He is near — ineffably near. It is wonderful to see how soon God is found when once the soul begins in true earnest to inquire after Him. Is it not striking that God should so love to reveal Himself, and should take such pains to insinuate Himself into our confidence, and, as it were, work Himself into universal communion and contact with our whole souls, so as to fill every moral want of our being? In view of this desire and effort on His part, and in view also of the means provided and promised for this result, we can see why God should command us to “be filled with the Spirit”. Such infinite supplies provided, and such earnest desire manifested on the part of God to have us appropriate these supplies to their utmost extent; — it is as if an ocean of water were suspended above our heads, and we have only to lift the valve and let down these ocean waters upon our needy souls. There is the

promise, let down like a silken cord; what have we to do but to take hold of it and pull down infinite blessings!

**7.** Until man feels his spiritual wants, he will resist all attempts you may make to bring him to God. Hence the necessity of touching the mainspring of danger, — of arousing his fears, and developing his moral sensibility. Hence the need of appeals to his conscience and to his sense of danger. Until you can make his moral nature sensitive, and rouse up his dark and dead soul to moral feelings, there is no hope for him. But when you can touch this side of his nature, and quicken him to feeling, and even to agony, under the lash of conscience, and make him really appreciate his wants, then he begins to feel his wants, and to ask how they can be met and supplied. This is the true secret of promoting revivals. You must go around among these dark, insensible minds, and pour in light upon this side of their nature. You must wake them up to earnest thought — you must rouse up the man's conscience and soul till he shall cry out after God and His salvation.

I always have strong hopes of students; for although they sometimes get wise in their own conceits, and sometimes render themselves ridiculous by their low ambition, yet, taken as a class, there is great hope of them. If suitable means are used, very many of them will be converted. Probably no class of students ever passed through college, the right means of instruction and influence being used with them, without deeply feeling the power of truth, and many of them becoming converted. They must, almost of necessity, feel every blow that is struck; every truth, brought home clearly through their intelligence upon their conscience, wakens a response, and impels the soul to cry out after God. Hence I have strong hopes of you. Yet many of you, I know, are not now converted. God grant you may be soon! I hope the hearts of this Christian people will reach your case in strong effectual prayer. You can indeed resist every effort made to save you — if you will; you can reject Christ, however earnest His entreaties or tender His loving kindness; but you cannot change your nature so that it shall be happy in rebellion against God and His truth; you cannot hush the rebukes of an abused conscience forever; these wants of your inner being must be met, or what will become of you? Your bodily wants will soon cease; and you need not care much therefore for them. Your intellectual pleasures, also, must ere long come to an end; for how can they pass over

with you into the realm of outer darkness, where are weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! Doubtless that is a state not of light, and truth, and joy in pursuit of knowledge; but of delusions, and errors, and of knowledge agonizing its possessor with keenest pangs for ever and ever: I do not believe sinners will have any intellectual pleasure in hell. It cannot be possible that they will enjoy any knowledge they will have there, or any means of attaining knowledge. The very idea is precluded by the relations that conscience must sustain to everything they know. All possible knowledge must have some bearing upon God, duty, and their moral relations, and hence must serve only to harrow up their sensibilities with keenest anguish. Oh, how will they gnash their teeth and gnaw their tongues in direst woe forever! "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked!" More and more deeply dissatisfied to all eternity! Execrating and cursing their insane selves for the madness of rejecting God and His gospel when they might have had both, now it only remains for them to wail in bitterness and anguish, lifting up their unavailing cries, to which the thunders of Jehovah's curse respond in everlasting echoes, "Woe to the wicked; it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him".

O sinner, will you yet press on into the very jaws of such a hell!

# VARIETY IN THE SERVICE OFFERED TO GOD

“For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please Me, and take hold of My covenant; even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.” Isaiah 56:4-7

Among the people who profess to serve God are three distinct classes, distinguishable by obvious characteristics. It will be my present object to point out these classes and their distinctive marks.

## I. THE FIRST CLASS ARE BOND-SERVANTS;

Persons whose ruling motive in all they do is fear. The service they render is not natural, but constrained. Usually they have a good deal of conviction and an unusual degree of light on religious subjects. They know what sin is and cannot indulge in it without conviction of wrong doing. They have so much sense of religious obligation that they dare not neglect God, but are forced to think often and much of their relations to Him and of His relations to them. Their own personal guilt and danger are often before their minds. It is not uncommon for such persons to dream fearful dreams, their minds being haunted even in sleep by the strong impression that they are wrong and in peril. This fear underlies all their religion. Consequently it makes them strict in what they call their religious duties. And when their

fears are specially active they will be specially careful in their business transactions as well as in all their religious duties.

When their convictions of sin and their fears of danger subside, their religious duties are relatively neglected and they become also less strict in their business affairs.

Another mark is that their hope of heaven is more or less strong according as they find themselves more or less strict in their religious duties, and on the other hand is more or less weak according as they indulge their appetites more and are less thorough in their devotions. With the decline of hope comes a revival of fear; and following this, fresh efforts to bring up in the line of duties and strictness. When this is pretty well brought up, hope revives again, the spirit of duty-doing flags; appetite conquers; then comes awful fear again; and so the wheel revolves, bringing up each development in its turn, in one perpetual round.

Again, these persons have no true joy in the service they render to God. It is impossible they should have because their service has no *love* in it. They have no sympathy or interest in the great ends God has in view, and they cannot have, so long as their hearts are supremely selfish. God chooses for His great end the highest happiness He can produce. If they sympathized with His great end, they would be benevolent. But in order to this, the very fundamental things in their character must be changed.

As they have no interest in God's great end, so have they none in the means He would have them use to promote this end. The thing that supremely interests them is to *build up a hope*. Hence if they can *do* a great deal, they obtain a self-righteous satisfaction and a feeling that now they are "engaged" and are doing their duty.

In proportion as they can silence their fears they get more hope and hence they value everything that obviates their fears. They lay the greatest stress upon a "good hope," valuing nothing else in any wise so much. Their hope costs them a great deal. They had to work hard to get it and they have hard and constant trouble to *keep* it. It needs a deal of nursing, so much that this becomes an important part of their business for life.

In seasons of great fear, they are prone to look at others and comparing themselves with others, they manage to bolster up their hope.

They keep up a sort of warfare against temptation, but their warfare is never *triumphant*. They find comfort only as they assume that none can gain much victory over sin and temptation in the present life, and as they compare themselves with others.

If they do anything for benevolent objects, fear underlies it all. They fear they shall not be prospered and that the judgments of God will be upon them. They give, under the hope they shall escape God's frown thereby.

They refrain from follies and crimes only for the same reason. Fear underlies all, their nervous temperament is greatly excited by their fears and this becomes the main-spring of all their activities. If you hear them pray or talk, you can at once read their character. They will surely show that fear and hope are the main-springs of their life; that all they do is done, and all they refrain from doing is abstained from because of its bearing on their hopes and their fears. Their fear may embrace various objects; it may be fear of final ruin, or fear of losing reputation or hope.

Again, all their religious works are performed with a sense of drudgery and pain. If they were to speak right out what they think, they would say, religion is a very expensive thing to us. It costs us a great deal of painful self-denial. They would say as a young girl said to me once about her religion. Not long since three young girls came together to see me at my room. The first told me she had got religion. I saw she was gay and dressy, and therefore said to her; "is it not a pity that at your age you should be obliged to become religious and lose all the pleasures this world can give? If you only knew you should not die too soon, would not you enjoy it much better to live as you please, unrestrained by religious obligations?" Yes, said she, if I had only known I should not die, it would no doubt have been pleasant for me to enjoy the world. The second of the three sympathized with her, saying, if she could only have been sure of not dying before she was ready it would have been pleasant to enjoy more of the world. But the third looked greatly surprised, and then grieved and began to weep. It would be no pleasure, she said, to her to have all this world could give, she could not enjoy it, because *it would grieve the Savior*. What! said I, would you not like to have the world if you could? No; no: all I want is to please my Savior. I could enjoy nothing unless it should be pleasing to Him. Then I had no occasion to tell the first two they had no religion. The third had

answered every question so warmly from her heart and so impressively through her tears, that they needed no other testimony to show them that they had not begun to serve God at all yet.

Many are not aware that the underlying influence in all their religion, is fear. This works deep in their mind; yet they do not analyze their own mental states and go deep even to the core. They really rely much more on public sentiment as to the grounds of a hope, than on any thorough knowledge of what faith is or holiness; as you may see by the interest they feel in noticing what others do for a good hope. What others do for a religion they too strive to do, so as not to fall below the public standard. Others may think them very pious; but at the very moment while others are applauding, they are very uncomfortable, considered in reference to their own state of mind, besides exerting a very uncomfortable influence on others.

Now it is easy to see that all this is really *self-service*; not any service rendered to God. To this kind of service, God promises no reward. However deep, earnest, constant and uniform it may be, there is nothing in it for God to reward.

## II. THE NEXT CLASS MAY BE CALLED MERCENARIES

They differ constitutionally from the first class; inasmuch as these serve for reward: those, to escape punishment: these act under the influence of hope; those of fear. This second class have little fear and little conscience. The motive power in their minds is the idea of *profit*. Religion is respectable, especially in a place like this. Indeed, in most places there is a kind of respectability attached to religion which everybody apprehends. Some are very much influenced by this consideration. I remember that about the only time I ever had the observance of the Sabbath urged upon me, it was done by a young man who told me it would give me respectability in society. Look all round you, said he; you will see that the most respectable people go to meeting. It will be much to your profit to associate with them. It will secure you a place in their confidence. Men will employ you. Any slave holder will pay extra for a pious slave. So in



every community, attendance on religious worship is profitable, It will secure the confidence of teachers, neighbors, employers; will ensure you better credit and a fairer reputation; will elevate you in society, especially if you go to a respectable church and associate with respectable people. Sabbath keeping is pleasant, and in many respects agreeable.

So it is respectable to give to charitable objects. Many say they never lose anything by giving moderately to charitable objects. They get more patronage in their own business. If they help build churches, they find it pays well. Hence there are the best of reasons for such donations.

In the same manner, *prayer* is profitable. It will secure the Divine direction in your business, and who cannot afford to pay well for such counsel? In short, all religious duties *pay well*. This is the reason why mercenary Christians perform them. This love of the *profit* underlies all their religious duties. They take the same kind of interest in religion that men do in profitable business. God is good, say they, and hence will be a good paymaster. Said a man to me who was at the point of death, "I am prepared to die, I think; I don't know that I have ever done anything wrong. I have always been to meeting of a Sabbath; I am sure I have always been in my place in the sanctuary." Many who cannot say so much as this think they have done some good to off-set whatever evil they may have done; and since the Lord is not a hard but a generous master, they feel quite confident that He will balance the books in their favor.

This class of persons, as I have said, do not serve God from fear, but from hope. They go into it as a good and a paying business. They do not toil hard, for they don't suppose it necessary, and their toil does not come hard to them, because they expect a handsome reward for it. They work cheerfully as those who are driving a good business. Their religion is not a yoke of bondage. They call it "gospel liberty." They will be all the more earnest and zealous, by how much the stronger are their hope and expectation of eternal life. They are laying up treasure in heaven, why should they not be cheerful and hopeful? They make reward their end; mistake presumption for faith; the love of gain for the love of God. It does not lie before their minds as the love of gain, yet it *is* so, none the less truly.

Such are only *mercenaries*. They serve not God but self.

### III. THE THIRD AND ONLY ACCEPTABLE CLASS OF SERVANTS ARE DESCRIBED IN OUR TEXT

God says of them, “They do the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant. They join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord and to be His servants.”

If we trace back the history of this class, we shall find that they once lived in sin; that they became awake to their guilt and convinced of their sin; were led to consider the character of God, the nature and spirit of His law; that they became interested in these objects, so that although they commenced their inquiries under convictions of danger and peril, yet they found themselves interested in God’s character; they saw the fitness and excellence of His law and the glory of His gospel, and though they may be quite unable to tell when or where they embraced this gospel and committed themselves to its principles, yet this they know — that they became intensely interested in God, in Christ, and in the entire scheme of the gospel. They are not thinking now about their hope, but about Christ’s work, His great mission; its success and their own responsibilities in promoting it. Look into the heart of one of these Christians; he seems to have dropped all fear, to have forgotten himself; he has ceased to pray much or chiefly for himself; has given himself up to a deep sympathy with the whole movement. When he comes to look within to the state of his inner impulses, he thinks this must be true religion; yet very possibly he had been in this state a long time before he saw it. He started selfishly, but lost his selfishness before the wonderful cross of the Savior! He dropped it there, when he saw and believed the love that God hath toward us. Then and thenceforward his religion became entirely spontaneous. He gave himself up to prayer for others. Neither hope nor fear is uppermost in his mind; but the love of God and the love of man — these are quite first and uppermost in all the inner workings of his mind. All his religion is spontaneous. He loves his work because he is unified with Christ in His great enterprise and in the all-controlling benevolence of His heart.

Observe also that although this class do not seek hope, yet they have it all the more. They have it the more because they do not seek it. It comes to them by a natural law. It springs up unconsciously and uncalled for as

they find themselves drawn into deeper sympathy with Christ and with holiness, and as they see without an effort that their souls are breathing the spirit of Christ and are already ripe for the benevolent employments of the heavenly state. They cannot perhaps remember the last time they prayed they might get to heaven; but they know they have been nerved day by day to pray that they may be strong in God to do every duty and bear all suffering for His name.

## REMARKS

**1.** The hope that needs nursing is a snare of death. If you are compelled to take pains to nurse your hope and take pains to keep it alive, rely on what I say, it is a snare of death to your soul.

**2.** Many as soon as they come to lose their hope are zealous in religion, till they get it back; then their zeal and effort decline. I have lately met with a painful case, in illustration of this. A man called on me as an old acquaintance, so changed however that I could not recognize him at all. He had long been a professed Christian, but long too had he been the veriest slave to intoxicating drink. I never shall forget the impression of a ruined man which his whole appearance made on my mind. He began to relate his recent exercises and said, "I think I have now found the Savior, but I had almost lost my soul because I have been spending this whole winter in trying to regain my lost hope. What a snare that old hope has been to me! It had well nigh ruined me by preventing me from coming to my Savior. My life for many long years has been full of wretchedness. There has been scarce a night for years when the drink has been out of me but I have been in dreadful horror and almost in utter despair. This past winter my mind has been thoroughly aroused to fly for refuge to Christ, yet as I said, I begun with vain efforts to get back my old hope. At last I gave up that pursuit and thought I might better try to find Christ. Through His great mercy, I trust I have found Him."

So, many try to get back an old and perished hope. It would be both easier and safer for them to try to find Christ.

**3.** Sinners who are here yet unconverted can see the distinction I have made. You can see that the first two classes are not truly religious, but are

deeply deluded. You can see what kind of people they are and how they came into such delusions. Some of them are in the seventh of Romans, and never have any other or better Christian experience than that. Said a merchant to me, "I have just lost a brother-in-law by death and I think his history may be of use to you as a warning to others. He was remarkably fond of show, greedy of gain, and loved money as he loved his own soul, and withal was exceedingly fond of making a parade of his wealth; yet he always found it for his interest to be very religious and to do a great deal of religious duty. I saw him when he was at the point of death and said to him — 'are you really prepared to die?' He replied, 'Yes, no doubt of it. I take this view of the case. If there is a Savior I have got Him, for I have always done all my religious duties; and on the other hand, if there is no Savior, there is no hell and I am safe.' But even now, on the verge of the grave, he was as grasping for money as man could be. Money had all his heart. His faith was mere presumption; a most terrible and fatal mistake! His ruling spirit was a greedy, grasping spirit, and this led him to grasp the rewards of religion among the rest. He laid hold of Christ, in the sense in which he did so at all, only for the sake of future salvation. He wanted to get gain, and since this might be a good investment, lying over in the future state, where he had laid up no other possessions, he thought it wise to lay up a store of religious merit by means of some external duty-doing. If heaven had really been *on sale*, his plan might have been successful, that is, if it had been in the market at his price!"

And now, my hearers, let this case and the great truth which underlies it be made thoroughly practical to each heart. Let each one ask himself — Have I done all my religious duties for reward? Have I been nothing better than a mercenary in God's service? Have I studied only respectability, and done my religious duties only for the sake of my reputation? I charge my soul before God to answer these questions in all truth and honesty. What is the fact in regard to my religious life? Have I thoroughly given myself away to Christ? Have I embarked everything in this great service? How is it with you, my brother — with you, my sister?

I have been speaking of the third class who are truly religious and who regard themselves as humble followers of Christ; but some of you belong to a class who do not think themselves religious. Will you set yourselves to find the place where you do belong? Consider that the first two classes

whom I have described have no reward whatever. You can see for yourselves that they are not honestly serving God as His true servants. Settle it therefore in your minds that you do not want such a religion. Those who are not seeking reward, but who serve God from love are the only true Christians and are all the more sure of reward by how much the less selfishly they seek it. Nay more, they have their reward here as they go along, and cannot help having it, in their very hearts as well as through the Divine favor, because they really give up their souls to benevolence as God does. Benevolence is its own reward, and would be reward enough even if there were no God, or if God should see fit not to superadd His blessing. But God will superadd His blessing, as truly as He is good.

Hence none but the real Christian makes any real profit from his religion. And he gets his profit not because he seeks it in a mercenary spirit, but because he gives himself up to doing the will of God with all his heart, and leaves the whole question of profit and reward with his Lord and Master.

# THE WAYS OF SIN HARD; OF HOLINESS, PLEASANT

The following passages present the subject on which I propose to speak.

*“The way of transgressors is hard.” — Proverbs 13:15*

*“It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” — Acts 9:5*

*“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. ‘There is no peace,’ said my God, ‘to the wicked.’  
— Isaiah 57:20, 21*

*“Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden,  
and I will give you rest.” — Matthew 11:29-30*

*“And His commandments are not grievous.” — 1 John 5:3*

*“Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”  
— Proverbs 3:17*

You will at once perceive the drink and meaning of these passages, many of which are found in all parts of the Bible. Their general doctrine is that the ways of sin are full of trouble, but that the ways of holiness are pleasant and peaceful. It will be my present object to illustrate this doctrine; to show that it must of necessity be true; and hence that whatever claims to be true religion and yet dissents from this doctrine cannot be true.

To compass these ends I must,

- I. ENQUIRE WHAT TRUE RELIGION IS;**
- II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN IT;**
- III. WHAT SIN IS;**
- IV. WHAT A LIFE OF SIN IMPLIES;**
- V. SHOW THAT RELIGION IS NATURALLY EASY AND DELIGHTFUL;**

## VI. THAT ON THE CONTRARY A COURSE OF SIN IS AND MUST BE, HARD, OPPRESSIVE, DELUSIVE AND SELF-RUINOUS.

### I. WHAT IS TRUE RELIGION?

To say all in a word, it is true devotion of heart and life to God. It supposes that instead of living to yourself, you live to God. You seek to consecrate all your powers to His service only. According to the Bible, true religion is supreme love to God, and equal, impartial love to man. It is not a state of passive emotion, but of supreme devotion to God. It manifests itself in good will to all beings, and in a voluntary committal of all our powers to God and to the good of all His creatures, so far as they become known to us.

### II. TRUE RELIGION IMPLIES MANY THINGS

In all the case of all sinners it must imply *repentance* — the turning of the heart away from all iniquity, and the utter rejection of all sin. This must be the first great step from sin to holiness.

It also must imply confidence in God and in His general veracity. When the heart turns round to become God's friend, it must confide in Him as good and as truthful.

There will also be a state of warm and lively confidence in Jesus Christ, embracing all those points in which He reveals Himself as our Savior from sin and condemnation.

There will also be a state of universal acquiescence in the providence of God. Believing in the fact that God rules in nature over all the external and internal worlds, the mind accepts this fact with joy and with trust. The mind being in a state of trust towards God and of true devotion to His will, this acquiescence in His general providence sits easy and is natural. Hence there will be an earnest sympathy with God in all His ways.

### III. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE MUST ENQUIRE, WHAT IS SIN?

Sin is devotion to self. Sin puts self in the place of God as the supreme object of regard and affection. It values nothing except as related to self. It makes self-gratification its first law.

Of course this implies opposition to God and stubborn impenitence. The man cleaves pertinaciously to self, and is ready to sacrifice everything else to promote selfish ends. He is utterly distrustful of God, and has no sympathy with His character, government and ways.

### IV. WHAT A LIFE OF SIN IMPLIES;

Sinning, unrestrained by gospel grace, and made the law of life as it always is in the unrenewed soul, will of course imply a supreme devotion to some forms of selfish gratification. The man aims to provide for himself. His passions and appetites may be more or less elevated; his choice among numerous modes of self-gratification is a matter of taste and training; but he may always be known by the fact that whatever his heart craves he gives himself up to obtain and enjoy. The sum of the whole matter is that his soul is *selfish*.

### V. SHOW THAT RELIGION IS NATURALLY EASY AND DELIGHTFUL;

Religion is altogether a natural state of mind, easy, peace-giving and delightful. Its exercises are in entire accord and with our constitutional nature and with the nature and relations of things. In a religious state of mind, man is in harmony with himself. Each function of his active powers performs its appropriate work, without friction and irritation. The affirmations of reason and the monitions of conscience are heard with quiet joy and are duly honored. The legitimate demands of animal nature are met, and the soul is not thereby brought into bondage. The social law of his nature finds ample scope in the new and glorious field of communion with



the Father and with the Son Jesus Christ. A truly religious man is in harmony with God and with all His manifestations. He loves the law; he loves the gospel. Seeing God in all the ways of His providence he rejoices to know that here too is the land of his Father, doing all things well. Thus coming into contact with God in every point, and being at peace and in harmony with all God is and does, how can he be otherwise than blessed?

By the same natural law, his relations towards his fellow beings are all easy and naturally peaceful. He accords to them, to each and to all, — their rights, and does it with real gratification. He enjoys seeing and making them happy. Hence he does not come into collision with them, as a selfish man is likely to, everyday. In reference to them also, his own mind feels self-respect, instead of being harassed with self-reproaches. Thus he finds himself at peace with all the universe of created beings, and each one, as he becomes known, heightens the peace and joy of his soul. His mind works in harmony with all true motives; conscience smiles on his soul all along his way. It is a sunny way; for God sheds the light of His face upon it; all holy beings shine and smile upon it. This representation is true not occasionally and under special circumstances only, but necessarily and always where true piety prevails.

Old bad habits are molded and yielded as soon as the will and conscience come fully under the power of this law of love to God and man. Consequently, the tone of his mind becomes more and more easy and flowing, as the selfishness that chafes and irritates is subdued and rooted out. His bosom becomes the natural home of peace and joy, intruders and disturbers being thrust out.

The Bible represents this course as like the shining light of morning, which, from the faintest streaks, shineth more and more unto the perfect day. This is its natural law. Joy and peace must advance with progress in obedience and self-subjugation to God's will. This state must be intensely delightful because all the work in which God calls the Christian to engage is pleasant, and just what he most of all loves. These are not the labors of a slave, but of a free man, working for an object, with a heart and therefore "*with a will.*" He makes God's glory his own end, the very thing in which he chiefly delights. Hence all he has to do is to promote his own highest interests, for he has identified his own highest interests with God's honor.

He has a glorious fellowship. No longer in universal warfare with God, and all the good in heaven and in earth, he is at peace with all, and in most refreshing sympathy. His enemies now are not the good and the mighty, but the bad and the weak. God is on his side, and his friends have God on their side. Against him are the world, the flesh and the devil; but *for* him are friends, more and mightier, — God, his angels, and all the good in earth or heaven. Well and fitly does the Bible speak of him as “more than a conqueror through Him who has loved us.”

The scriptures do not deny that the good man has conflicts. No, they really recognize this fact; but they provide for him all the armor he wants; and pledge him the strong aid of the Almighty God besides.

I am speaking now of a state of true religion, not of legality. Many seem to misunderstand this subject. They talk as if this world must be dull and comfortless, and as if God had made it as bad as He well could. But this is a most blasphemous representation. When the Bible speaks of the present state as a warfare, it always represents the believing soul as gaining victories through Jesus Christ, his Lord. He conquers through abounding grace, and thus finds peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

On the contrary a course of sin is a hard state. The way of transgressors, we have the best authority for saying, is hard. It is all unnatural, in the sense of a violation of the laws of our being. It deranges and tramples down each and every one of these laws. The mind conflicts with itself and wars perfectly against its own judgment and conscience. It also wars upon its own best interests; and not least, against the *truth*. God made the human mind to move in harmony with truth. But sin is a state of eternal antagonism against truth, and therefore must inevitably be one of disquiet and wretchedness.

This state of sin is necessarily one of warfare with all the wicked, for selfish men are by natural law at loggerheads with each other. Each man, having a supremely selfish interest to maintain, finds himself thoroughly in conflict with every other supremely selfish man. Notice their locks and bolts and bars. See how they build up their walls of protection against each other. The laws they make against all forms of selfish aggression upon property and the care they manifest to put everything in writing, show that they have no confidence in wicked men as generally honest. Surely

God does not make men to devour each other like beasts of prey. Nor did He make man to live like the swine, regarding the indulgence of his appetites and passions as his chief concern. Surely such a course of living must be for man, such as he is made, most unnatural.

Sin is, of course, a constant warfare against God and against all the interests of God's great family and kingdom.

I said it was a state of *universal* warfare. And truly there is not a being, not a creature under heaven, against whom the sinner is not at war. He fights every man, every beast. He would lay the whole universe under contribution to minister to his own selfish enjoyment. He would lay his commands on God if he could. If he resorts to prayer instead of command, it is only because he finds he cannot command to any purpose. He prays only in hope thereby to make God his own servant. He cares no more for God than for the devil, only as His aid may be of more value to himself. If he could, how soon would he engross the universe to make it subservient to his own selfish ends! Gladly would he command and appropriate all the fishes of the sea and the cattle of a thousand hills. If it might subserve his own selfish ends, he would blot out the sun in the heavens, little caring how many equally good with himself were thereby doomed to eternal darkness. But you say — "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" "I never thought of doing such things!" Stay! Let me tell you the only reason why you have not. It is only because you have never supposed you *could*. Just as you have never thought of being king of England or President of the United States; yet if the way were open and you could reach either of these summits or power by a little sacrifice of your conscience, would you not do it? Certainly you would! Who would trust you to be disinterested and to act according to a sound conscience? No man. But what have you not done? A man who would do a little meanness for a sixpence would do a great villainy for a kingdom. A man who would quibble for a cent would do more than quibble for governmental office and patronage.

Thus sin throws everything into utter and interminable disorder. It is war, *war*, WAR on all interests — against God and against all created beings! Of course, there can be no rest to the guilty soul, day or night. Forcefully does the Bible say of the wicked — "He is like the troubled sea when it

cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Did you ever stand on the shore of the sea and look down upon its restless waters, as they rolled up masses of mud and filth, boiling and surging perpetually? I have, and as I looked I thought of this striking and beautiful passage, and have sighed to think how truthful its representations are.

Sin is a constant failure. The sinner never can realize his own expectations. You find it so, and the more as you advance the farther in your career. Some of you are yet young and have not yet had so much bitter experience of disappointment as you are destined to have if you still press on in your career of sin. Now you dance along on the top waves of pleasure; yet you must confess you have already seen one bubble burst after another, just at the moment when you thought you had almost seized a treasure. But you still expect to catch the most of them and to find ample enjoyment yet in sin. Alas, you need not hope to outdo all the sinners who have gone before you! You need not flatter yourself you shall yet baffle the Almighty and disprove His fearful threats against the sinner!

These older men and women; have they found their fill of joy in sin? Oh no. Your desire has enlarged itself as hell and is never satisfied. The more you get, the more you fail in your purpose as to real happiness. You are working against all the relations in which you are placed. The whole of your wicked selfish life is a struggle for vanity, and must therefore, inevitably, prove a failure. John Jacob Astor said, near the close of his life, after he had amassed millions — “My life has been a perfect failure.” Perhaps few men have meant more by these words than he. Indeed the more you think you get, the more you make yourself wretched. With great wealth comes great care and trouble. Solid happiness is not there.

Political ambition is a great snare to the soul. A young student says, “I will study law and become a statesman.” Suppose you try and suppose you succeed even to your highest expectations. By incessant scheming and unwearied effort you get up step by step, till you become a member of the State Legislature, and at last, of Congress. What now? Pause and ask how much you have really gained in the line of the happiness you are so earnestly seeking. Are you a whit more happy than when you had your first election and were made a constable? Not at all more. The higher you ascend, the more you must become the tool of a party, and consequently

the more really degraded you must be. You are *after honor*. Think of that — after honor! Look at the career and final end of Daniel Webster! Who ever struggled harder to climb the steep of official preferment than he! Yet he is dead; and now it comes to this that the greatest and the best thing which can be said of his commendation is that he died a Christian! There seems to be no point which his eulogists are more anxious to make out than this; with how much difficulty, I need not stop to say.

But, did he live a happy life? I am not aware that anybody claims this for him. And how, of Clay and Calhoun? Does any man claim that they were happy men while they lived? No. Every intelligent man knows the contrary. Webster ran away from religious life and gave himself up to political aspirations; but what is the result after all? There is no higher or better thing sought to be proved of him than that he died a Christian. Andrew Jackson retired from the Presidency and made profession of religion. This was the acme of his honor. Nothing else do his eulogists seize upon with so much interest after his death. And verily, “the Christian is the highest style of man.” I was once struck with the remark made by the President of a college. He said he should honor his station and do nothing to its discredit. I thought then, “Is this true honor?” Is this a correct principle? Is the honor of being President of a college to be one moment compared with the honor of being a Christian, a son and an heir of God? But to pass by this as comparatively nothing and to speak of the honor of a President’s station as if this were to be made law in morals and propriety, is surely anything but reasonable.

A course of sin is a course of constant failure to realize present expectations. Sinners are always aiming at what they never attain. With unwearied diligence they seek happiness, but evermore in those directions where it is not to be found. Their life is made up of constant lusting, sometimes for one thing, sometimes for another. Even the young who have least experience in the disappointments of earth, are fully aware, whenever they allow themselves to think, that their pursuits of real good are futile. The entire course of sin is hard work and poor pay, and poor keeping besides; and to make the case yet worse, incessant rebukes from his conscience and his better judgment, all his best friends. It must be seen that this is a bad case.

I have said that sin is an unnatural state. But you will perhaps say to me, I find it very natural for me to sin.

What do you mean by that? I am aware that, if you set your heart upon selfish good, it may be very natural, in one sense, for you to use means to secure it. Yet it is utterly impossible that this should be a natural course in reference to your own constitution, or to your relations to God, to man, or to your own conscience.

## REMARKS

**1.** It is easy to see why the Bible always represents sinners as being *fools*. “Madness is in their hearts while they live.” “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.” Such is its language; and the reason of it we can realize in their vain and foolish labor. Solomon set his heart to exhaust every fountain of earthly good. No man can hope to have better facilities for the work than he, or more ample resources. He left on record the results of all his experiments. One word tells the story: “*Vanity!*” “Vanity of vanities; — all is vanity!” It was not through any failure of means for making a fair trial: it was a *necessary* failure; a failure founded in the nature of things; in the utter lack of adaptation in such objects, so sought, to satisfy a being so constituted. Man’s nature cannot be altered. His relations as a subject of God’s government, and as a member of society, are changeless. Hence, if he gives himself up to selfishness, he defeats himself, and only all the more certainly by how much the more ample his resources and elevated his position. The higher he stands, the more he interferes with other interests, and the more palpably he violates the laws of social order.

**2.** This is not saying that the world has no good in it, provided it be used as it should be. I will not disparage the pleasures of this world, nor anything else God has made. God has not put creatures here to starve them to earthly good. The failure grows wholly out of *abuse*. Let a man of Solomon’s means take an opposite course from his; fall directly and fully in with God’s great plan; set himself to do all the good he can; and he will enjoy everything. The very flowers of his garden, which before rebuked his selfish heart, will now smile upon him and regale him with their fragrance. The fact is, a man may enjoy any virtuous course of life, in any sphere of

activity, only let him live for God, and serve his generation according to God's will. Take any of the professions or pursuits in common life — suppose the young man enters life as a lawyer, and devotes all his powers to doing the highest general welfare. He must succeed. People will push him forward, step after step; they will put him up because they, as a public, have interests to be served, and they know that he is the man to be trusted to serve them. They see he is not ambitious. This lawyer need not violate his conscience. He rises as fast as any man need to, without. He lives in peace with his own conscience, and dying, he can lie down in peace. His experience presents a case of one who uses the world as not abusing it. He does not live so that after his death, the living tax their wits to the utmost to persuade themselves that he has not gone down straight to hell. Every man spontaneously says, *he* has gone to his heavenly reward.

**3.** We see that legalists and formalists labor under a great delusion. They claim to be serving God, but they find His service intolerably hard. I must, he says, I *must* do this and I *must* do that. O, it is a hard service! So many meetings — how can he stand it? So much to be done in order to be on good terms with his conscience, and to keep up a good Christian name; what can he do? Now suppose this legalist had a great deal more of this same religion; suppose his time were filled up with it from early morn till the hour of sleep — nothing but meetings and religious duties; and all felt to be intolerably hard; would this become the life and bliss of his soul, or its misery? Would this be heaven, or hell? Now, is it not obvious that such a religion is altogether a delusion?

**4.** These legal and formal religionists are a great stumbling block to the church and to the world. They misrepresent religion and scandalize it before both saints and sinners. How remarkable is the fact that they introduce a new sort of phraseology into Christian experience, in which you hear continually of burdens, trials, crosses; but never, as in the scriptures, of “joys that pass all understand,” and “peace as a river,” and “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.”

**5.** It is easy to see why sinners think religion must conflict with their present happiness. It is because they see so little of the genuine article, and so much of the counterfeit. It is rare, for example, that they see a mother

whose mild, Christian influence throws a heavenly charm over the entire circle of her family and of the society in which she moves. But on the other hand, you find those whose piety is hard, whose souls are in bondage, who go to prayer meeting full of complaints, and who, regarding religion as all of grace, yet assume that this grace is almost unattainable; that God is exceedingly slow to grant it; who in fact will tell you, that since the fall of mere man has been able, with all the grace He could get or God could give, to obey the whole law, but must daily break it in thought, word and deed. How different is this from the Bible. This affirms that “His commandments are not grievous.” This promises, “with every temptation, to provide a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” According to the Bible, it is the sinner’s life which is hard; but the Christian life is as the shining light, a walking with God, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is indeed represented as a warfare; yet one, which through grace, may be a simple succession of victories and triumphs. It is no doubt true that those who are not converted until they have formed strong habits of vicious indulgence, must have conflicts before they can eradicate and subdue their propensities to sin; but if they take hold of promised grace as they may, they shall go on from strength to strength. As faithful Christians grow older, they usually find greater peace. They know that Christ will bruise Satan under their feet shortly, and the flesh also. At worst, their warfare is not to be compared with that of the sinner. See the sinner smitten of affliction — the hand of God heavy upon him — wife or husband low in death, where can he go for refuge? Alas! there is no hand to bind up his wounds! He cannot look to God — he has no Savior!

But the Christian, smitten of affliction, flies to his Savior’s bosom. Does his property “take wings?” Let it go; his chief treasures are ensured in heaven. Losses cannot crush him as they do the sinner. Often you see him greatly joyful under trials so severe as might drive a sinner to distraction.

Sometimes the sinner throws a loose rein on his selfishness, and allows himself in little dishonesties in business. Soon he finds himself uneasy, suspected, and withal, troubled in conscience. A hard time has he, when his old friends begin to say in under tones, “It is best to look out for him; he may possibly be an honest man, but we had better look sharp.” Soon there comes down upon him a chilling suspension of confidence, and if he never did before, he does now find that the way of the transgressor is hard.



How often we see sinners afraid of God's hand in providence. "A dreadful sound is in his ears." There is a fearful thunder-storm abroad; the cold chills run over him; dread horrors fill his soul; to whom can he fly for refuge? Ah! he knows nothing of that peace, which, even amid such scenes, the true Christian enjoys!

Compare the sinner with the Christian under the sudden rush of great calamity. There was Job, a venerable Christian. He staggered a moment under the dreadful pressure of so many and so heavy afflictions; yet see how his soul rallied and still held on trustfully to the arm of the Lord. A worldly man, so tempted, would no doubt have cursed God and died! But having true faith, the afflicted soul will say, "God knows why this comes upon me. Surely I can trust all my case in His hands. Sickness and death cannot come otherwise than by His permission."

The great peace which reposes at the bottom of the Christian's mind under the pressure of great affliction is most admirable, and often really sublime. Property, health, friends, are swept away; yet their anchor lies deep among the great rocks of Jehovah's attributes, and the mighty ship holds steady amid the storm. Like a vessel whose great keel lies so low in the deep waters, that it heeds not the ruffled surface of the sea, so his soul reposes deeply in God, and knows little of the storms that howl or the waves that dash upon the surface. When you thought to find him walking his room in anguish, you are surprised to find him sleeping peacefully as a babe on its mother's bosom. Angels fan him with their wings, and the spirit of faith and promise soothes his brow.

Many forget that sin is in any respect a warfare and a conflict. If they could only *be safe* in sin, they think all would be well. Hence they speak only of the *danger*, not of the wrong and wickedness of a life of sin. How great is their mistake! Let it never be granted, that a life of sin, in its best estate, is better than holiness in its place, even for its present results. By the necessary laws of mind, so long as the mind acts benevolently, and is right towards God, the present results will be pleasant, and even blessed. Hence, sinners need not assume that in becoming Christians, they forego the pleasures of life and submit to the bitterness of religion! They need not think of religion as they do of the surgeon's amputating knife; as if religion were little else but sacrifice, hard labor, a hard life and poor pay at that.

Sinners have their trials too, as well as Christians; but without those precious consolations. But in comparison with each other, a sinner and a Christian — take each from the same walks of life, with the same culture, and the same nervous constitution — you see the Christian full of sensibility, but cleaving to Christ; tried sorely, yet deeply reposing on the bosom of Jesus. The other is tossed perpetually, yet not comforted; has no resting place — is full of trouble. He cries out, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” But the Christian says — God has prospered me and I have enjoyed all He has given me. Everything has been doubly dear to me because it has been the gift of God. O! he says, my life has been a sunny way. I have indeed been sick, and I have been well; but everything I have received has been good for me, and has worked out good for my soul. The sinner, right over against this, can only say, “I have had a great deal of trouble; all *trouble! trouble!*” You have had some good things? “*Yes, but — but —*” You have had some honors? “*Yes, but — but —*”

Come to the Christian’s couch of death; wipe away the cold sweat, and mark how his face is radiant with joy and peace. He can hardly talk about his trials, so sweetly has he enjoyed them all. Has your time come? “Yes,” and turning away he says, “I am ready to go. May God give me patience to wait all His appointed time till my change come!” When Elder Marks was near death, he was called upon to sign his name. He made the effort, but found himself unable to do it. “Glory to God!” cried he, “I am so near heaven, I cannot even write my own name! Are you not glad? Cannot you all rejoice with me?”

Now go, see the sinner. See how bitter his life has been. He lost his wife, and it nearly killed him. His children died, and where could he go for consolation? “Alas,” said he, “I had prosperity, but it seemed only to curse me. I had health, but I abused it. I had wealth, but it did me no good. Dark, dark! all is dark in the past. All, too, is dark in the present.” Don’t tell him he is about to die — his physician dare not trust it, lest it shock his nerves and destroy all the good effect he hopes to get from his medicines. Be silent as the grave; suppress your tears; turn away from this heart-rending scene. God will soon “drive him away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death.”

It only remains that I ask you why you will go on in this course. You have nothing to gain by sin. Why should you throw away your immortal soul?

# ON QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

*“Quench not the Spirit,” 1 Thessalonians 5:19*

In treating the subject presented in this passage, I shall,

- I. SHOW WHAT IT IS TO QUENCH THE SPIRIT;**
- II. HOW IT IS DONE;**
- III. SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF DOING IT.**

I. The Bible represents the Spirit as giving to the mind both light and heat. It both illumines and impresses; both reveals the truth, and makes it seem real, and hence makes it *effective as truth*, upon the mind. Hence the fitness of the figure which on the day of Pentecost, presented the descending Spirit under the symbol of “cloven tongues like as of fire.” Hence also the figure implied in our text — “Quench not” — as if it were a candle flame, a fire, which might be extinguished. It is the office-work of the Spirit to enlighten the intellect, and at the same time to warm the sensibilities. This is indeed a most remarkable fact, that when the Spirit of God reveals light, it is done in a manner which always warms the sensibility. The mind is quite as conscious of the latter influence upon the sensibilities as of the former upon the intellect. Beyond question, Christians are sometimes conscious of new views of truth, which they rightly attribute to the teaching of the Spirit; but not less clearly are they sometimes conscious of the animating and quickening influences of the Spirit, deeply rousing their sensibilities. Hence no figure can be more apposite than this. To quench this light and heat by counteracting and repelling the Spirit is the thing against which the text exhorts us.

## II. HOW IT IS DONE;

But we must give a more minute attention to this question as to the *manner* in which the Spirit may be quenched.

I have said the Spirit causes the mind both to see and to feel. He convinces of sin. He strongly enforces obligation. The degree of impression made by

the Spirit on the mind of course varies indefinitely, from the very slightest up to the broad and blazing sun-light which almost overwhelms the outward man.

The Spirit may be quenched in many ways.

**1. *By disregarding His teachings.*** When the Spirit reveals truth and urges duty upon the mind, then if the man turns away and refuses to obey, he quenches the Spirit. Often in pressing home truth upon the mind, the Spirit makes the sinner so uneasy, that he says, "I cannot endure this; I am not ready to yield now, and I cannot bear the perpetual urging. I must resist it." It often happens that students are so unhappy under the convicting influence of the Spirit that they declare they will not attend to the subject, but will harden their hearts against this disturbing and annoying influence. Perhaps to help on their purpose of diverting their attention, they will carry their study books into religious meetings, to occupy their minds in something else besides religious truth. Cases of this sort have occurred among us; students have found their studies hindered by intruding thoughts of God and their soul's salvation, and have determined they would not have it so, and consequently have ruled the whole subject out of their mind. Others besides students may do the same thing perhaps for similar reasons; the subject interferes with some cherished pursuit, and they would sooner risk the loss of heaven than bear the interruption of cherished sinful pleasures.

**2. The Spirit is quenched often by the sinner's *refusing obedience when the will of God is distinctly known.*** They see that if they would please God, they must do some particular duty, impressed on their mind so strongly they cannot doubt as to the Divine will; but they refuse to do it. Thus they quench the Spirit, for it seems a fixed rule in God's spiritual administration that He does not strive by His Spirit long, in the face of direct and determined disobedience.

I must also say here that men may quench the Spirit when the mind is by no means definitely and consciously committed to disobedience. Perhaps the man is only conscious that he cares very little about obedience. He would not wish to insult God, but he cares so little about pleasing Him that his mind settles down into a chronic stupidity. Under the influence of this, he sees God's demands only with great indistinctness and with the

utmost unconcern. I need not say that such a state of mind repels the Holy Spirit, and quenches its sacred fire.

The cases are fearfully numerous in which men see with great clearness what God requires, and see that God has brought before them the distinct issue of eternal destiny, as hanging upon their present decision. Yet they reject God's counsel and rush on their own damnation. I have often seen cases of this kind in which persons have told me that they saw the dreadful issue, yet made the fearful plunge.

### 3. The Spirit is quenched by *procrastination*.

It is not their design to put the matter off forever, nor perhaps very long; but they have some selfish reason, for doing so, just at this time. Alas who knoweth what shall be on the morrow? This is one of the fatal ways to quench the Spirit.

4. *By yielding to some temptation*, the Spirit is often quenched. The temptation will often come in just that form which is, of all, most adapted to quench the Spirit. It may be the very object of the tempter to seduce you to do just the thing that will most surely and fatally repel the Divine Spirit forever from your heart. True to his genius and character, he will present it in a very seductive form. It will make its warm appeal to some long cherished indulgence. Then if you parley with the temptation instead of instantly repelling it, you are gone. If you allow yourself to linger in presence of the tempting good, and let your sensibilities to that good become excited, and do not try to hold strongly before your mind the great things of God, you have nothing to expect but a fearful fall before its power.

A distinction should be made, as to the matter of guilt, between being hurried suddenly into temptation before you can think and so yielding, and on the other hand, looking long and thoughtfully at the subject and then giving way deliberately to its influence. In the latter case the results must be terribly fearful.

Often men give way to some worldly motive, and thereby so fundamentally decide the question as between their own souls and God, that the Spirit is quenched, and withdraws in despair of success. I could name cases where men have yielded to *political* motives, and other cases

where they have yielded to *business* motives. They were sufficiently enlightened in their duty; they saw the will of God revealed plainly enough, but the temptation came, and they yielded. Some very striking cases have come under my personal observation, and I have lived to mark the results. I have lived to see that these men, giving way to the temptation of some strong political or business motive, have turned away from God fatally and forever, and God has withdrawn from them — to return no more. “Woe unto them — saith the Most High, when I depart from them.”

In some cases sinners give way to the fear of man. It may happen that some other sinner has great influence over him; the latter dare not displease his companion; indeed would sooner displease God than this poor sinner under whose influence he has suffered himself to fall. Some issue will be made by the Spirit of God; the Spirit will present and press the claims of the gospel, and then there is no alternative but to sacrifice the favor of this wicked friend or the favor of God. Such issues are often made as between the claims of God and the influence of some individual. The simple question is — Whom will you serve? Will you serve God, or God’s enemy?

You may remark in such cases the truth which has ten thousand illustrations in the moral world — that the Spirit of God never shuns, but rather seeks fundamental issues — issues of such a sort as decide the main question pending between God and the sinner. It is His business to bring this great question to a decision as between God and the sinner. Hence, He does not shrink from pressing His claims because the question may bring on a fundamental issue. You have often found it so. The question comes up in your mind — Shall the fear of God or the fear of man, control me? An issue, made in this form is in its own nature fundamental and decisive. Whoever dishonors God by preferring man’s honor before His, cuts his acquaintance, to use a familiar phrase; he cuts the friendship of the Almighty and casts Him off. Insulting as he does the majesty of God, how can it be otherwise? Shall the great God submit to have others, such as sinning and mean men, preferred before Himself, and this too in the vital respect of honor and obedience? If He were to submit to such an insult, what would become of His kingdom?

**5.** Men quench the Spirit by *self-indulgence*. Men are often brought to see that their self-indulgent habits are displeasing to God. When this is the case, they come into a fearful trial. Shall they yield to the demands of self-indulgence, or resisting these demands, shall they yield to God? This becomes oftentimes the great crisis of their lives.

Some of you recollect the case of a young man once a student here, who under the influences of the Spirit, became greatly agonized on the question of using tobacco. At one time he tried to laugh it off; at another tried to justify himself by pleading the example of many good man; but when all these pleas availed not, he yielded at last, and said he would do God's will, cost what it might. He afterwards said to me, most emphatically, "I have no doubt I should have gone to hell, if I had held on and resisted God through that struggle. It was the crisis of my destiny."

I have in mind another case of a man who visited me. He said as he entered, "I have a particular errand in making this call upon you, and yet I have scarcely strength to tell you my case. The dreadful conflict in my soul has almost crushed me." He spent some days with me. When he came to be able to relate his story, he said in substance, "I have been in the habit of using tobacco a long time. At length I saw an article in some paper, which set forth the evils and the sin of the practice. I was convicted, I saw those evils developing themselves in my own system. I felt convicted of the sin of this mischievous and sensual indulgence, and resolved to discontinue it. But ere long temptation came; I yielded, and returned to my guilty self-indulgence. What was the result? I fell to the very depths of moral impotence; I seemed to have lost all power to resist not only this temptation, but every other form of temptation. In fact the Spirit of God seems to have utterly departed from me."

Some of you may be disposed to sneer at this as a trifling thing; but *mark!* it can be no trifle to decide a great fundamental question as between yourself and God!

Suppose a child takes issue with his father. It may be about the merest trifle; but no matter how small the thing in controversy may be; the question of obedience or disobedience is always great. When a child rebels against parental authority and takes issue on the question of authority, the results are momentous. Do you estimate the sin to be small because the



indulgence promised in the temptation is insignificant and trifling? Will you yield to a temptation to displease God, and think it no harm because the temptation is so very small? Will you infer that God does not care how much you insult and disobey Him, provided your temptation to do so is quite trifling! To think so is to mistake absurdity for argument. The smaller the temptation and the indulgence, the greater the guilt and the insult towards God when you prefer contemptibly small things to His favor, and to Himself.

**6.** Persons quench the Spirit by indulging in *hard thoughts and revengeful feelings*. Let any man go down upon his knees in prayer to God, and while in this attitude and in these attempts, let him indulge in revengeful purposes. Can he pray any more? Certainly not, until he breaks down and repents. If one allows himself to brood over his fancied wrongs and cherish a revengeful feeling and purpose, it is vain for him to suppose that the Spirit of God can dwell in his bosom. The antipathy may fasten on some individual, or on bodies of men, or on some of the great reforms of the age; it is all the same as to the result — it must quench the Spirit of God. How strongly do some men speak and act in some things, showing that they are under the dominion of their prejudices. With such, the Spirit of God cannot dwell.

So also the indulgence of *envious feeling* quenches the Spirit. You see this sometimes among students. A few years since, there was a young man here who had a rare talent for public speaking, and some other respectable talents besides. There were at that time several students here who allowed themselves to indulge in feelings of envy towards him. I had occasion to know that not one of them enjoyed the presence of God so long as they indulged this envious spirit.

A selfish ambition must have the same result. When a student is determined to rise in the world for purely selfish ends, he will surely quench the light of God in his soul.

When persons allow themselves in a censorious and contemptuous spirit, and give scope to their tongues to speak censoriously, they quench the light of God from their own souls. They can not have the Spirit of the Lord dwelling within.

When persons having done wrong refuse to make confession, and when satisfied of their own wrong, are yet too proud to confess, it cannot be otherwise than that they quench the Spirit. They may think God will overlook such sin as theirs, but they know not God if they think so.

Some do not directly refuse to make restitution, but put it off a long time. I know one man who has wronged his neighbor, and has refused to make restitution so far as I know up to this hour. I am certain he has not had any of the Spirit's presence since he perpetrated that foul wrong. Even if he should say he enjoyed the Spirit and should make his oath of it, I would not believe him. He might deceive himself, but he cannot deceive God; nor can he induce God to look with any favor upon his iniquity.

Again, men often quench the Spirit thus. A great public object comes before them, demanding pecuniary aid — as for example, raising the salary of a minister and some people dodge away and grieve the Spirit of God.

In their public relations, men often quench the Spirit by political dishonesty. It is striking to observe how much room there is for this since the great social and moral reforms have come up to throw their influence and their demands into political life. Truly may it be said, these reforms are “set for the fall and rise of many in Israel.” How searchingly do they put to the test the consciences of political men! And how fearfully do they harden many consciences — presenting moral claims which selfish men find it convenient to resist! You, young men, might go and preach to such seared consciences till you die, and never bring the first man of them to repentance. If from similar motives they do what they know is wrong; if for party purposes they give way to political dishonesty — where are they?

Persons may commit themselves to the wrong side and thus throw themselves under an influence which is utterly adverse to their being led by the Spirit of God. Men associate themselves together into parties, and by and by, their party takes a morally wrong position; then the whole strength of the party bond goes to bind them to wrong-doing and to harden their conscience against all appeals to do right. Suppose a minister should preach on political duties before such a body of men, and any one of them should see his own dreadful error and should begin to think seriously of turning from his evil way. Some one accosts him, saying — Will you be

influenced in politics by the preacher? At once his pride is up; the party ties draw; he returns again to his iniquities.

Some men are influenced by what they call prudence, which is real unbelief. The amount of it is they judge merely after men and according to human views, and as if there were no God, or at least no reliance to be placed on what He has said. Must not such a course quench the Spirit?

Sometimes men trample down their religious feelings and put an extinguisher upon their emotions, and thus put out the light of God in their souls. If it be true, as I have said, that the Spirit gives heat as well as light; quickens the emotions as well as enlightens the understanding, then most clearly those who resolutely repress all religious emotions must quench the Spirit.

Yet again, men will quench the Spirit when they resist conviction of any question of duty. No matter how these impressions of duty may be made, whether immediately by the Spirit, or mediately by external providences, yet if they are resisted, the Spirit is driven away.

And finally some quench the Spirit by resenting reproof when they really need and deserve it.

In such ways as these men quench God's Spirit.

### III. WE MUST NOW CONSIDER SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES

**1.** Judicial blindness of the intellect is a natural result. The intellect becomes more dark and blind than ever before, even doubting and perhaps denying things which were clear before. It is most remarkable that truths, never before doubted are doubted now. Such persons lose confidence in the Bible and even in the very existence of God; declare that they have no confidence in anybody's piety, and even deny that there is anything as sincere benevolence. Such a state proves itself to be a judgment from God — for no mind in its normal, rational state can take such views as these. It is a dark atheistic state. God has given such men up to strong delusion that they may believe a lie. The reason why He has done so is that they would

not receive the truth in love that they might be saved. They resisted and quenched the Spirit. They set at naught all the agencies God could wisely employ to save them — distorted all the truth He revealed to bless them; and now it only remains that their example of dark delusion and full damnation should be a lesson of warning to save other souls from that way of death.

It is only right and just that God should send strong delusion on such as will not obey the truth, and such as will neither honor nor cherish the work of His Spirit in their hearts. He has an unquestionable right to deliver them up as He did Ahab. Ahab, you recollect, would have his own way, although God told him he must not go and would lose his life if he did. Still he wanted to go — would go — went and was killed. You may recollect the circumstances. Ahab had years before been at war with Syria; there had now been a three years' suspension of hostilities. A certain city, called Ramoth Gilead, belonging of right to Ahab, had been during this armistice, in possession of Syria. Jehoshaphat of Judah makes Ahab a friendly visit. While there, it occurs to Ahab to propose to him to go up with him to help him recapture Ramoth Gilead, and he replies favorably. But in those days no king went to war without consulting his gods. Hence Jehoshaphat inquires if there are not some prophets of the Lord by whom they may consult the true God. Ahab replies — I have a host of prophets of Baal and of the groves; let them all be convened and questioned on this great matter. *But*, says Jehoshaphat, have you not some prophet of the Lord whom we may consult? "There is one," says Ahab, "but I hate him, for he never prophesies good for me, but only evil." Nay, says Jehoshaphat, but let him come also, and let us hear what he shall say from the Lord.

With one voice Baal's prophets said, "Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Jehoshaphat, still unsatisfied, calls for the answer from the one adhering prophet of Jehovah. Micaiah knew how the case stood. Aware that Ahab had sold himself to do wickedly and that God was giving him up to his chosen delusions, he answered at first ironically — "Go and prosper" — as the false prophets had said. It is plain there was something in his tone and manner that showed Ahab that his words meant what they did not say, and therefore he replies — "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?" Then Micaiah, under the awful solemnity of

his position, revealed to Ahab his true character and his impending doom. “Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord; I saw the Lord sitting on His throne and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left.” I need not repeat what is written of the imagery of this scene; suffice it to say God suffered a lying spirit to go forth to lead Ahab on in his own cherished and chosen course. Yet even so, Ahab rejects this solemn warning from the Lord; though warned, he still persisted in his plan and met his death as God had said. So men are sometimes given up to judicial hardness and speedy ruin. They lose all sense of guilt; they seem desperately infatuated; afloat on a sea of doubt and darkness, they speedily near the awful brink of death; you look for them, *and they are gone!*

In our days, the methods of delusion are slightly modified as compared with those which obtained in the days of Ahab. Yet you may distinctly trace the same law of the Divine administration — the same dark ocean of doubts and absurdities. Now, mesmerism, biology, the most foolish things that can be gotten up, will seem to them more like truth than the teachings of God’s Spirit. They will even believe the revelations of Andrew Jackson Davis more than those of Isaiah, and will give up all belief in the Bible if some rapping spirit tells them to do so. From all I can learn, I regard these delusions as the legitimate result of the manner in which the Holy Ghost was treated in those revivals which have overspread the land since my remembrance. The dread results are before us — delusions deep, dark and damning, hastening on the righteous doom of those who knew their duty but who did it not; who were visited with the light of God’s Spirit, but having quenched that light, are left to judicial blindness and strong delusion.

**2.** Again, let me say, if persons quench the Holy Ghost they will wax worse and worse. By no methods of their own will they deliver their own souls. Abandoned of God, their own intelligence strangely perverted by deep depravity of heart, there is no redeeming power to save them. The most palpable lies they seem to have lost all power to discriminate from the truth, or to deliver their souls from the power thereof. If they attempt to pray, they cannot realize that they are praying to God at all. Nothing to support, nothing to guide them; no Holy Ghost to enlighten them, no power from above to warm their souls into life; oh, how languid are their

efforts at self-recovery; how feeble and how futile! If at any time one of this class becomes a little alarmed, and feeling some sensibility on religious subjects, falls on his knees to pray, almost before he begins, his mind wanders, he thinks of something else, and this is the end of his prayer.

Are any of you in this state? If any one should listen at your closet door, would he hear a feeble whisper and be impressed that your spiritual efforts are only of the very feeblest sort? What are your prayers? Is all earnestness dropped out? Is everything dark and dead round about your soul and within it, when you essay to draw near to God? Do you go and lie on your knees, almost ashamed of yourself that you think of praying at all? What is your state? Are you honestly afraid that the light of heaven has gone out? One of the most talented young men I ever knew came under the powerful influences of the Spirit, but resisted them finally and fatally. He had so much worldly political ambition, he could not possibly have God. His death-bed scene hastened on apace after he had fatally repelled the Spirit of God. Why should God spare him to live longer? The death scene came on. Darkness gathered thick upon his soul, so thick that it seemed to him the very room was all dark as the pit of despair. Lifting up his voice to its highest note, he cried, *“Bring in a light, bring in a light!”* Alas, how could he see light, after he had quenched all the light of God! How affecting the contrast between his case and that of the dying saint who melts away into the light of heaven!

Will you suffer yourself to pass on, rejecting God? Then no mercy or hope can ever beam upon you.

But if there be still a ray of light and some earnest thought of God; if your soul yet longs and trembles, O, seize the precious moment while yet it lingers; say — “I will never quench the Spirit of God again! May the Lord enlighten me into all His blessed will!” This is the only safe course; the only course that can result in salvation. What do you say? Will you come and gather round the altar of God, to pour out your heart in mighty prayer? “Behold now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.”

## WHAT MEN HIGHLY ESTEEM, GOD ABHORS

*“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.” — Luke, 16:15.*

Christ had just spoken the parable of the unjust steward, in which He presented the case of one who unjustly used the property of others entrusted to him, for the purpose of laying them under obligation to provide for himself after expulsion from his trust. Our Lord represents this conduct of the steward as being wise in the sense of forethoughtful and provident for self — a wisdom of the world, void of all morality. He uses the case to illustrate and recommend the using of wealth in such a way as to make friends for ourselves who at our death shall welcome us into everlasting habitations.” Then going deeper, even to the bottom principle that should control us in all our use of wealth, He lays it down that no man can serve both God and Mammon. Rich and covetous men who were serving Mammon need not suppose they could serve God too at the same time. The service of the one is not to be reconciled with the service of the other.

The covetous Pharisees heard all these things, and they derided Him. As if they would say — “Indeed, you seem to be very sanctimonious, to tell us that we do not serve God acceptably! When has there ever been a tithe of mint that we did not pay?” Those Pharisees did not admit His orthodoxy, by any means. They thought they could serve God and mammon both. Let whoever would say they serve mammon, they knew they served God also and they had nothing but scorn for those teachings that showed the inconsistency and the absurdity of their worshipping two opposing gods and serving two opposing masters.

Our Lord replied to them in the words of our text — “Ye are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

In pursuing the subject thus presented, I shall —

Show how and why it is that men highly esteem that which God avoids.

**1.** They have a different rule of judgment. God judges by one rule; they by another. God's rule requires universal benevolence; their rule is satisfied with an amount of selfishness, so be it sufficiently refined to meet the times. God requires men to devote themselves not to their own interest, but to His interest and those of His great family. He sets up one great end — the highest glory of His name and kingdom. He asks them to become divinely patriotic, devoting themselves to their Creator and to the good of His creatures.

The world adopts an entirely different rule, allowing men to set up their own happiness as their end. It is curious that some pretended philosophers have laid down the same rule — viz.: that men should pursue their own happiness, and only take care not to infringe on others' happiness too much. Their doctrine allows men to pursue a selfish course only not to infringe too palpably on others' rights and interests.

But God's rule is, "Seek not thine own." His law is explicit — "Thou shalt love (not thy self, but) the Lord thy God with all thy heart." "Love is fulfilling of the law." "Charity (this same love) seeketh not her own." This is characteristic of the love the law requires — it does not seek its own. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's." (1 Corinthians 10:24.) "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others." "For all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ." Philippians 2:4,21. To seek their own interest and not Jesus Christ Paul regards an entire departure from true Christianity.

God regards nothing as virtue except devotion to the right ends. The right end is not one's own, but the general good. Hence God's rule requires virtue, while man's rule at best only restrains vice. All human governments are founded on this principle, as all who study the subject know. They do not require benevolence, they only restrain selfishness. In the foundation principles of our government, it is affirmed that men have certain inalienable rights, one of which is the right to pursue each his own happiness. This is affirmed to be an inalienable right, and is always assumed to be right in itself, provided it does not infringe on others' rights



of happiness. But God's rule requires positive benevolence and regards nothing else as virtue except devotion to the highest good. Man's rule condemns nothing, provided man so restrains himself as not to infringe on others' rights.

Moral character is as the end sought. It cannot be predicated of muscular action, but must always turn on the end which the mind has in view. Men always really assume and know this. They know that the moral character is really as the end to which man devotes himself. Hence God's law and man's law being as they are, to obey God's is holiness; to obey only man's law is sin.

Men very inconsiderately judge themselves and others, not by God's rule, but by man's. They do this to an extent truly wonderful. Look into men's real opinions and you will see this. Often without being at all aware of it, men judge themselves, not by God's rule, but by their own.

Here I must notice some of the evidences of this, and furnish some illustrations.

Thus, for example, a mere negative morality is highly esteemed by some men. If a man lives in a community and does no harm, defrauds no man, does not cheat, or lie — does no palpable injury to society; transacts his business in a way deemed highly honorable and virtuous — this man stands in high repute according to the standard of the world. But what does all this really amount to? The man is just taking care of himself; that is all. His morality is wholly of this negative form. All you can say of him is, he does no hurt. Yet this morality is often spoken of in a manner which shows that the world highly esteem it. But does God highly esteem it? Nay, but it is abomination in His sight.

Again, a religion which is merely negative is often highly esteemed. Men of this religion are careful not to do wrong; but what is doing wrong? It is thought no wrong to neglect the souls of their neighbors. What do they deem wrong? Cheating, lying, stealing. These and such like things, they will admit are wrong. But what are they doing? Look round about you even here and see what men of this class are doing. Many of them never try to save a soul. They are highly esteemed for their inoffensive life; they do no wrong; but they do nothing to save a soul. Their religion is a mere

negation. Perhaps they would not cross a ferry on the Sabbath; but never would they save a soul from death. They would let their own clerks go to hell without one earnest effort to save them. Must not such a religion be an abomination to God?

So, also, of a religion which at best consists of forms and prayers and does not add to these the energies of benevolent effort. Such a religion is all hollow. Is it serving God to do nothing but ask favors for one's self?

Some keep up Sabbath duties, as they are termed, and family prayer, but all their religion consists in keeping up their forms of worship. If they add nothing to these, their religion is only an abomination before God.

There are still other facts which show that men loosely set up a false standard, which they highly esteem, but which God abhors. For example, they will require true religion only of ministers; but no real religion of any body else. All men agree in requiring that ministers should be really pious. They judge them by the right rule. For example, they require ministers to be benevolent. They must enter upon their profession for the high object of doing good, and not for the mere sake of a living — not for filthy lucre's sake, but for the sake of souls and from disinterested love. Else they will have no confidence in a minister.

But turn this over and apply it to business men. Do they judge themselves by this rule? Do they judge each other by this rule? Before they will have Christian confidence in a merchant or a mechanic, do they insist that these shall be as much above the greed for gain as a minister should be — should be as willing to give up their time to the sick as a minister — be as ready to forego a better salary for the sake of doing more good, as they insist a minister should be? Who does not know that they demand of business men no such conditions of Christian character as those which they impose of gospel ministers? Let us see. If a man of business does any service for you, he makes out his bill, and if need be he collects it. Now suppose I should go and visit a sick man to give him spiritual counsel — should attend him from time to time for counsel and for prayer, till he died, and then should attend his funeral; and having done this service should make up my bill and send it in, and even collect it; — would there not be some talk? People would say, What right has he to do that? He ought to perform that service for the love of souls, and make no charge for it. This applies to those

ministers who are not under salary to perform this service, of whom there are many. Let any one of these men go and labor ever so much among the sick or at funerals, they must not take pay. But let one of these ministers send his saw to be filed, and he must pay for it. He may send it to that very man whose sick family he has visited by day and by night, and whose dead he has buried, without charge, and “for the love of souls;” but no such “love of souls” binds the mechanic in his service. The truth is, they call that, religion, in a layman which they call sin in a minister. That is the fact. I do not complain that men take pay for labor, but that they do not apply the same principle to a minister.

Again, the business aims and practices of business men are almost universally an abomination in the sight of God. Almost all of these are based on the same principle as human governments are, namely, that the only restraint imposed shall be, to prevent men from being too selfish, allowing them to be just as selfish as they can be and yet leave others an equal chance to be selfish too.

Shall we go into an enumeration of the principles of business men respecting their objects, and modes of doing business? What would it all amount to? Seeking their own ends; doing something, not for others, but for self. Provided they do it in a way regarded as honest and honorable among men, no further restriction shall be imposed.

Take the Bible Society for an illustration. This Institution is not a speculation, entered upon for the good of those who print and publish. But the object aimed at is to furnish them as cheap to the purchaser as possible, so as to put a Bible into the hands of every human being at the lowest possible price. Now it is easy to see that any other course and any different principle from this would be universally condemned. If Bible societies should become merely a speculation they would cease to be benevolent institutions at all, and to claim this character would bring down on them the curses of men. But all business ought to be done as benevolently as the making of Bibles; why not. If it be not, can it be a benevolent business? and if not benevolent, how can it have the approval of God? What is a benevolent business? The doing of the utmost good — that which is undertaken for the one only end of doing good, and which simply aims to do the utmost good possible. In just this sense, men should

be patriotic, benevolent, should have a single eye to God's glory in all they do, whether they eat or drink or whatever they may do.

Yet where do you find the man who holds his fellowmen practically to this rule as a condition of their being esteemed Christians, viz.: That in all their business, they should be as benevolent as Bible societies are? What should we say of a Bible society which should enter upon a manifest speculation and should get as much as they can for their Bibles, instead of selling at the lowest living price? what would you say of such a Bible society? You would say, "Horrible hypocrite!" I must say the same of every Christian who does the same thing. Ungodly men do not profess any Christian benevolence, so we will not charge this hypocrisy on them, but we will try to get this light before their mind.

Now place a minister directly before your own mind, and ask, Do you judge yourself as you judge him? Do you say of yourself, I ought to do for others gratuitously all and whatever I require him to do gratuitously? Do you judge yourself by the same rule by which you judge him?

Apply this to all business men. No matter what your business is whether high or low, small or great; filing saws, or counting out bank bills; you call the Bible society benevolent; do you make your business as much so and as truly so in your ends and aims? If not, why not? What business have you to be less benevolent than those who print, publish and sell Bibles?

Here is another thing which is highly esteemed among men, yet is an abomination before God; viz.: selfish ambition. How often do you see this highly esteemed! I have been amazed to see how men form judgments on this matter. Here is a young man who is a good student in the sense of making great progress in his studies, (a thing the devil might do,) yet for this only, such young men are often spoken of in the highest terms. Provided they do well for themselves, nothing more seems to be asked or expected in order to entitle them to high commendation.

So of professional men. I have in my mind's eye the case of a lawyer who was greatly esteemed and caressed by his fellow men; who was often spoken of well by Christians; but what was he? Nothing but an ambitious young lawyer, doing every thing for ambition — ready at any time to take the stump and canvass the whole country — for what? To get some good

for himself. Yet he is courted by Christian families! Why? Because he is doing well for himself! See Daniel Webster. How lauded, I had almost said *canonized!* Perhaps he will be yet. Certainly the same spirit we now see would canonize him if this were a Catholic country. But what has he done? He has just played the part of an ambitious lawyer and an ambitious statesman; that is all. He has sought great things for himself; and having said that, you have said all. Yet how have men lauded Daniel Webster! When I came to Syracuse, I saw a vast procession. What, said I, is there a funeral here? Who is dead? Daniel Webster. But, said I, he has been dead a long time. Ye, but they are playing up funeral because he was a great man. What was Daniel Webster? Not a Christian, not a benevolent man; every body knows this. And what have Christians to do in lauding and canonizing a merely selfish ambition? they may esteem it highly, yet let them know, God abhors it as utterly as they admire it.

The world's entire morality and that of a large portion of the church are only a spurious benevolence. You see a family very much united and you say, How they love one another! So they do; but they may be very exclusive. They may exclude themselves and shut off their sympathies almost entirely from all other families, and they may consequently exclude themselves from doing good in the world. The same kind of a morality may be seen in towns and in nations. This makes up the entire morality of the world.

Many have what they call humanity, without any piety; and this is often highly esteemed among men. They pretend to love men, but yet after all do not honor God, nor even aim at it. And in their love of men, they fall below some animals. I doubt whether many men, not pious, would do what I knew a dog to do. His master wanted to kill him, and for this purpose took him out into the river in a boat and tied a stone about his neck. In the struggle to throw dog and stone overboard together, the boat upset; the man was in the river; the dog, by extra effort, released himself from his weight, and seizing his master by the collar, swam with him to land. Few men would have had humanity enough — without piety — to have done this. Indeed men without piety are not often half so kind to each other as animals are. Men are more degraded and more depraved. Animals will make greater sacrifices for each other than the human race do. Go and ask a whaleman what he sees among the whales when they suffer

themselves to be murdered to protect a school of their young. Yet many mothers think they do most meritorious things because they take care of their children.

But men, as compared with animals, ought to act from higher motives than they. If they do not, they act wickedly. Knowing more — having the knowledge of God and of dying Savior as their example and rule, they have higher responsibilities than animals can have.

Men often make a great virtue of their abolitionism though it be only of the infidel stamp. But perhaps there is no virtue in this, a whit higher than a mere animal might have. Whoever understands the subject of slavery and is a good man at heart will certainly be an abolitionist. But a man may be, an abolitionist without the least virtue. There may not be the least regard for God in his abolitionism, nor even any honest regard to human well-being. He may stand on a principles and adopt practices which show that if they had the power, they would enslave the race. They will not believe that a man can be a colonizationist, but I know good men who are — some men not only lord it over the bodies of their fellow men, but over their minds and souls — their opinions and consciences — which is much worse oppression and tyranny than simply to enslave the body.

Often there is a bitter and an acrimonious spirit — not by any means the spirit of Christ; for while Christ no doubt condemns the slaveholder, he does not hate him. This biting hatred of evil-doers is only malevolence after all; and though men may ever so highly esteem it, God abominates it. On the other hand, many call that piety, which has no humanity in it. Whip up their slaves to get money to give to the Bible Society! Touch up the gang; put on the cat o' nine tails; the agent is coming along for money for the Bible Society! Here is piety (so called) without humanity. I abhor a piety which has no humanity with it and in it, as deeply as I condemn its converse — humanity without piety. How greatly then must He abhor either when unnaturally divorced from the other!

All those so called religious efforts which men make, having only self for their end, are an abomination to God.

There is a wealthy man who consents to give two hundred dollars towards building a splendid church. He thinks this is a very benevolent offering,

and it may be highly esteemed among men. But before God approves of it He will look into the motives of the giver; and so may we, if we please. The man we find owns a good deal of real estate in the village which he expects will rise in value on the very day that shall see the church building determined on, enough to put back into his pocket two or three fold what he pays out. Besides this he has other motives. He thinks of the increased respectability of having a fine house and himself the best seat in it. And yet further, he has some interest in having good morals sustained in the village, for vice is troublesome to rich men and withal somewhat dangerous. And then he has an indefinable sort of expectation that this new church and his handsome donation to build it will somehow improve his prospects for heaven. In as much as these are rather dim at best the improvement, though indefinite, is decidedly an object. Now if you scan these motives, you will see that from first to last they are altogether selfish. Of course they are an abomination in God's sight.

The motives for getting a popular minister are often of the same sort. The object is not to get a man sent of God, to labor for God and with God, and one with whom the people may labor and pray for souls and for God's kingdom. But the object being something else than this is an abomination before God.

The highest forms of the world's morality are only abominations in God's sight. The world has what it calls good husbands, good wives, good children; but what sort of goodness is this? The husband loves his wife and seeks to please her. She also loves and seeks to please him. But do either of them love or seek to please God in these relations? By no means. Nothing can be farther from their thoughts. They never go beyond the narrow circle of self. Take all these human relations in their best earthly form, and you will find they never rise above the morality of the lower animals. They fondle and caress each other, and seem to take some interest in the care of their children.. So do your domestic fowls, not less, and perhaps even more. Often these fowls in your poultry yard go beyond the world's morality in these qualities which the world calls good.

Should not human beings have vastly higher ends than these? Can God deem their highly esteemed qualities any other than an abomination if in fact they are even below the level of the domestic animals?

An unsanctified education comes into the same category. A good education is indeed a great good; but if not sanctified, it is all the more odious to God. Yes, let me tell you, if not improved for God, it is only the more odious to him in proportion as you get light on the subject of duty, and sin against that light the more. Those very acquisitions which will give you higher esteem among men will if unsanctified make your character more utterly odious before God. You are a polished writer and a beautiful speaker. You stand at the head of the College in these important respects. Your friends look forward with hopeful interest to the time when you will be heard of on the floor of Senates, moving them to admiration by your eloquence, But alas, you have no piety! When we ask, how does God look upon such talents, unsanctified, we are compelled to answer — only as an abomination. This eloquent young student is only the more odious to God by reason of all his unsanctified powers. The very things which give you the more honor among men will make you only the scoff of hell. The spirits of the nether pit will meet you as they did the fallen monarch of Babylon, tauntingly saying — “what are you here? You who could shake kingdoms by your eloquence, are you brought down to the sides of the pit? You who might have been an angel of light — you who lived in Oberlin; you, a selfish doomed sinner — away and be out of our company! We have nobody here so guilty and so deeply damned as you!”

So of all unsanctified talents, beauty, education, accomplishments; all, if unsanctified, are an abomination in the sight of God. All of those things which might make you more useful in the sight God, are if misused, only the greater abomination in His sight.

So a legal religion, with which you serve God only because you must. You go to church, yet not in love to God or to His worship, but from regard to your reputation, to your hope, or your conscience. Must not such a religion be of all things, most abominable to God?

## REMARKS

The world have mainly lost the true idea of religion. This is too obvious from all I have said to need more illustration.



The same is true to a great extent of the church — professed Christians judge themselves falsely because they judge by a false standard.

One of the most common and fatal mistakes is to employ a merely negative standard. Here are men complaining of a want of conviction. Why don't they take the right standard and judge themselves by that? Suppose you had let a house burn down and made no effort to save it; what would you think of the guilt of stupidity and laziness there? Two women and five children are burnt to ashes in the conflagrations; why did not you give the alarm when you saw the fire getting hold? Why did not you rush into the building and drag out the unconscious inmates? Oh you felt stupid that morning — just as people talk of being “stupid” in religion! Well, you hope not to be judged very hard, since you did not set the house on fire; you only let it alone; all you did was to do nothing! That is all many persons plead as to their religious duties. They do nothing to pluck sinners out of the fire, and they seem to think this is a very estimable religion! Was this the religion of Jesus Christ or of Paul? Is it the religion of real benevolence? or of common sense?

You see how many persons who have a Christian hope indulge it on merely negative grounds. Often I ask persons how they are getting along in religion. They answer, pretty well; and yet they are doing nothing that is really religious. They are making no effort to save souls — are doing nothing to serve God. What are they doing! O they keep up the forms of prayer! Suppose you should employ a servant and pay him off each week, yet he does nothing all the long day but pray to you!

Religion is very intelligible and is easily understood. It is a warfare. What is a warrior's service? He devotes himself to the service of his country. If need be he lays down his life on her altar. He is expected to do this.

So a man is to lay down his life on God's altar, to be used in life or death, as God may please, in His service.

The things most highly esteemed among men are often the very things God most abhors. Take for example, the legalist's religion. The more he is bound in conscience and enslaved, by so much the more, usually, does his esteem as a Christian rise.

The more earnestly he grows under his bondage to sin — the more truly he has to say -

*“Reason I hear, her counsels weigh,  
And all her words approve;  
Yet still I find it hard to obey  
And harder yet to love,”*

by so much the more, does the world esteem and God abhor, his religion. The good man, they say — he was all his life-time subject to bondage! He was in doubts and fears all his life? But why did he not come by faith into that liberty with which Christ makes His people free?

A morality, based on the most refined selfishness, stands in the highest esteem among men. So good a man of the world, they say — almost a saint; yet God must hold him in utter abomination.

The good Christian in the world’s esteem is never abrupt, never aggressive, yet he is greatly admired. He has a selfish devotion to pleasing men, than which nothing is more admired. I heard of a minister who had not an enemy in the world. He was said to be most like Christ among all the men they knew. I thought it strange that a man so like Christ should have no enemies, for Christ, — more like Himself than any other man can be — had a great many enemies and very better enemies too. Indeed it is said, “If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution.” But when I came to learn the facts of the case I understood the man. He never allowed himself to preach anything that could displease even Universalists. In fact he had two universalists in his Session. In the number of his session were some Calvinists also, and he must by no means displease them. His preaching was indeed a model of its kind. His motto was — Please the people — nothing but please the people. In the midst of a revival, he would leave the meetings and go to a party; why? To please the people.

Now this may be highly esteemed among men; but does not God abhor it?

It is a light thing to be judged of man’s judgment and all the lighter since they are so prone to judge by a false standard. What is it to me that men condemn me if God only approve? The longer I live, the less I think of human opinions on the great question of right and wrong as God sees them. They will judge both themselves and others falsely. Even the church

sometimes condemns and excommunicates her best men. I have known cases and could name them, in which I am confident they have done this very thing. They have cut men off from their communion, and now every body sees that the men excommunicated were the best men of the Church.

It is a blessed thought that the only thing we need to care for is to please God. The only enquiry we need make is — What will God think of it? We have only one mind to please; and that the Great Mind of the universe. Let this be our single aim and we shall not fail to please him. But if we do not aim at this, all we can do is only an abomination in his sight.

# THE INDICATIONS AND THE GUILT OF BACKSLIDING

**OBERLIN EVANGELIST OCT 11, 1854**

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth: Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eye with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.  
Revelations 3:14-20.

This is one of the Asiatic churches to which Christ sent letters by His amanuensis John. This church had not been long established, yet had even so soon begun to backslide; hence this letter of rebuke and warning.

In discussing this subject I propose,

- 1.** To show what lukewarmness is;
- 2.** To present some unmistakable indications of this state of mind;
- 3.** Show that it is a most guilty state;
- 4.** Show that its folly is no less great than its sin; and
- 5.** Explain the threatening — “I will spew thee out of my mouth.”

**1.** The persons addressed were professors of religion. In this sense they were not cold; — as men who make no professions of attachment to Christ. Yet though professing much, they had none of that zealous love which belongs to the true Christian life. Indeed they were neither the one thing, nor the other; — were not what Christians should be, nor were they avowed enemies, as open transgressors are. Not as cold as they might be, and not as warm as they should be — they held a position if possible more loathsome than even the cold and the dead.

**2.** I am to present some indications of this state. In doing this, I shall naturally give a more definite view of what the state is.

**1.** A profession of religion with a worldly conversation. Christ said no new thing when He said — “But out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh,” Everybody knew this before. Everybody must know it. The tongue was made to give utterance to the heart’s abundance. Hence that which abounds in a man’s heart and fills it will seek utterance in the natural channel. Let the heart be full of the things of God, and the mouth will reveal it. When the heart is full of the world, does not the mouth show it? No matter what the particular form of worldly interest may be, whether stocks, or lands, or trade, or office, or honor, the tongue is not wont to be slow in revealing the abundance of the heart. Why should not the same law obtain in regard to a heart full of religious interest and love?

**2.** Neglect of the Bible. This is emphatically the Christian’s Book. He will have one if he can, and having it, will read and study it. Religion presupposes a supreme interest in the Bible. Hence, when the Bible is neglected, you may be sure religion is not much in the heart. To the Christian the Bible does not wear out as other books do. It suffices to read most other books once. You get all they have at one reading, and can then recall whatever you want to reflect upon and use further. Not so with the Bible. No man ever exhausted that at one reading. To the Christian it is a well of water. He does not drain it dry at one draught; in fact he never drinks it dry; nor does it suffice for his wants to drink but once. His wants reoccur continually, and therefore he comes, and still comes again to draw. It is his daily business to draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Or still to vary the figure, the Bible is his compass, chart and guide: how then can he think to make the voyage of life heaven-ward without keeping

this roll in his bosom? Hence, if he neglects his Bible, it must be regarded as an unmistakable evidence of a heart not full of religion.

**3.** When he can read his Bible without interest — when he goes to it as a task, and has no conscious sympathy with its spirit and no love for its principles, he is surely lukewarm. See that professor doing up his Bible reading as the Catholic tells his beads, in a hurry to get through and be off. Is his heart full of religion?

**4.** Neglect of secret prayer. What would you think of a wife who should shun, or should even neglect to seek and improve all opportunities of the society of her husband? Or of a husband who should neglect the society of his wife? In either case, do you think such neglect could be consistent with pure and strong affection? Suppose you were yourself the party neglected; what would you think of professions of love, carried out by such manifestations?

Ask yourself — what is secret prayer? It is the earnest outpouring of the heart to God. Alone with God you enter into deep and unobstructed communion with him. If you love God, you will surely love and seek such communion. If you are debarred the possibility of retirement, still your inward heart will pray. Its inner chamber will become a closet and an altar from which the continual incense will ascend to God. The professed Christian who can neglect such communion with God may know that he is far from warm and earnest love to God.

Or if not altogether omitting the form, he yet does it as a mere duty and a task, in which his heart takes no interest, he may equally know that his first love is gone. If prayer has become a burden, surely his heart lacks warm and earnest love. Do you remember the days of your first love? Where were you then? Not dreading and trying to avoid prayer.

Again, if prayer meetings fail and die out, it is a startling evidence that the church is in a lukewarm state. When Christians can live in the same neighborhood, under the same responsibilities, and yet sustain no meetings for social prayer, you may know they have but little of the light and power of godliness. Surely I need not say that when prayer meetings have fallen into decay, religion has fallen fearfully low. Hearts in which religion

lives will make prayer meetings. If they take no interest in seeking and getting up such meetings, they are fearfully lukewarm.

**5.** Christians are lukewarm when they do not naturally care for the salvation of souls. When they feel and express more interest for anything else than for the souls of their friends, you cannot but know they are lukewarm towards Christ. Suppose these room-mates take less interest in each other's souls than in the health and welfare of the body; or suppose a teacher feels less interest for the souls of his class than for their progress in study, what must you think? Or of a parent who never speaks of the souls of his children? In short, if it be natural to neglect the soul, you know the cause, who does not know that the love of God and of souls forbids this neglect and this unconcern? If religion lives in the heart it is impossible there should be such neglect of souls.

Again, neglect to inquire into the state of religion, reveals the same state of heart. He who never inquires whether there be any revivals, or conversions — who is not interested to know how these matters progress — is certainly lukewarm. If his heart is full of Christ, this will be his theme of chief interest. He will not inquire half so quick whether they have had rain as whether they have God's Spirit. He naturally wants to know whether the cause he loves is prosperous. You may know the man is lukewarm if his heart does not burn to know how religion prospers, and whether souls are turning to the Lord.

In like manner, persons are proved to be lukewarm if they neglect to pray for a revival and for the salvation of souls. Or if when they pray, it is for themselves only, you must make the same inference. If they do not pour out their hearts for others, but confine their supplications to themselves alone, you may know them to be lukewarm.

More still, if they pray for themselves in a manner that indicates present impenitence. Sometimes even professors of religion plainly indicate this. If they confess sin, their manner shows they do not repent of it, nor mean to forsake it. Sometimes they merely pray for conviction, or for that which if genuine would be mere conversion. Often after hearing persons pray for a season, I have had occasion to say to them — “If your prayer is answered, you will be converted. That is all you prayed for. Is that what you mean? Your prayer calls for just that, and no more. Instead of praying as inspired

men do pouring out the heart of praying for the Zion they love, you are only praying that you become a Christian.” Of course I do not allude to the case in which a Christian is speaking in behalf of others, using words in which they may join. In such a case, he will use language which calls for convicting and converting grace. Excepting such cases, you will often notice in prayer meetings that the very manner of their prayers and confessions shows that they are far from God. The very tone and laziness of their prayer shows how lukewarm they are.

You have another indication in the absence of a spiritual zeal. If you see no zeal for spiritual religion, no deep interest for the progress of Christian experience, no solicitude for that which constitutes the substance and essence of religion, none of that wakeful spiritual sympathy which seems ready to devour truly spiritual conversation — a state of feeling that naturally looks to the Bible for its spiritual food, which loves to talk about prayer and communion with God; — if these things are wanting, you may know that genuine piety runs low. Those professors are lukewarm.

Again, it is no less an indication when there is other zeal, but not a spiritual zeal. Some professed Christians have much zeal for objects in common with infidels, but none for objects in which infidels have no sympathy. It is a zeal of nature, not of grace. Often you observe there is no lack of zeal, but all in other than a right direction. It is the great peculiarity of our age that ungodly men are zealous in certain social reforms. Many of our most zealous reformers are professedly impenitent. Their zeal is such as one may have without any interest in the true spiritual life of the soul. In fact, there is often no God at all in it. He has no proper recognition of God and no sympathy with His pure benevolence.

It is remarkable that this zeal manifests itself only against certain forms of sin. By how much the more these reformers zealous in their special reforms, do they lose their interest in religion, their confidence in the Bible, their charity for mankind and for Christian people, their interest in the conversion of souls and in revivals of religion. They have the greatest zeal against certain forms of sin, but against those forms only. They have no zeal against commercial speculation, none against a worldly spirit, nothing to say against neglect of prayer or neglect to save the souls of men. They have no zeal against those terrible forms of sin which have done more



mischief in the world than all things else combined. Nothing else that can be named has done so much mischief in the world as lukewarmness. This single sin has done more to curse the world than all the slavery and intemperance of the world ever have. But I cannot pursue this subject just here, it being my present purpose only to show you how to discriminate the lukewarm. I was saying, they may have a zeal of nature originating in natural constitution, instead of a zeal of the heart, originating in divine grace. It shows nature active, but grace dead.

Yet another indication of lukewarmness is, being blind to the true spiritual state of themselves and others. A deep interest in spiritual life makes persons sharp, eagle-eyed, wide awake to both a spiritual state and to those influences that bear upon it. Such persons cannot be indifferent, and of course will not be blind to any powerful agencies which bear on the great ends they love.

But this involves my next remarks, viz., that a most decisive indication is a want of concern about the interests of spiritual religion. If they can be remiss and can neglect to make efforts to promote religion and save souls, you may know them to be lukewarm. If this is your own conscious experience, you may know that you are yourself lukewarm.

I wish I had asked you at every point to question yourself and see how each test applies to your own heart and life. You can do this now. Pause and review this entire list of unmistakable indications and see how they apply to your own soul. This is the chief use you can make of these texts — not to search other people, but to search yourself. I beseech you to do this in all fidelity to your own soul as you value its spiritual health and even life.

Yet another indication is, reluctance to give money for Christ's cause. Men give their money to the objects their hearts love. When you are called on to give for Christ's cause freely, do you meet the call cheerfully?

Again, every one who has any true religion alive in his heart is in an earnest state of mind. God is in earnest; the great depth and intenseness of His benevolence forbid anything less than this. Angels are in earnest. See them wherever you will in the sacred volume, they are full of the most intense activity and emotion. Saints in heaven are intensely wakeful and active.

What did Isaiah see when the upper temple was opened to his astonished vision? Were those holy seraphs asleep? Mark their intense excitement. They cried one to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." The very nature of religion is love, and love arouses and fires the sensibilities as nothing else can do. Its objects are so vast, its scope so broad, its emotional excitement so pure and so intensely delightful, it has in itself all the qualities requisite for becoming naturally more intense than any other class of emotions can be. Hence the zeal of the Christian must be an intense state of mind. But the zeal of lukewarm souls would freeze heaven. Mark it — as cold as the north pole; one would suppose it could never have felt the warmth of the sun of righteousness.

Now I do not imply that religion consists in excitement, yet such is its blessed nature, and such is the hold it takes upon the soul, that it stirs up the sensibility intensely, and this intense action of the sensibility impairs amazing energy to all the powers of the mind. Hence religion makes everybody intensely active. Mark one of those living Christians, — his very sleep is so full of religion, he seems to sleep on the very borders of wakefulness; he can scarcely find time for needful repose. His mind is supremely interested in this subject. When you hear him talk or pray, you will see that his soul is full of intense feeling and tireless activity in God's work. Can he be full of the Spirit and yet not be intensely alive to all that concerns the kingdom of his Lord?

If you see one more easily interested on other subjects than on religion, — if you find it almost impossible to awaken any interest in spiritual things, you may regard it as an unmistakable indication of lukewarmness.

Where persons do not care to learn about revivals, you must note it as indicating a similar lack of religious life. If they are full of the Spirit of God, you might see them take up a religious paper and run their eye over it for the word "Revival;" omitting everything else, they would look first for the column of revival news, and then for whatever else is most spiritual and tends to bring them nearest to Christ. If you see the opposite of this, you will of course know that that man's interests in religion is only subordinate — not supreme. Suppose you had a brother or a child in California; — how would you watch the steamers, and how anxiously you

would run your eye over the list of deaths, and see if the loved name is there! But why this anxious eagerness? You have an interest there. So, if you had an interest in God and in Jesus Christ, you would watch for everything in respect to those objects of your warmest love.

There are some papers, professedly religious, which, show on their very face, either that the men who control their columns are sadly lukewarm themselves, or that they judge the churches to be so, and therefore fill their sheet to suit a fallen, backslidden state of Christian feeling among their readers. For months past I have taken up a religious paper, and read at the head of its first column — “Swiss Scenery” — “Scenes in Switzerland” — etc. etc. The soul that thirsts for the waters of life is turned off with “Swiss Scenery,” and travels, and things that come no nearer the gospel than the religion of nature. I will send that paper back. Why should I try over and over again to feed my soul on such food? And what a state of religion there must be in the country when editors can expect to feed and satisfy Christian people thus! How utterly dry and barren! If the religious readers of such papers depended on them for spiritual food, they must be starved to death!

Again, if people do not kindle up with interest when efforts are to be made for a revival, you must regard it as an unmistakable indication of lukewarmness. If you are not ready for these efforts, you are certainly in a miserable state.

Now in view of all these indications, will you be so kind to yourself, each of you, as to ask — Is this my state? Can you go on your knees before God and say — O, my God, thou knowest I am not lukewarm. How is this?

I have still to name one more indication — a life which fails to make the impression on all who see it that religion is your chief business — the one thing needful. For if religion is your chief concern and the thing of deepest interest with you, it is most certain and inevitable that your life will show it. Your life will make the impression on all who know you, that your heart is full of God and of love. The true Christian is a light which cannot be hid. His life will make its impression. He will be known as a zealous man, a self-denying man, as a charitable man, as a holy man — as one who lives in God and God in him.

But I must pass now to say,

**3.** That a lukewarm state is a most *guilty one*. As a general thing, these professors of religion are enlightened. The fact that they have publicly professed religion evinces this. By how much the greater their light, by how much the greater their guilt.

It is also a most *hypocritical state*. Backsliders are hypocrites I do not mean that they have never been converted, but I do mean that they profess towards God what is not true. Their heart and their life believe their profession. They are living, walking hypocrites!

It is, moreover, a *perjured state*. That Christian has taken his oath to love and serve God, and has done it under most solemn circumstances — even at the communion table with the symbols of Christ's body and blood in his very hands! What has he sworn? to live for God; to observe all His statutes and all ordinances; often the very terms of his covenant specify attending to all the general meetings of the church, and performing each and all of his duties as a member of the body. Thus he solemnly swears — but thus he never does. At each successive communion season he renews his oath, only to break it again during all the next succeeding interval. He solemnly swore that he would renounce all ungodliness and every worldly lust — that he would walk soberly, righteously and godly in this evil world; — yet how constantly and universally does he violate each point in the solemn affirmation! Do I speak too strongly when I say that this man perjures himself? I am well aware of the technical distinction made in courts of law whereby it is held that there may be much falsehood without perjury — it being essential to perjury that the accused should deliberately swear falsely on a point material to the issue. But let me ask you if the oath of the backslider is not taken deliberately? What could be more so? Let me also ask if it is not to a point most material to the main issue? Surely it is. The very thing he swore he would do is the very thing he does not do. How horrible must such perjury be! Suppose you go into court and you see there a witness taking the stand and swearing to a lie — to what you know is a lie — and to what you know he knows is a lie! Would you not cry out, How awful! — What have we come to! But what is this compared with that we see at the communion table? See there; — the table is spread, God's holy presence is solemnly invoked — the minister takes

the holy Bible, and expounds the nature of the oath to be taken; — then backsliders come forward and solemnly swear to perform all their Christian duties; — solemnly avow their allegiance to Jesus, the crucified — profess supreme love to him, solemnly testify that they believe in his blood as the ground of their forgiveness and that they owe him the devotion a thousand hearts and lives; — they solemnly covenant to walk with their brethren in labor and prayer — to attend the prayer-meetings; — but when the hour comes, he is not there! Another season comes round; he is not there! He almost never comes. It is a very rare thing that he even pretends to do any one of the many overt tangible things embraced in his vow. He does indeed come to meeting occasionally on the Sabbath. But this costs him no particular self-denial. On the Sabbath there is nothing else he can do. He may not work his farm, or drive his trade, or open his store. So on the Sabbath he will come to the house of God. But really, and in the spirit of it, he breaks every material point of his solemn covenant. At the next communion he is ready as ever to renew it; the communion season once past, he is ready to trample it under his heedless foot again! Is not this a most guilty state?

Still further, it is guilty because it is a most injurious state. It does infinite mischief. Nothing so discourages a minister as to be shut up to the necessity of reaching the impenitent over the heads of backsliders. He preaches that religion is the chief concern; they deny it. He says, it is and should be the principal business; they give him the lie. He says, religion gives its possessor peace; they reply — that is all a lie. He holds forth that Jesus has died for sinners, and those who are bought with his blood must devote their whole life and heart to his service; they reply — we don't hold, in practice, to any such things. He preaches to sinners that the hearts of Christians are bleeding with sympathy for them; they can very promptly say — that is utterly false, for we know better. Let the minister say what he will to paint the glories of heaven, or portray the woes of hell; to urge the need and the value of gospel salvation, or to exhibit the power and the reality of religion; — the backslider rises before him and gives the lie to all he can say. Alas, it is almost a hopeless task to preach so! For to make the matter still worse — these professed Christians are supposed to know from experience. They have tried it and have gone back to the world again. The minister may have a good theory, but it don't work in practice,

and there is the proof. Or he may have some professional motive for such preaching; but, say they, do we not know that the proof of these things must lie in experience!

Hence, when backsliders come upon the stand and swear that not one word of God's can be believed — that all His promises are a humbug — that all the time prospects and hopes of the young convert are blasted, and he must needs return to the world again for life and joy; how fearfully injurious must this be!

It must be most injurious, because it hardens sinners in the worst way, and begets in them a contempt for religion. They see those who profess it go to the communion table and carefully maintain the forms of religion; but then they also see these same persons perjure themselves on all these vital points of their profession. They know that these professors have no deep interest in religion — no feeling about it; they see enough to convince them that their profession is nothing better than a blasphemous humbug. When they see masses of those who have made the solemn professions, absenting themselves from prayer-meetings, and really doing nothing to promote the objects they profess to love so deeply, is it any wonder that they are hardened? Is it strange that they are made skeptics? I know, and everybody who examines the subject must know, that the backsliding of professed Christians does more to beget skepticism than all the writings of infidels. I have seen places — I have been called to preach in places, where the conduct of professors has begotten an almost universal skepticism, so that the very foundations of Bible truth had to be laid over again. Nothing could be done in preaching the gospel till you had gone back to first principles; till you had rolled baleful influence of so much backsliding and apostasy, and shown people that they must examine the Bible for themselves and on their own responsibility — let apostates believe it as they might.

Backsliding does more injury to souls than any thing else, because it leads to false hopes. Men will form their notions on what religion is from the life of his professors. If this life believes religion, giving a false view of it, multitudes are deluded. Thus the backslider does much to confirm both himself and others in a false hope. Suppose a pastor becomes lukewarm, and that then his deacons also become lukewarm, their life and spirit still

remain the general standard of piety. The masses, thinking themselves as good as the deacons and the minister, feel very much at ease in their state, and so go down in vast numbers to the depths of hell.

It is expected that young converts will be led by older and leading minds. The latter virtually say — We are older and have more experience than you; it befits you to follow rather than to lead us; modesty and humility are altogether becoming in the young. Thus backsliders throw themselves directly in the way of young converts. Twice within a few years have I heard ministers say — “O, if I could only take these young converts away by themselves, how easily could I train them up for God and form in them habits of earnest Christian activity. But now, what can I do? If the older, backslidden members are not kept foremost, they will become chafed, restive, and perhaps will wound the feelings of the young converts; while if the converts are kept back and under their influence, they will be frozen to death. If we could only take these young converts along as they now wish to go, what a noble church they would make, and what living, working Christians?”

Again, backsliding is fraught with mischief because it bewilders and stumbles inquirers. When they see professed Christians absent from church-meetings, and meetings for prayer, full of worldly interest and conversation, how fearfully does it retard God’s work of grace in their souls!

Backsliding is fraught with guilt and unbelief because it naturally and greatly disheartens laboring Christians. Nothing discourages them more. Often have I heard such laborers mourn over the mischievous influence of backsliders, and say — How can we bear up against it? We cannot live so! We shall die!

Backsliding grieves Christ. What could grieve Him more? You may judge of His feelings by the language He uses towards them — “I would thou wert cold or hot; because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth.” Nauseated with a thing so loathsome, He will throw them off with unutterable loathing!

It gratifies the devil. What could they do to please him more! He would rather have a few backsliders in a church than scores of infidels and

Universalists! What can infidelity do in the midst of a living Christianity? If his people lived religion, the minister would never need to open his mouth to defend the divine authority of the Bible. If there were a living, breathing, speaking Christianity abroad among the people, they would not need one word of preaching to withstand infidelity. Yet how common it is for a lukewarm professor to rebuke and deplore the prevalent infidelity of the times; when it is a fact that all the infidels of his town do not work so fearful an influence against religion as he and his associate backsliders!

The Bible describes this class of people in most affecting and forceful terms. They are “clouds without water,” clouds indeed — things that promise water and raise high hopes; but they bring no rain. We have had striking illustrations of this during the past weeks. Clouds have arisen upon the face of the sky — full of promise they were, and every man looked hopefully, perhaps confidently, to see them roll up their dark volume and pour out their crystal floods; but alas, the winds are up and tear the clouds to pieces; and we get not one drop of rain! So of the religion of these backsliders. At the communion table they renew their solemn oath; they seem to do it in all solemnity, and people say — now we may surely expect a religious life; now we shall have prayer and zeal and faith and labor; — but alas, the wind gets into that hopeful cloud! The spirit of worldliness is still there, and it scatters those hopeful clouds to the four quarters of the heavens! They are clouds without rain, carried to and fro by tempests.

Still varying the figure, the Bible describes them as “wells without water.” We can begin to understand this. At every corner you hear the complaint, “My well is dry; my cistern has failed me; can you give me a pitcher full of water?” So in the backslidden church you might take your empty pitcher all around for a few drops of the water of life, and alas you find none!

How impressive these Bible figures! The Bible was written in a country subject to great and fearful droughts; and hence when we come to experience similar droughts we are thrown at once into circumstances to feel the force of those figures. Suppose yourself in an eastern desert; the whole caravan are famishing for want of water; they come to the wells of the country — no water there; after long marches and many raised hopes,



they reach the spot — only to be once more disappointed. Alas, when the troubled sinner goes round among backslidden Christians, holding forth his empty pitcher for some precious drops of the water of life — and finds none, he understands the force of this figure!

Backsliders betray Christ with a kiss. Following Judas, they come to his table with fair promise, — they go away to blast those raised hopes in bitterest disappointment.

Look at Judas. He had been at the communion table; the solemn Passover had been enacted; he rises hastily — slips away to the Jewish officers, — gets a band of soldiers, and guides them stealthily to the place where he knew Jesus was wont to retire for prayer. See him coming! His men fall back and he advances; as if glad to welcome his Lord again, he rushes up to embrace him crying, “Hail Master,” and kisses him. Jesus rebukes the traitor — “Judas,” said he, “betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” So does each backslider. He comes to the communion table to greet his Lord with a kiss; then turns away to betray him!

By another Scripture comparison, they are “wolves in sheep’s clothing;” — clad like a sheep, but really a wolf. They look so fair, no one fears them; the ewes will almost invite them to lie down among their tender lambs — but how long before he has those tender ones in his bloody jaws!

There is yet another illustration, not from scripture, yet too pertinent to be omitted. Along the coast it is common for reefs of rocks to project into the sea. To lessen the dangers to the navigator, especially in storms, light-houses are erected to indicate the harbors which vessels may safely make in a storm. Now there are human beings so lost to humanity and so full of Satan, that they build fires on a stormy night to allure vessels upon those dreadful rocks, that they may revel in the plunder! The fog is dense, the spray thick, the night dark and the mariner cannot distinguish these lure-fires from the genuine light-house; so on he comes, bearing down upon those roaring breakers! The wreckers are on the look-out; they see the lights of the vessel as she bounds over the billows; they hear the last fearful crash as she strikes, and as the wails and shrieks rise above the roar of the storm — but they are ready for their work. What is it to them that human beings are dashed upon the rocks of ocean! They want plunder — at any cost!

Backsliders are spiritual wreckers. They set mountain fires for the mariner. They say — We are spiritual guides; we will lead you in the way of life. See them in all the solemnity of an oath, professing to live and labor as Christians, and to lead the multitudes to God! — Whither do they in fact lead them! See the man come up to the communion table in presence of the ungodly. Hear him; he says, “I am a Christian; mark my Christianity and take it as your model. I am in the way to heaven; follow me.” They follow till he has lured them along and dashed them on the rocks of damnation! Let him not say — “I ask no man to follow me; I can take no responsibility for their being misguided;” — the fact is, his very profession does the mischief; his very profession proclaims — “This is a Christian life, and whoever will follow me shall reach heaven.” So he need do nothing more than be a Christian backslider, and he becomes a spiritual wrecker, luring souls upon the rocks of spiritual death.

But again; backsliding is great folly as well as great guilt. The backslider gains nothing. His life is utterly inconsistent, odious, loathsome; indeed the Bible describes it as insupportably odious and disgusting. Christ says — “I will spew thee out of my mouth.” He cannot hear them, and will quick relieve himself of the dreadful nausea! Some of you know what it is to drink tepid water to produce nausea and vomiting, and you can appreciate the force of this figure of speech.

What is there more loathsome than fair professions and a false life? I have suffered but too much from this very thing myself. Many a man begins with saying I am Mr. Finney’s friend; I esteem Mr. Finney highly; — but — but — I cannot approve his measures — I cannot endorse his course.” So having begun with gaining public confidence, they end by using it all to injure me and my usefulness in the worst possible way. They come up to salute with a kiss — and then give the fatal stab! This is the surest way to do mischief. This is the backslider’s course. He says — See how I love the dear Savior! Then he goes his way and lives out the utmost dishonor against His name. Some writer has said — “Protect me from my friends; I can withstand my enemies myself.” No wonder Christ should feel so, as to His backslidden people.

## REMARKS

This course is a most deceptive, because a most hardening process. You may take any number of infidels or Universalists, people of most irreligious, prayerless character, place them under the same preaching and the same influences for conversion with an equal number of backsliders, and none of the former will be converted to one of the latter. Where did infidels or Universalists ever resist faithful instruction and warning, as backsliders have done in this congregation? The reason is, backsliders deceive themselves to their fearful hardening and sudden destruction. Hear what Christ said to the Laodiceans — “I will spew thee out of my mouth.” So he did. He warned; they repented not; and now their candlestick is removed from its place. For long ages past, the Mussulman has muttered his blasphemies on the very spot where those churches stood. Yet who heeds the warning!

**2.** The absence of religious zeal is scarcely considered a sin. If you speak to people about their great sin, they look up in surprise and say — what! whom have I cheated? Whom have I overreached or slandered? They will tell you of David’s great sin, of the awful dishonor which he brought upon God. True, David’s sin was a horrible affair; doubtless his heart felt it most deeply; but he did not begin to dishonor God as the backsliders of our day are doing it. He was in the main a good man, and a laborious and useful Christian; and all the nation knew it. The closing scene of that sad transaction shows it. A humble prophet could come to the lofty monarch of Israel and pierce him through and through with the arrows of convicting truth, and even be received gratefully. His repentance and future life told the story. From his smitten heart flowed strains of sorrowing penitence and holy resolve all along down the history of the church to this day! Reproach him for dishonoring Christianity? His case is not to be named in comparison with modern backsliders.

**3.** It is most remarkable that churches now tolerate backsliders, while Christ spewed them out of his mouth. Angels know them as outcasts, and pass them by; but the church retains them, and allows them still to come to her holy table with mummeries and lies. They go on, swearing falsely,

full of levity and worldly mindedness. Do you think this is saying too much against them? The very thought shows where you are.

**4.** “Whom I love, says Christ, I rebuke;” “Behold, he says, I stand at the door and knock” — ready to enter and to bless. I come even to your house and to your heart; if you will but hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and all the past shall be forgiven and forgotten. We shall be friends again as ever, and you shall have all the precious tokens of my love.

Who of you stand here today convicted of backsliding and lukewarmness — having these indications manifest in your spirit and life — saying, My peace of mind is gone; I have lost my light, lost my way. And are you willing to acknowledge it? Will you confess it to yourself — and confess it also before earth and heaven? Many know they are in a lukewarm state, yet would as soon die as confess it. Are you convinced of your sin in this matter? Then “be zealous and repent.” Nothing short of earnest zeal to repent will suffice. Shrink not back in cold unbelief. Hear the tender appeal — “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”

# GOD'S COMMANDMENTS NOT GRIEVOUS

*“His commandments are not grievous.” 1 John 5:3*

The commandments here spoken of are God's. The whole verse reads — “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous.” It is elsewhere said, we may know we love God because we love His children. Here the order is reversed; — “we know we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments.” Both statements are true. If we truly and rightly love men we shall love God also; and if God, then we shall love His children too.

*“Grievous,”* in our text means oppressive, heavy to be borne; yet not heavy in the physical, but in the moral, sense.

I. And here in the outset we must enquire when a commandment may be said to be grievous, and how we may know whether it is truly so regarded or not. What are those qualities and relations which constitute a commandment really *grievous*? Have we any certain test, any sure means of knowing?

We have. God has given us a moral nature by which we may judge, and by which indeed we cannot but judge. Indeed, God requires us to judge by the decisions of this very nature, a requisition which assumes that His written word imposes no precepts on us inconsistent with the moral nature He has given us. It should not be overlooked that God has given us two volumes of revelation, the one written; the other implanted in our constitution. It is safe therefore to assume that the precepts of the one cannot be in conflict with the unquestionable decisions of the other.

Upon this principle, we know,

**(1.)** That a commandment, impossible to be fulfilled, must be pronounced grievous. We cannot help pronouncing it so, let who ever will affirm the contrary.

**(2.)** The same is true of a commandment that is unreasonable, one which our moral sense affirms to be so.

A commandment may be unreasonable in many respects; e.g. if it be manifestly unnecessary; the result of capricious severity. If we say this, we should say, that the command is unreasonable, and therefore grievous.

Supposing we know beyond question that the commandments are unnecessary, then if they require great things under great and solemn penalties, they are a great grievance; if under infinite penalties, then they are infinitely grievous; if under light penalties, then they are a light grievance. If the things required are not important, and yet are enforced by grave and fearful penalties, the commands are clearly grievous. Every sane mind necessarily affirms this to be the case.

**(3.)** A partial commandment is grievous. If it requires different things of persons under the same circumstances; if it has respect of persons, we condemn it as grievous.

Again, if it were difficult to be obeyed, even by the well disposed, and great penalties were attached to disobedience; if under the best circumstances and with the utmost facilities, obedience were scarcely possible, and failure almost certain, this would be grievous.

Again, if we were required to secure any given end and the requisite means were not within our reach, and are not furnished us by the Power that makes the requisition; if we were required to make brick without straw, or to convert the world without the requisite agencies and powers, and the commands were enforced by heavy penalties, this must be regarded as greatly grievous.

Or, if the command were unadapted to our nature or opposed to our highest and best interests; or if the possibility of obeying it were precluded by our circumstances, or by our relations, and we are laid under the burden of heavy penalties to do these things, this would be truly grievous. We could not possibly regard it otherwise.

We should regard a commandment grievous if it required anything more than honest intention and best endeavor, inasmuch as whatever lies outside of and beyond this must be impossible to us. What we cannot do with the

best intention and the utmost endeavor, we cannot do at all. This, therefore, would be grievous.

Or yet again, if the interests to be protected by law were of vast importance, and yet were protected by only a slight penalty, such a law might well be deemed grievous by those who had interests demanding protection. You would regard it as a most grievous law which should propose to protect your life by a penalty of only 37 1/2 cents.

Or if a trifling end were set up, but a fearful penalty were attached, this also would be grievous.

## II. WHEN A COMMANDMENT IS NOT GRIEVOUS

It is not grievous merely because it conflicts with our unreasonable desires. If the desires are contrary to reason, it is not unreasonable that laws should cross them.

Law is not grievous because opposed to the selfishness of men. A precept may be perfectly, infinitely opposed to selfishness, and yet be far from being grievous.

It is not grievous because of its being opposed to our self-will. A self-will that is arbitrary and capricious is no standard by which to judge of law.

Law is not grievous when it merely opposes what conscience also opposes. If law does not conflict with a good and sound conscience, all is right, for conscience is the reason judging on moral subjects — the faculty constituted of God for this end. If conscience be for it, therefore, it cannot be grievous.

No law is grievous which requires only that which is for our highest good. This, our reason necessarily affirms.

If the object of the precept is to secure our own highest good, it cannot be regarded by us as grievous, for its spirit is altogether good.

Now do not say that in these statements I am dogmatizing. I am only affirming self-evident propositions. They need only a clear statement to appear to every mind self-evident.

If the law forbids nothing except what would be injurious to us, it is all right.

If it requires us to deny ourselves for the good of others, all is right, provided this self-denial will be for our own highest good. If it will be greater good to us than the sacrifice is an evil; if the self-denial, though real and great, gives us back more than an equivalent, the law which requires it is by no means grievous. Especially is this true if the self-denial not only gives us a greater good, but is an essential and only means of securing our highest good. By no means can this be deemed grievous, requiring of us a self-denial, of which the more we exercise, the greater good we secure.

A law is not grievous where it requires of us simple honesty — a regard to the rights of others, equal to our regard for our own. This cannot be grievous. This may be honest and right if it requires no more of us than we require of others conscientiously. Who can pronounce such a commandment to be grievous?

I shall proceed by and by to enquire whether God's commandments have these qualities and this character; but at present, I am discussing the subject only in its general and abstract form. So doing, we may perhaps better establish the principles that underlie the subject.

A command cannot be said to be grievous when it requires of us only the reasonable employment of all we have and are. For so much *is* reasonable, no matter what the particular service may be under the circumstances. It were a contradiction to say it is unreasonable to require a reasonable service of active powers, made for useful action, or of means of usefulness, put in our hands by our Creator.

That cannot be unreasonable or grievous which simply requires of us a right voluntary state. We know ourselves to have a free will, the power to originate our own volitions. This is a thing of which we are absolutely certain from our consciousness. We do *not* certainly know that we can move our own muscles. The law of connection between the will and the muscles is sometimes suspended. You might find it to be so in any effort you might make. But you know you can control your own will. You may try this at any time; and you will find it so. You also believe and assume it to be so, of everybody else, of sane and sound mind.



Now, therefore, if God's love requires of you only a right state of your will, and those acts and states which follow naturally from a right state of the will, no man can reasonably feel that this is grievous, or can honestly pronounce it to be so.

A commandment is not grievous when it requires nothing capricious, nothing unnecessary, nothing hard to the well-disposed; and threatens disobedience with only the proper penalties.

Again, it cannot be deemed grievous when we could not be satisfied if it required nothing less than it does; when we ourselves, in all honesty, are constrained to say, it is all right; but if anything less were required, or if its requisitions were enforced by a less penalty, we should say — it is wrong. Especially if we are aware that any other course than that indicated in the precept would be hard or even ruinous — hard in the sense in which sin is hard, and ruinous in the sense in which sin is ruinous.

Again, if it requires us to do nothing for which help is not provided — all the help requisite in the case — this is not grievous. If it tenders to us all the appropriate instrumentalities necessary to make us practically obedient, we cannot regard it as grievous.

Nor again, when it is easily understood by the well disposed. If the law were above our reach, as the ancient king nailed his on a pillar too high to read, — you might complain; but since the law is made so plain that he who runs may read it, you cannot regard it as grievous. Especially you cannot so regard it, since the will is taken for the deed, and it is always accepted if there be a winning mind and a good intention. e.g. Suppose the command be to convert the world. You set yourself to do it. You live for this purpose. You honestly intend to do all you can for this end. You fail only because, having exhausted your powers, the work has proved too great for your strength. Very well; you shall have your reward, as if you had succeeded and done all. What! say you, is the will taken for the deed? Yes; when the whole heart is in it and you do your utmost. Ah, said that missionary, as he returned with ruined health and blighted hopes, "I have failed! My mission purpose and endeavors have been a failure!" Perhaps not. You have been to Africa, and are driven back by the climate. Very well, you have obeyed the command and you shall not fail of your reward.

### III. I AM NEXT TO CONSIDER IN SPECIAL THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, TO SEE WHETHER THEY CAN RIGHTLY BE DEEMED GRIEVOUS

#### 1. Negatively, as to what they are *not* and do *not* require.

Not one of them requires anything above the use of our own powers, and nothing which goes beyond the dictates and approval of our own reason. The precepts of the law and of the gospel are identical in spirit and in general character, neither requiring of us anything more than we can do, nor anything not in harmony with our reason.

God's law does not require us to undo anything we have done that is wrong — in the season of putting it back to its position before being done. This might be, and usually would be, impossible. God only requires us to undo our present wrong purposes and states of mind; the wrong deeds of the past. He has provided a way to forgive; the present wrong of our heart He makes our concern.

He does not require us to make satisfaction for the wrong done, either by atonement, or by making up for the wrong we have done.

He does not require us to save ourselves and secure the salvation of our own souls, without His aid and grace. He neither requires or expects that we shall save anybody else by our own wisdom or efforts. He knows this is naturally impossible.

He does not ask us to work out a legal righteousness for the future. He does not make perfect obedience to law the condition of our salvation. This, if required, would be grievous, inasmuch as we have entirely broken the law and forfeited all hope in that direction.

Nor does He require us to fulfil the law in the future without reference to His grace, and without His aid, presented in the gospel. Nor does He demand that we shall bear our own burdens, overcome our temptations, and fight our spiritual battles — without His grace, guidance and strength. He does not expect us to be our own guide, to find our own way, and to create our own success.

Again, God requires nothing that will in the least mar our own happiness, or interfere with our true interests. Nothing inconsistent with our highest progress in true improvement; nothing that naturally retards our rapid advancement in all that is good.

He does not require us to love Him above our ability.

The law specifies — “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength.” With *whose* mind — and *whose* strength? Only thine own. And with how much of this mind and strength? *Only with all*. Nothing more. It were simply absurd to say that this is impossible; and therefore it is impious to think or speak of it as grievous.

The law does not require us to regard and treat our Heavenly Father in any respect better than He deserves to be treated, and never better than *we know* He deserves, or than we affirm that we *ought* to treat Him. When we can honestly and conscientiously be satisfied with ourselves as to our treatment of God, He will be satisfied. No one shall ever be able, honestly, to say — “I think Thou requirest me to obey to love Thee more than Thou deservest to be obeyed and loved.” There is nothing in either law or gospel which requires anything beyond the legitimate demands of our own reason. Nay more; the law appeals to him in its own vindication and makes his own conscience the rule. God appeals to every moral agent to judge for himself what is right. “Are not My ways equal, says He; are not your ways unequal?” “Of how much sorer punishment, *suppose ye*, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God?” So throughout the Scripture God makes His appeal to man’s own mind to judge for himself of the rectitude of the law imposed on him and of the equity of the threatened penalty. Who then should say that the spirit of His government is overbearing, capricious, unreasonable? Who can regard His commandments grievous?

Again, God never requires His interests to be estimated above their real value. Yet some think God to be very selfish, in requiring everybody to love Him. But what less could He require? God does not ask you to love Him more than He deserves to be loved; nor more than it is right you should love Him. This love which God requires of you towards Himself is good-willing, and it has intrinsically for its object the happiness of sentient

beings, and should be in proportion to the amount of being, so to speak, which each individual may have; or (which amounts to the same result) to the amount of happiness each is capable of enjoying. Now God's capacity for happiness is infinite and therefore is an end of infinite value and rightly claims the utmost good-willing of all created beings. When God asks you to love Him supremely, He only asks you to love Him in proportion to the importance of the object — on His own happiness. If His interests are supreme, why not accord to them your supreme regard?

But He requires of you also the love of complacency; a delight in His character as good. He asks that this should be supreme, and why should He not? Is He not infinitely worthy of your complacency and regard?

Yet further; God never requires us to regard any interest not known, or which we are not capable of knowing; nor does He ask us to regard any interest beyond its perceived or perceivable value. Thus universally, God measures His demands by our powers of obedience, love and service. He never requires us to do things we cannot reach and grasp; never, to treat Him with any more confidence than He deserves, nor to love Him when He is unworthy of our love, or at all beyond His worthiness.

God's requisitions upon us never go beyond our honest convictions of what they should be. He does not require things, the propriety of which is to our own minds questionable. He is never despotic, never tyrannical. His intelligent creatures are always under the conviction that God's will ought to be obeyed and ought to be the universal law. He requires of no creature of His in any world more obedience or love than His own intelligence sees and affirms to be right.

No one can rightly ask of us any more or other feelings than those which naturally result from right intentions and a right state of the will. The feelings, it should be considered, are involuntary and therefore are not directly controlled by the will; yet they are so related to the will that certain feelings naturally follow a right state of the will and certain other feelings, a wrong state. Hence moral responsibility truly attaches to the state of the will; and it is on this principle that God acts, declaring that "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted."

In accordance with this, God never requires any other action or course of life except what naturally flows from right intention. Hence He lays His requisitions on the will or heart, requiring only that this be right and thus virtually requiring its natural results and out-flowings.

#### IV. WHAT GOD'S LAW DOES REQUIRE

An equitable state of mind; one that regards every known interest according to our judgment of its value. God requires us to regard the universal good of each being according to its perceived value. This is an equitable and right state of mind. It is a voluntary and a simple state of mind, a mere unit. Instead of being embarrassed with points of casuistry, it comes to you asking only that you give your heart to God and merge your will in homage to His because His is infinite reason. It simply requires you to regard all interests according to their perceived value. If your neighbors interests are equal to your own, regard them so; if less, regard them less; if greater, regard them more. God never requires any being to sacrifice his own interest for a less valuable interest of another. Hence, when He requires of us universal benevolence, this does not demand that we love others and not ourselves — God and not ourselves; but only each, according to its value. Hence this law never drops from regard our own interest, but most effectually secures it.

This Christian, virtuous, life, is the natural and certain result of the state of mind which drops selfishness, and puts self and all other interests in their proper places. You have only to maintain that state of mind and abide in it; then your acts and state will meet the entire demands of the law.

Let us now look into the gospel. This requires the same as the law, and something more. It comes, in most inviting and impressive form, to win us back to the love and obedience which the law enjoins. Its special requisition for this end is that we *receive the Holy Ghost* as the condition and means of practical obedience and a practical realization of the great result of holiness in heart and life. Man needs such an influence; therefore God provides it. Whatever else did or did not occur at the fall of man in Eden, it is plain that the Holy Ghost was grieved. Man tore himself away from his God and from communion with Him, so that God no longer dwelt

within him. But now God is seeking to restore that state of communion and fellowship. He now returns to man in the person of His Spirit, and asks of the sinner to open his heart and make this Heaven agent welcome.

I need not here speak of the case of those who know not the gospel, only to say that all such are plainly under the law only, and not under the gospel. They have the work of the law written in their heart; and by this light they stand or fall. But of us, who have the gospel, God requires that we should receive the Holy Ghost. Some will say — is not this unreasonable? No; for the Holy Ghost is not far away in some remote quarter of the universe where you cannot reach Him, but is present, and needs only be made welcome and He will take up His abode with you. He comes in connection with His word, to teach, enforce and impress it; and the thing for you to do is to yield yourself to the conviction of the truth, thus revealed. To yield to truth, is to yield to God. When the Bible shows you that you ought to believe and trust God, then to do this is to yield to the Spirit of God and to welcome His presence to your heart. When you know that you ought to give up your sins, then to yield to this conviction is to consent to the claims of His Spirit and to receive it to your soul. Else you resist the Holy Ghost. He does not expect you to rise of yourself and without His aid from the state of death in which you are plunged, but requires you to receive the Holy Ghost, and continually, to yield to every conviction of duty. By presentation of the truth, He draws; you are to yield; He constrains; you acquiesce. He requires you to be led and filled with the Spirit; to lean on Him and to avail yourself of His help. He bids you obey His perfect law; and by this divine agency, offered through the Spirit, He provides all requisite aid and strength for this purpose. This provision is both full and free. If it were otherwise, you might find or feel it hard to be required to be filled with the Holy Ghost. If you must needs ascend into heaven to bring Him down, or descend into the deep to bring Him up, this might be grievous. But only to receive a present and offered Spirit; how can you think this hard? Jesus comes to restore and reinstate you in holiness and love; does He require you to do all this unaided? He neither expects nor requires it. He tenders to you His advocacy; proposes to advocate your cause without cost. Are you rich? Give to your suffering fellow men and please God therein; Are you poor? He requires of you only according to what you have.

He does not require you to live an anxious distracted life, bearing all your own burdens alone, but has permitted you to be “without carefulness,” casting all your care upon Him. He gives you the fullest permission to let the peace of God rule in your heart; and is this a hard thing? Is this state of mind a hard and grievous one? Jesus said — “My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” The men of the world give sparingly, grudgingly; they give today and take back tomorrow; but not so does Christ give to His friends. Is this grievous?

He says — “Rejoice always.” Many seem to think religion only fit for sick-beds and funeral occasions, and they say, “What have we to do with a religion so gloomy? Must we forego all our enjoyments? How grievous that would be!” The “righteous should make their boast in Him and be glad.” In His salvation, let them “exceedingly rejoice.” God invites them to look up to Him hopefully, never desponding, much less despairing. If He had required you to rejoice in worldly pleasure and be happy in the good things of earth, this were indeed a hard saying and a grievous commandment.

But I have heard some of you say — “God wants nothing to do with me; He has utterly cast me off; How then can I believe and trust in Him? I have abused Him too long.” Mark; God asks of you no such feelings, no such thoughts. On the contrary He only asks you to take Him at His word and welcome to your soul a full salvation. He gives you the full consolation of believing. Is this grievous?

He requires you to embrace every dispensation with a kiss; to believe that all things shall work together for your good; and so believing, to rejoice in all your afflictions and tribulations.

Of you, sinner, He requires that you should come today and bring all your load of guilt to Him. Come, however deeply conscious of much past sin; come and hold your soul under the flowing stream of His redeeming blood. And is this hard? Is this too bad? Is it too bad that He should forgive so freely and tender you the waters of life without money or price? He does not require you to hear a great many sermons or make a great many impenitent prayers.

But you say — “Lord, if I were a Christian, I would come at once to Thee; but now, I must certainly make myself better before I come.” “No,” says your Savior; “come now. Make no delay; offer no excuses for refusal.” “Can I come, you say, without His help?” Is He not helping you even now? Suppose I should sit sullenly down and refuse to move, when everything is ready and nothing wanting but the action of my own will? Suppose I should then plead that I lacked the power and that I must wait! What nonsense!

Now He offers you His hand and asks you to take hold of it with your own. There must be a reciprocal taking hold of hands, the Spirit’s agency working together with your own. The hand of your faith must take hold of the hand let down from heaven to you. And is this hard or grievous?

## REMARKS

What could God have required less than He does? Nothing. What could He have required which would be more easy? I appeal to every sinner in this house; can you think of anything more easy, more feasible, more available? Of course you cannot think of His saving you in your sins. This would be no salvation. Do you complain that Christ’s commands are grievous? In what one particular could He have done better?

You know that Christ has always done as much as He could for your salvation. Can you suggest a better, or more available system? Can you devise anything better than for you to take hold of His strength? He gives you the entire influence of His example, the utmost virtue of His blood and of His dying love; can you think of anything more favorable?

Let me ask these young women, can you think of anything better? Has He made salvation less easy than He might? Did you ever tell Him so? Do you say — “Why did He not over-rule my freedom?” If He had, He could not have saved you any how. Could He have done anything more that would have been of service towards your salvation? Has He refused to make any sacrifices that if made, would have done you good? Did He avoid the cross? Did He shun the shame? Did He stay in heaven and bask in its bliss? Oh No! He came down; He *flew* to your relief; although He saw how many groans and how much blood it would cost Him.



Have you thought of any expression of love which He has not made? Of any words of tenderness and forbearance He should have uttered, but did not? Have you acquainted yourself with what He has said? Is it said guardedly? Is the fulfillment uncertain? What is wanting?

How wicked in you if you complain! What have you to complain of? He has done the best He could; and have you any right to complain of that? How wicked to regard and treat His service and His gospel as if it were a hard thing!

A young woman said to me, "I am trying to become a Christian." What does that mean? Real honest trying implies the full consent of the will, and that is all that God requires. This consent is, being converted. People commonly deceive themselves when they talk thus about *trying*.

How great a mistake, to suppose that we cannot obey God. If our circumstances and nature were such that we absolutely *could* not obey Him, it would indeed be very grievous for Him to require it. But how can it be difficult now, since the thing He requires is only right willing? To say that a moral agent tries to will right and yet cannot is a downright absurdity. Nobody ever tried to will right and found it hard. This would be a contradiction in terms.

Inasmuch as the Spirit of God is freely given to us, it must be easy and not hard for us to get it. The command therefore to "be filled with the Spirit" is by no means grievous.

Only those complain of its being difficult to obey the law who would fain do it without accepting the help offered in the gospel. With the heart all wrong, they try to render an external obedience. This is always a hard uphill business.

Without being at all aware of it many are trying to get along without Christ. Their effort is to make themselves good enough by dint of resolutions and efforts of their own, made quite in their own strength. Such persons, of course, will find it hard to be religious.

In a little different mode, some try to get grace by works of love. They want to come to Christ, but in order to get Christ, they try to work up a

certain state of feeling and perform some legal works. All this is quite aside from the simplicity of gospel faith.

In like manner many try to get the Spirit without yielding to His present teachings. Overlooking and disobeying these, they wait for more light and pray for more of the Holy Spirit, while they refuse to obey what they have.

In fact, such persons fail to use a present offered Savior; do not realize how near, and how free, and how rich, are His gifts, nor how truly they are available — that they may as truly have and use the strength of Christ as they can use the strength of their own muscles. You may hear them crying and shouting aloud for the Holy Ghost, as if He were as far off as the fixed stars, not aware that He is really *within them*, trying to bring them to take hold of His present help. Such people make religion a hard and grievous matter. They do not understand its great simplicity and its ineffable richness and adaptation to human want.

Those who refuse to take Christ at His word will find it hard to get religion. You will hear them saying —

*“Reason I hear, her counsels weigh,  
And all I hear I approve;  
but still I find it hard t’obey,  
And harder still to love.”*

Is that your experience? If so, then you do not believe one word of Christ’s promises. You have failed to reach the simplicity of gospel faith. While Christ is trying by every means to woo and to wed your heart to Himself, and lets down an almighty arm to rescue and save you, what reception does He meet with! Each Sabbath evening in this place, we meet persons who think it one of the hardest things in the world to become Christians; who say — “I am trying to find Christ, but I must conclude He is not to be found. I cannot come to Him.” Are not all these conceptions of Christ unkind to Him? Are they not false, injurious to Christ?

The great mass of professors of religion take ground directly opposed to our text. Whereas the inspired word declares — “His commandments are not grievous,” they represent God’s service as very hard and full of grief. Reason; they are in legal bondage, and have never broken out into the

glorious liberty of the children of God. Let me ask these sinners, have you not received the impression from what you have heard Christians say, that it is a very difficult thing to get religion and that its service is so hard and God's law so high, it requires an angel's heart to keep it? Whereas the truth is, God requires nothing in anywise unreasonable. It is easier to be well-disposed than ill-disposed. How then can you say, it is easier to rebel than to obey? O sinner, all such notions are utterly false. His commandments are not grievous.

Look at that young man who says — “If I become a Christian I shall be compelled to preach the gospel, and O, what dull work and poor pay!” Does he forget that they who “turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever?” Is this too hard?

But he says — “I must be a missionary and go to Africa; be sick there and die an early death.” Well; “he that will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.”

“But I am not eloquent.” Oh, not eloquent! Can you not stammer out the gospel story? If it were really in your heart filling all your soul with its rich experience, could you not give some utterance to its glorious yet simple message? Beware of ambition! If you could be the first preacher in all the land — the most eloquent and the most applauded, that would do! Oh, that unholy ambition! You make your religion insufferably hard if you try to serve both God and your own ambition!

# THE CHRISTIAN'S GENUINE HOPE

*“Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.”*  
— 1 John 3:3

The connection of this passage shows what its meaning must be. With admiring wonder the apostle calls our attention to that love bestowed on us by the Father in calling us sons of God. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called sons of God!” This is a present blessing. “Behold, *now* are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” The thing known and present is our sonship — that we are the sons of God; the thing future and not yet known pertains to *what we shall be*. This will come to light when Christ shall appear; because, *then*, seeing Christ as He is, we shall certainly, by the very laws of mind, and in accordance with the divine plan, be *like Him*. This is the thing we hope for. This precisely constitutes the Christian’s hope — that he shall see Christ as He is, and be eternally like Him.

**1.** In discussing this subject, I must first define the psychological nature of hope. It is compounded of two elements — desire and expectation. Plainly there must be desire, for an event we dread and fear, we cannot say we hope for. For example, death. The mind that dreads death cannot be said to hope for it, however certain that it must come. So there must also be expectation, at least some degree of it; for no man hopes for what he knows or believes to be impossible.

It should be farther remarked that desire, as an element of hope, should be taken in its broad and comprehensive sense, as implying more than a mere action of the sensibility. It should involve such a state of mind as calls the will into action. The man not only wishes and wants, but is willing to *work* for what he honestly hopes to attain.

**2.** Hope is always a condition of effort to secure its object, and a powerful stimulus to such effort. The object must be desired and chosen; else, it is

impossible for the mind to make efforts to attain it. The will must be fixed and fully purposed to secure the object, if possible; else, no proper exertion will follow. And there must be also expectation; otherwise, the mind will not put forth its energies. A man cannot exert himself sanely and wisely for a thing he knows or even believes to be impossible and not to be at all expected. The object must be deemed possible to be attained; and there must be at least some degree of expectation of its attainment. These elements are not only the conditions, but are the natural stimulus to effective effort. In fact, they necessitate effort. When you apprehend an event or result as a great good, and are led to regard it as attainable, you must of necessity put forth efforts to attain it. This is only the result of a fixed law of mind.

**3.** A specific hope must secure a corresponding course of life. This follows by necessity from the principles above stated. There are many specific objects of desire and expectation; consequently there must be a great many specific objects of hope. For example, you may hope to get an education. If so, you set your will upon it. Your hope, in proportion to its strength, stimulates your effort. So of wealth, fame, office, honor; when the elements of hope are present, your efforts are called forth, and you try to attain the hoped for object. So I might go over a vast field, showing that hope invariably does and must produce special effort.

**4.** The Christian hope is one specific form, and the general laws of mind compel us to apply the principles above explained, to this form also. In fact our text is a distinct affirmation of this sentiment, and gives it a *universal application*. “Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself.” The apostle positively affirms that every instance of this hope will be manifested by the appropriate effort. How can it be otherwise? The object before the mind is the being like Christ. You hope to be like Him when you shall see Him as He is. Now you can see at once that this hope must beget a constant endeavor to become like Christ now. For what is this hope, and what does it imply? Study this point with care. A true hope of heaven implies a realization of what heaven is; for a man deceives himself if he thinks he has a Christian hope and yet does not rightly apprehend what heaven is. I knew a lady who long time thought she had wanted to go to heaven, and had enjoyed, as she supposed, a Christian hope. But in process of time truth broke in upon her mind and she began

to see, as she had not done before, the *holiness* of heaven. At length the subject came fully before her mind as it were in a blaze of heaven's own light; and she said to her husband, "You know I have long been hoping for heaven, and have supposed myself in a measure prepared for it; but my mind is entirely changed. I do not want to go to heaven; they are so holy there!"

It is most evident that you must have a deep sympathy with heaven, its society, and its employments; else you cannot by any means have a Christian hope. The Christian hope, is the hope of being like Christ; and for this, you must understand His character — must see its excellence, and the possibility of being like Him; this will impel you to labor to be transformed into His likeness.

## REMARKS

1. Many have no just idea of the Christian hope. They talk of hoping that they are Christians, as if this were the Christian hope. They hope they are converted, and they take this to be the hope of the Christian; but obviously they have no just conception of what the Christian hope is. Theirs is not a Christian hope, for it has not the right object. They hope they shall escape punishment; they hope they shall not be doomed to hell; but this is by no means the true end of a Christian hope. And furthermore, they have not the right expectation of attaining the true end; they do not expect to become like Christ; so that both elements of the Christian hope are wanting.
2. A good hope is of priceless value. It is the very secret of holy living. One never lives holy while in despair of attaining to the image of Christ. No man lives holy unless he has the conception of holiness and of heaven. On the other hand a true hope fires the soul with its desire and expectation, and sets it upon mightily energizing to attain the desired object. Hence this is the secret of holy living. I do not say it will produce a holy life without the aid of the Spirit of God; but I do say that the Spirit cannot produce a holy life without this hope. The agency of this hope as a means and an instrumentality seems naturally indispensable.

Without hope none can attain holiness. You cannot attain sanctification without first having the hope of attaining it, and then being stimulated by this hope to make appropriate efforts. Hence, you must expect to *attain* as a condition of attaining.

**3.** A good hope naturally secures its object. For example a young man hopes to become a good minister. What will be the effect of this hope? First, he will get before his mind the true ideal of a good minister. He cannot intelligently hope for such a result without this ideal. The very ideal is a first and necessary step towards the attainment of the end. Then, his hope will set him upon efforts. It will make him ever wakeful and ever earnest in the attainment of his object. His hope becomes both condition and stimulus of attainment.

**4.** A false hope must and will reveal itself in many ways. It will reveal itself by its obviously mistaken end. Suppose it to be the common hope of being a Christian. A man has a hope, he says; you ask him what he hopes for, and he tells you he hopes he is a Christian. This man, perhaps, does not at all conceive what constitutes eternal life. He has never thought of it as being an eternal likeness to Jesus Christ, and an eternal sympathy with Him. On the contrary, he thinks of it only, or at least chiefly, as an escape from hell. Now, by natural consequence, this hope will reveal itself as we so often see it — no energizing after holiness — no laboring to be prepared to live forever with Christ; but anything else, rather than this. Yet who does not see that the result of the Christian hope must be a most earnest preparation for the employments of heaven?

A young lady of my acquaintance received a proposal of marriage. She frankly confessed her interest in the proposal, for really she felt the highest esteem for the gentleman who made it. It was indeed this very esteem, coupled with a deep sense of her own deficiencies, which led her to reply — I am not prepared now to become your wife, because I cannot be to you all that a wife ought to be. I can accept your proposal only on the condition that it shall not be consummated for some time to come. Her condition was accepted, and the engagement made. Then the young lady entered upon an era of hope. She thenceforth expected to become his wife, and earnestly desired to become all that the wife of such a man should be. What must be the effect of this hope on her mind? Obviously, it puts her

upon most earnest efforts to make all those improvements in her habits and character which she is conscious she needs. Now this illustration touches the very point in hand. The Christian says — I must be prepared to dwell with Christ. I must be in readiness for those Divine joys and employments which constitute heaven. The heart is set upon it, and the assured hope of it inspires intense efforts. Such a hope will make a Christian avoid everything that can displease Christ. Suppose that young woman, betrothed, yet delaying marriage with a man she highly respects and warmly loves, should nevertheless pay no attention to preparing herself for her anticipated married life; what would you think of her? The supposition is incredible. The things supposed could never all co-exist in a sane mind. The very laws of mind forbid their actual co-existence. So of the Christian. It is utterly impossible that a hope of being like Christ, and of seeing Him as He is, should fail to quicken the heart to realize the very result hoped for.

Eternal life is nothing else but sympathy with Christ and its consequences. Becoming like Christ in spirit and temper, you have the life that dwells in Him. Your soul is essentially transformed into His moral image.

Some of you have known the personal history of a somewhat distinguished editor of a religious paper, who, after editing it for a season, relapsed into a career of scandalous vice, and finally died a horrible death. It is said that his religious hope, and its action upon his spiritual state, were just such as I have been representing as the spurious hope. He only hoped for an imaginary heaven — not for the fitness which the real heaven requires — not that he might see Christ as He is, or be like Him. It operated on his mind thus. When his hope became strong, he became careless, gave himself up to the power of temptation, and relapsed into shameful sin. Then, conscience roused itself; he became alarmed; his hope faded away; he set himself to his religious works, preaching and praying, till he regained his hope, and then fell back again into the same careless and prayerless state as before, only each time a little worse. Then, convicted of sin, he aroused himself once more — went over the same routine, vibrating perpetually from a delusive hope to utter licentiousness of heart and life, until at last death found him, and terminated the scene. Strange he did not see that such a hope revealed at once its utter rottenness! If his had been the true Christian hope, its very nature would have rendered it impossible



that he should relapse into sin under its influence. People do not backslide because they have a Christian hope, but because their hope is not genuine. They lose sight of the true object of a Christian hope. Their hope is radically spurious because it has a mistaken object.

A good hope must reveal itself in holy living. What can an unsanctifying hope be good for? It can only deceive and curse its possessor. A hope that makes a man careless and prayerless — what is it good for? Just nothing at all — save to ruin his soul. Such a hope is sheer presumption. So far from being any title to heaven, it is certainly a lure to hell. It is a nuisance to him and to everybody else. If his hope leads him into sin, it is the greatest curse he can have upon him. It is a nuisance to all his acquaintances. The existence of false hopes in the church, is one of the greatest evils in the world. They beget a vast amount of spurious religion. They lead men naturally and of necessity, to misconceptions of what true religion is. By false hopes, as I now use the phrase, I mean those that do not purify the heart. This is the certain mark of their spurious nature.

In the face of our text, and in defiance of the very nature of the case, many persons will hold on to an unsanctifying hope. Despite of the Bible, regardless of the very nature of the Christian hope, both of which forbid them to suppose their hope to be good for anything, they yet persist in the most confident expectation that all will be well. They will even regard any man as their enemy who shall try to tear their hope away, in order to save their soul. It is the greatest presumption possible to hold on to a hope which fails to renew the heart unto holiness.

Many are too proud to confess their hope to be false, when they inwardly know it to be so. They can see that they are surely deceived — but alas, the pride of their heart rebels against any confession of the humiliating truth. I knew the case of a lady who had been a professor of religion for eight years, and had been regarded as a good Christian, but being present on one occasion where a sermon was preached on the holiness of God, the truth came home to her mind with great power. She sunk upon her seat apparently helpless. The people brought her out at the close of service; I spoke to her, but she was quite unable to make any reply. After being in this state of overwhelming conviction and mental conflict for sixteen hours, she came out into the full light of the Savior's countenance, and then told

us how her mind had been exercised. She said, “I say that I had never known God. When you described His holiness, I saw that I had not the least degree of it myself, and indeed, that I did not *wish* to have any. I knew then that my character was utterly unlike God’s. Then all my Christian hope perished. My whole soul drew back from God, as if it refused to have anything more to do with a Being so holy and pure. Then followed convictions of my own sin and guilt — a fearful conflict — until grace triumphed and my soul bowed.

Such experiences are not uncommon. Persons who indulge the Christian hope, do not know how holy God is — have no just appreciations of His character, and therefore do not strive to become like God in this respect. Under this delusion they live, and thus they die, with no suspicion of their mistake until they open their eyes in hell. I have before my mind another case — that of a man who was altogether a leader in the church, and very intimate with the minister who frequented the place. On one occasion, as I was at his house, he asked me what I should think of a man who, day after day, prayed for the Holy Ghost, yet never received it. I replied, I should conclude that he prayed from wrong motives. But, continued he, suppose his motive was, to be happy, what then? That would be altogether selfish, I replied. What motive should he have? he asked. I answered, the same that David had when he prayed for pardoning and restoring grace; “Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” “O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise.” He turned suddenly away — said nothing; but, several hours afterward, he came to me and confessed that he turned away, mad at the truth I had presented, and deeply offended that God should require such self-renunciation. He saw himself in his real nakedness, but felt for some time that he had rather die than have it known that he had been deceived. At length he passed safely over that point where so many make shipwreck and are lost.

Backsliders always have false hopes, never a true one, as the very fact of their backsliding shows. If a man backslides, his hope must be bad, for he could not backslide if his hope were “an anchor to his soul, sure and steadfast” — if it were of the scriptural stamp, “a hope that maketh not ashamed.” A hope under the influence of which he would “purify himself, even as Christ is pure.” The backslider has only the hope that he shall be

converted, and this only serves to confirm him in his state of backsliding/ just as the sinner's hope of being one day converted, prevents him from being converted now. If you can tear away this hope, you may save his soul. So, if you can tear away the backslider's hope, you may save his soul; else, it is certainly lost beyond hope. The very idea of backsliding is inconsistent with a gospel hope — such as our text describes.

What is *your* hope? Some of you hope for an education; some of you for fame; some for respectable connections in society; but have you the Christian's hope? If you have, then your heart is set upon being like Christ. *Is it so?* Is your heart thus set? Does your hope beget most earnest striving to be like Christ? You have some religious hope of some sort — but is it a true *Christian's hope*? Many are so entirely in the dark, they hold on to a hope, supposing it all right, when, in the light of the Bible, there is not the first element of a Christian's hope in it. Their hope is their curse and their ruin.

We are compelled to conclude that there are but few of all the professed Christians of our world who have the true Christian's hope. I do not say, that there are but few real Christians — taken absolutely; but I do say their number is small relatively to the great mass who think themselves Christians. There are but few relatively, whose life and spirit show their hopes to be scriptural — but few who are really purifying themselves, even as Christ is pure.

No good hope can be kept secret. Some people talk of having a secret hope, and speak of others as having a secret hope. The fact is, a hope that can be kept secret, shows itself to be poor and vain. For if it were a good hope, it would lead its possessor to purify himself. No man can throw the energies of his being into the struggle after Christian purity, and still keep his religion a secret. The world will know him; Christian brethren will feel the warmth of his heart.

Some of you have a hope, which, instead of leading you on to a holy life, makes you quiet and easy in your sins. It does not tend at all to make you purify yourself from sin, but on the contrary, it makes you careless and dead in your sins. You know you live in sin, yet you have a hope that you shall be saved at last. Is it not a fact on the very face of it, that your hope is *bad*, and that your soul is on the way to hell? It has precisely the

opposite influence to what it should have; it works more sin rather than more holiness; it fits you for hell — not for heaven; yet you hold on to it as if it were your very life. Do you not see that it must inevitably drown your soul in destruction? It helps you to live careless and prayerless. It impels you after everything else but Christ. Surely you must see that it is leading you down to hell! Unless you abandon it as a nuisance, a curse and a lie, you can never be saved! Put it away as an abomination that is leading your soul down to hell! Why not put it away? What good can it do you? You may just as well have a good hope, in a glorious gospel — a hope that shall purify your heart, and lift you upward to heaven. Why will you have the counterfeit, while the good coin can be had just as well and as cheap? Why cleave to delusion and death, when the truth is free, and eternal life in Christ comes without money and without price?

# ON NEGLECTING SALVATION

*“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Hebrews 2:3*

Every thing about this question invests it with solemn interest and presses us to ask — What does it mean? Escape what? If we neglect so great salvation, what shall we not escape?

The question itself plainly implies that there is danger of something, and presupposes that you are likely to neglect, and if so, are certain to incur some fearful evil. His very mode of asking the question shows that there can be no answer — none of such sort as would show how an escape can be secured. You must be saved from something; — must make an effort to secure that salvation; — neglecting this effort, you cannot escape.

The writer conceives of this salvation as great. If you attend carefully to the context you will see that he had in eye a particular reason for representing this salvation as great. You will notice that he opens his epistle by saying — “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son” — “appointed heir of all things,” “by whom He made the worlds” — above all the angels — spoken of often in the scriptures as really God. “Therefore, says the writer, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip.” For if — under the old economy — the word revealed from God to men by means of angels, was sanctioned of God, and every form of disobedience was visited with retribution; “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” This salvation was first distinctly preached by the Lord Himself, and has since been confirmed unto us by those who heard Him, and by many miracles wrought of God to endorse their mission.

From this hasty sketch of the context, it is plain that the apostle conceived of Christ as infinitely above the angels through whom God revealed His law under the old economy. Indeed, the Father called Him God, and commanded all the angels to worship Him. Then turning to the history of the Jewish dispensation he alludes to the well-known fact that every insult shown to the word as published by angels was sternly

punished, and on this fact, coupled with the transcendent greatness of the Son of God, he bases his appeal — How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation? If sin against God's word by angels was so surely and fearfully punished, how much more, sin against the word that comes through His equal Son!

This was obviously the particular thing before Paul's mind when he pronounced this salvation great; — yet he does not by any means imply that this salvation is great in this respect only. I shall therefore proceed now to designate certain other respects in which this salvation may be seen to be great.

- 1.** The greatness of this salvation must correspond to the greatness of that evil from which it saves us.
- 2.** It must correspond, also, to the greatness of that positive good which it confers.

By how great soever the ruin wrought and threatened by sin, by so much must this salvation be great; and again, by how great soever the glory to which it exalts the saved sinner, by so much is it great. Its greatness then, is well and truly measured by the woes of hell and the bliss of heaven.

But to enter somewhat more into particulars; — This gospel saves from sinning: — yea, from endless sinning. It must be a great thing for a man to be saved from endless sinning, and the more apparently great after he has reached a point in his career of sinning where he is borne along by his passions, and under the influence of an iron habit, from which there is not the least hope that he will extricate himself. This is the condition of many sinners. Of all sinners, it is true that they never will turn from sin of themselves alone; but of some, it seems more emphatically and terribly true, for their habits become so fixed, that they seem almost to defy Omnipotence. For such to be saved from sinning is truly by a miracle of mercy and of power.

This is also a great salvation because it saves from endless suffering. There have been great speculations about the nature and degree of this suffering. For example, it has been asked — Will it be (in the future world) merely governmental, — consisting in some form of punitive infliction; or will it be wholly natural, resulting naturally from sin itself?

But what difference does this make in regard to the comfort or discomfort of the suffering? Pain is pain, and it matters little to the sufferer whether it comes in one form or in another. In the sinner's case, the suffering comes ultimately from God as punishment for his sin; — how then can it much concern him whether it comes directly from Jehovah's hand in the form of inflicted penalty, or indirectly, through such a constitution, physical and mental, that sin brings its own consequences of sorrow and woe? God creates the constitution, and of intent makes it such that sin begets pain, — to some extent, — here; — to an infinite extent, hereafter. Small difference, indeed, does it make to the sufferer. If the suffering be eternal, and eternally increasing, this is sufficiently awful, let it come in one form or in another; and if so much be granted, it makes only the least imaginable difference in which form it may come.

Another question is raised — to wit: in respect to the degree of this suffering. Some years since, I preached a sermon touching this point, which was reviewed, In that sermon I assumed that the capacity for suffering must increase with the increase of knowledge and of suffering also. To this the reviewer replied that, in the present life, men make progress to a certain point, but no farther; and hence, he argued that progress here fails to prove eternal progress there.

It is enough to say in reply to him, that the fact he adduces results so obviously from physical causes, and causes connected with the general laws of decay and dissolution in this mortal state, that no inference can be drawn from it to abate the force of the general law of progress which obtains in regard to mind in all positions which admit of progress.

But suppose all that the reviewer contended for to be true. Suppose the suffering to be endless, yet not eternally increasing, but on the other hand, unchanging and a constant quantity. Nay, go farther if you please in that direction, and suppose it to be in degree, the very least possible. Even so, how dreadful must an eternity of such suffering be! Think how long! Consider how utterly even this supposition cuts the soul off from real bliss through the entire period of its existence

An illustration, given by some divine of other days, may help you to gain some conception of the duration of eternity, suppose this earth to be a mass of sand, and God sends, once in a thousand years, a small bird to take

away, in its little bill, just one grain. At the end of one thousand years, he comes and takes away another grain — and so on, till the earth is all removed, This would be only time, not eternity, This, even, would by no means, measure eternity.

But suppose, further that all the bodies in the solar system were, in like manner, composed of sand-particles, and one by one, at a thousand years' interval, they should be removed till they were all gone. This too, would only be time, not eternity, Nay, advance still to a supposition indefinitely more vast: suppose that every star in the universe is a sun in its system, and that not one of these systems is less vast than our own; and then let the period necessary for the removal, — or, if you choose so to regard it — the annihilation of this universe of matter — one grain each thousand years — be made our measure of duration; this, too, is time, not eternity. For this vast duration must come to an end. The poor, forlorn sufferer would have at least this small consolation — I shall surely live to see an end of this long and bitter woe But now, he has outlived the entire period necessary in this supposed process for the complete annihilation of the material universe, he must still say — My woe is only just begun. It has not made the least approach towards its termination. There is just as much duration to suffer as when he began.

O, what an idea is that, of eternity!

Now it matters not, as I have already said, whether the suffering is in its nature governmental, or is merely natural. If one grain of earth's sand measures each thousand years, and all the material universe were sand, eternity is long enough to remove it all. Think of an endless duration, and what have you before your mind! There being no limit in that direction, it matters little whether the suffering be of the sort or of another. Of very little consequence, indeed, must it be if a man could make it appear that all this suffering is natural, or that it is all governmental; or even that it does not eternally increase. The amount in any given period may be greater, or it may be less; but the great final result is, to our conception but slightly affected, by any of these things, so long as it is eternal. This infinite duration is the dreadful fact! If the soul must exist endlessly, the final result is substantially the same. Think of this scene of woe, so long that



even the tallest angel cannot remember when it began! No matter how small its amount in any given period; — if endless in duration, how awful!

**2.** But this salvation is by no means merely negative. It does not merely save from this inconceivable amount of misery; it bestows endless and immeasurable blessedness.

On this side of the scale, also, we may say — if it be endless, it matters little how small it be in amount, for any given period. But when you consider that the scriptures place it before us as blessedness, rich, full, deep, ever-flowing, everyone's cup swelling, enlarging to all eternity, and always full; — what a sublime and thrilling idea is this!

It is a wonderful fact that this great salvation is neglected by so many persons. It is one of the most unaccountable things that occur in this strange world! What a mystery! — that men should neglect this salvation is when they admit the reality of those evils and dangers from which it saves them. They admit this salvation to be a good thing, nay more, an indispensable thing; that, considered as a remedy it is not one which will come, whether they attend to it, or not. They know that the evil impending forces itself upon them, even as death does — as a thing that can by no means be averted, only as they accede to God's mode of deliverance.

Further, they admit the guilt and danger of neglect to be very great; — they know that every moment's delay may be fatal — that any single moment of their lives may seal their destiny and consign them beyond hope to everlasting destruction; and that this is true not only of delay in general, but of this present moment's delay — and yet they strangely linger. Now, is it not strange that men should delay so ! Suppose the interest at stake were the title to a man's estate. If one moment's delay might prove fatal, what a rush would be made to secure it! Just in proportion to the greatness of the interest at stake, and the imminence of danger from delay, would be the eagerness to ensure the prize. O how would men rush to the means of ensuring an earthly treasure! On every other subject but this of salvation, men would act rationally, and would by no means let slip a great treasure by default of vigorous exertion; — but on this subject you cannot move them!

The strangeness of the sinner's course is seen yet more fully in the fact that he will postpone attending to the salvation of his soul for the sake of giving his attention to the merest trifles. If men were to neglect their souls for great and good reasons only, it were not so strange, but that they should do so for trifles is beyond measure strange.

It is yet more strange that men should deliberately shape their plans to neglect this salvation, while they as deliberately plan to get for themselves every sort of inferior good. They plan to eat, to sleep and to journey — to get riches, and learning, and fame; but they leave no place to attend to this greatest of all concerns. Having laid all their plans so as effectually to exclude this, they then make their business their excuse for not attending to their souls. Devotees of pleasure excuse themselves, for they are entirely occupied; and men of business, of course, are under too much pressure to think of turning aside for such a matter as the salvation of their soul. Thus they make one sin their excuse for still doing wickedly!

Many students make no sort of calculation for attending to their own salvation. They definitely plan out their time so as to exclude attention to their hearts. When they have filled up every hour, they plead that they have no place left for the concerns of their souls.

Many professed Christians even seem to lay their plans so as to make no progress in spirituality. They definitely calculate on getting all other things that they deem valuable — learning, wealth, all earthly good; but they put their religion last and lowest in the scale. When everything else has had all the attention they care to give it, then they may be ready to cultivate their spirituality. It is most remarkable that such persons never do much to purpose for either their own souls or the souls of others.

It is affecting to observe how difficult it is, when men have laid their plans for worldly good, to get them to change, and seek first their God. Even of professed Christians this is often true. They cannot go, with cheerful steps, even to a prayer-meeting. If they go at all, they are very late, to make the time as short as possible, and then they come with hearts full of the world. Instead of giving up their worldly plans and saying — “I must have salvation; my plans are all wrong from the beginning — all selfish in their spirit — and I must wash out all the past and begin a new life;” — instead of this, I say they cling ever more to their cherished plans. Perhaps

I have told you how my mind became pinched under the pressure of this sort of question, after I had accepted the Bible as from God. When God's claims began to come home to my conscience, I said to myself, How do I know but God will want me to give my profession, — (to which I was very much attached,) and of so, what shall I do? This question grasped my conscience terribly, for I saw that becoming religious implied giving up my business, or, at least, making it entirely subject to God's control. Perhaps, said I, God will want me to go on a mission, or, at least, to preach the gospel. Can I consent to do it? The impression came down heavily on my mind — God wants you to preach his gospel! He does not want you to follow the law. Then I said — I have never consulted God at all in reference to the business of my life, though He has given Christ to redeem me and watch over me all my life long to do me good. I must do so now and henceforth! I ought to know what God would have me do, and I must know. I must not go on in this way.

The great point was now gained; I began to act as a rational being should, and God shed light on my path. Now, perhaps some of you, young people, have never asked God whether He wants you to get an education, and for what purpose. Some of you may have asked this question prayerfully; others not. If you have not, how do you know what God would have you do? Is it not plain that this neglect, on your part, amounts to moral insanity? Who of you all does not admit that you ought to attend to the great business for which God sent you into this world? Have you ever asked God to show you what your special errand in this world is? Suppose an angel should meet you today and should say — have you attended yet to the great business for which you were sent into the world? In the stillness of the midnight hour, you open your eyes and lo, an angel of God is before you — and he asks if you have done anything, after so long towards executing the mission for which you were sent into the world. O, how you are smitten with dread and horror when he tells you that, if you have not, he is commissioned to demand your soul! “This night,” he cries, “thy soul is required of thee! “Then, you will readily believe that to neglect the great business of life, when you knew what it was, is indeed the worst insanity! O, take care of your soul; don't lose it; the treasures of eternity are in its welfare — and how can you throw them all away!

What are your reasons for this neglect of salvation? Not ignorance, for you know your duty. Not the force of circumstance, for they have not excluded you from God and from due attention to his claims. There is no important reason. Could you study better without religion? Not so well. Would you be more happy without it? Nay, but far less so. Can you assign any reason for this neglect? What can it mean? Is it not moral insanity?

The only reason you can assign is that you love what God hates. You are not willing to be saved from your sins. The gospel comes to save you from your sins, but you are not willing to be saved from what you so much love!

You care not how much evil you do by neglecting this great salvation. The evil you inflict on your classmates and near friends is often fatal — yet how little do you care! suppose one of those friends should die this night! You have seduced him along in sin, and have really made him neglect the salvation of his soul. He is about to die. Looking up earnestly into your eye, he says — My soul is lost! Feel of my pulse. In a few minutes I shall be in hell!

He is gone! There; he opens his eyes in hell! My room-mate, my class-mate; my dear friend — in hell! O! Alas! a soul is lost, and that, through my influence, I have done nothing to save him. I might have saved him if I had done my duty. Alas, that a soul should be in hell through my neglect! Example is the highest influence. If you neglect this great salvation, you are doing all that you can to induce others to do the same. Your example urges them on in that course, with greater power than anything else you can do or say.

Do not presume upon God's forbearance. You probably think you may presume without losing your soul. You think God is too good to cut you down in your sins; — but you may find He is too good to spare you — too good to let you allure others down to hell -too good to let you accumulate more guilt, and make your eternal doom more dreadful. Ought He not to be afraid lest your example should ruin other souls? Ah, you may provoke Him to pass His hand over your pale brow and take your equity, oh, mighty man! So a man might vainly presume that he could burn down buildings, and murder innocent people, and yet escape punishment, because the magistrate is a good-hearted man. Take care, sinner, lest the

very goodness you rely on to save you should secure your destruction! It is the worst of all folly to neglect this great salvation because you know that God is merciful.

Mere neglect secures the soul's ruin.

Many seem to suppose that heaven is a place, and of such sort that access to it turns not at all on fitness of character. Some, also, suppose that death has great sanctifying power, and will, of itself, make them quite fit for heaven, Or, they think God is so good He will take them to heaven without insisting on a new heart. Yet the very least consideration ought to show men that they must be radically changed in character, and be sanctified by the truth of the gospel, or they can never see the Lord. According to the plain and uniform teaching of the Bible, this renewal must take place in this life. The means for it are to be used here, and here they must take their effect. What is death but the gate-way to the eternal world — to the sinner, the door by which he passes from earth and goes down to hell. There is nothing in the door to change his character or his destiny! Neither to expect this. Then why do men live on in this way?

Neglect ought to be fatal. There is not a conscience in the universe which does not say it ought to be. If men will neglect the richest provisions God could make for their salvation, there is a moral fitness in His holding them to the legitimate results of their folly, and giving them the doom they so richly deserve.

Neglect, even so long as through the period of youth, is generally fatal. Young persons are prone to assume that they can safely neglect their souls for a season, while amusements press on their attention, and other engagements engross their regard; but while they sport and God is waiting, time flies away, and often the day of grace shuts down upon them, closing in hopeless night. The day of hope is gone, and their neglect has proved fatal.

To make up the mind only for once to neglect salvation, often proves fatal. It may be your intention to delay but one hour, or till you can go from the house of God to your home: and yet that one short delay may be just once too many. That call from God may have been the very last! You turned away, and soon you found that your soul was left in darkness — that your

moral sensibilities were dead — that a deep spiritual desolation had come over you, consequent on that one fatal purpose to delay. It was said of one — “He wist not that the Lord had departed from him.” So, many a sinner, after he has turned God away. It often happens that those who are guilty of one deliberate act of turning away from God find themselves devoid of moral sensibility and utterly without conviction of sin.

Persons may as well neglect wholly as to give attention in the way many do. They attend just enough to deceive themselves, yet not enough to make any real progress. This is true of some professors of religion. They make no progress in sanctification; they grow no better; but rather worse. They keep up the forms of family prayer, and just enough of the forms of religion generally to keep up the strong delusion that they are on their way to heaven. Thus they manage to quiet their fears, and prop up a ruinous hope. No doubt hundreds of thousands are doing this continually. Many of you, I fear, are in this very career of self-deception — just giving attention enough to delude yourselves along on a hope that must perish when God shall take away your soul. You do not half enough to keep your souls in the atmosphere of God’s love; but only enough to coast along under the trade winds of death, hard upon the rocks of damnation! All along your course, you might, if you would listen, hear the roar of the breakers under your bow. Ah, ere you are aware you are gone!

You know you are not laboring for souls. Really, you are doing nothing at all in that great work, although you know God has told you to “have compassion on them,” and “pull them out of the fire.” What are you doing? Only just enough to keep alive your hope. The devil wants you to do so much — just enough to work out your own destruction, and encourage others along in the same path by your example. He desires this, not only that he may be sure of you, but that he may use you to ruin other souls. He would encourage you to pray just enough to keep your hope good, and to be a stumbling-block to others. So, you please Satan; but Christ has the utmost abhorrence of your course. Ye who profess religion — how many of you are only servants of the devil — doing no other work but his? How many of you maintain a spirit and conversation altogether worldly ?

Finally, the excuses men make for not attending to their soul's salvation are the grossest insult to God. At bottom they assume that God's interests and honor are not worth their regard. They do not care for His feelings. It matters nothing to them how much they slight His authority, or grieve His love. And is this the rational way to secure His good will? Would it be strange if God should not turn out of His onward course of governing the world for the sake of accommodating such sinners with more time to sin unpunished, or with greater measures of His Spirit to abuse? A career of sin, so guilty, must come to a bitter end! How shall they escape who neglect so great a salvation.

# LOSING FIRST LOVE

*“Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou has left thy first love.” — Revelation 2:4*

In speaking from these words, I shall:

- I. NOTICE BRIEFLY WHAT THE FIRST LOVE OF A CHRISTIAN IS;**
- II. HOW IT MANIFESTS ITSELF;**
- III. HOW IT MAY BE KNOWN THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE LEFT THEIR FIRST LOVE;**
- IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE INTO WHICH THEY FALL;**
- V. THE ONLY REMEDY FOR THIS STATE OF THINGS;**

I. The Christian’s first love is best known by experience. Those who are really brought from great darkness into marvellous light — from sensible condemnation into conscious and assured peace and joy in God, cannot but know what this first love of the convert is. Ardent, earnest, self-sacrificing, — it makes religious duties supremely delightful, and fills the heart with joy in God all the day long.

## II. HOW IT MANIFESTS ITSELF;

II. The modes of its manifestation are obvious, and have, indeed, been necessarily indicated in what I have said of its nature. It should be remembered that it is as natural to the Christian life to do what pleases God for the sinner’s life to do what pleases himself. For example, *prayer* is as natural to the true convert as living without prayer is to the unconverted. The latter are conscious of being *pushed* forward to perform these duties before they can be persuaded to do them. Other considerations besides the pleasantness of the thing itself must be brought to bear on the mind, or the man will not pray. But to the one who loves



God, it is sweet to worship, and pray and praise. These things have a sweet attraction to his heart, and come with a rich relish to his soul.

The Christian, in his first love, is free from a sense of guilt and condemnation. He has great peace of mind, and, living in such faith as pleases God, he cannot have a sense of condemnation.

Again, nothing that God requires seems hard or grievous. No matter what it may be, “the yoke is easy and the burden light.”

*“Tis love that makes his willing feet  
In swift obedience move.”*

Even the burdens that pertain to the Christian life do not at all abate his interest in religious duties. He takes up these labors as part of his business in life. He feels no sense of burden in doing these laborious things; a divine peace fills his soul.

These states and experiences are, of course, unknown to the unconverted. Even some who think themselves converted, know them not, and are exceedingly jealous sometimes of those who do.

### III. HOW IT MAY BE KNOWN THAT CHRISTIANS HAVE LEFT THEIR FIRST LOVE;

It may be known that persons have left their first love when they begin to talk of the burden of the Lord, and manifestly show that religion has become a weariness to them. If other considerations besides love to God are requisite to sustain the Christian life, and even to keep their outward observance of its forms, then you may be sure that their first love is gone. It may be that still “they cannot bear them that are evil;” Christ gives even the Ephesian church credit for so much; but this may be more a thing of conscience than of love.

Again, this loss of first love is indicated by a sense of *bondage*. When the Christian performs his religious duties, not from any sense of love, but of bondage to conscience, you may know that “first love” is gone. Obedience is not spontaneous. Under one’s first love, it always is.

The annexed exhortation to “remember from whence they have fallen,” shows that they had fallen from grace in the sense of having lost a gracious state of mind — a state in which the gifts of the Spirit beget the Christian virtues, and the resulting state of the heart is acceptable in God’s sight. Such cannot be in a justified state. Can it be possible that those are in a justified state whom God commands to *repent*, on pain of being blotted from the roll of his recognized churches?

## IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE INTO WHICH THEY FALL;

IV. The state into which they fall is (1) one of *hypocrisy*. This must be the case unless they have become openly impenitent and irreligious. But the passage gives no hint of this. Of course we must conclude that they retain the *forms* of godliness without its *power*. This is real hypocrisy.

**2.** It is a state utterly odious to God. He who makes no pretensions to religion is odious enough; but one who makes professions and yet dishonors God, is much more so. But many sinners profess to love God. Ask them if they love God. O, yes, say they. Ask them if they love to pray and praise; and they will tell you they do. They make profession enough, but are only hypocrites.

**3.** It is, moreover, a state of delusion, for they keep up the notion that they are still accepted of God. They are so hardened as not to see that they are the victims of the most fearful delusion. Scarce any thing is more adapted to blind the mind and scar the conscience than hypocritical forms of prayer. Let a man practice prayer without any heart in it, and who does not know that this course benumbs the conscience and kills the moral sensibility? Trace the history of such a man’s praying. The first time he prayed, prayer filled his soul with awe. Usually those who have not been accustomed to prayer, experience this impression of awe and reverence. But a moderately long period of observance of the mere *forms* of prayer, kills this solemn impression, and he can pray as coldly unconcerned as if he had no heart. Prayer makes no impression on him. Nothing seems to touch him. This keeping up the forms of religion in a heartless way is

playing a game with ourselves in which the interests of the soul are fearfully the loser. You win nothing.

Notice, also, that the influence of this on unbelievers is most ruinous. Nothing leads them so naturally to condemn religion as the sight of so much heartless profession. On the other hand, when they see a living manifestation of religion, it will either drive them towards religion or make them uneasy without it, or drive them further off. The latter effect is produced only when the heart's depravity rebels utterly against God's claims, and therefore, it is more a testimony for than against the agencies that excite it. But false professions are naturally fatal to the unconverted; and it is no wonder they are so. On this subject I am often reminded of impressions made on my mind in my early and unconverted life. I then had on my mind the strong impression that the great mass of professed Christians seemed not to understand what they professed. There were one or two men and some women who, I knew, had religion. They exhibited what I could not account for on any other supposition. Their life had more weight on my mind than the forms and professions of ten thousand of the other and more common sort. Being a lawyer, I could understand that the few gave a *positive* testimony, witnessing to what they knew, and revealing what their souls had certainly felt; while the testimony of the other class was only negative. It did not know anything in particular on the subject. I know one man who is not a Christian, but his wife is a Christian. He has been struggling for years to work himself into infidelity, but he cannot — never can so long as his wife lives to let the light of her example and spirit shine before him, or so long as he remembers her. I have already intimated the reason of this; he sees multitudes around him whose professed piety he contemns; but there is one — his own wife — whose life refutes infidelity most utterly.

Such religious declensions are most injurious to young converts. Said Dr. Hawes, of Connecticut, and Dr. Campbell of London — O, if these young converts could only be kept by themselves, and not be brought under the influence of dormant professors who have left their first love, they might be made a living and working church. But thrown back under this untoward influence, how surely will they fall under the same example of unbelief!

This state of mind must be painfully trying to Jesus Christ. What can be more so than to see his professed people lose their first love! When we see a wife who has lost all affection for her husband, it makes us naturally suspicious of him. Despite of all we can do to resist the feeling, it will arise. The wife is either lost to all the common impulses to humanity, or the husband is radically a bad man. Hence, when I see professed Christians lose their first love, I often say — Are you disappointed in Christ? Does he not bear acquaintance well? What has he done that you should lose your hearty interest in his character and in his cause? Is he in fault? If he is not, then surely *you are* — greatly so. This interest is entirely unavoidable.

The implication in backsliding, is most dishonorable to Christ. The Jews called God's service a great burden until he sent them a prophet to rebuke them. And who does not see that they deserved to be rebuked?

Ungodly men draw this inference: "If I must live such a life, let me put off its commencement as long as I can, for such a religion is not the thing to live by and enjoy." Who does not see that such an impression is most disastrous in all its influences?

These men who lose their first love are uneasy and unhappy. None of them can be satisfied with it. For the most part, they must be in great doubt as to their acceptance with God. Often they query with themselves — "I wonder if Christians ever do fall from grace. Methodists think they do; Presbyterians and Congregationalists think they don't, for in this case I am safe. But if they ever do, then I am fallen." Thus they trust in an old hope, with nothing to rely on except their old experiences. They need some such reliance as men get by abusing the doctrine of saints' perseverance. It is not the true doctrine, but only in its perversion that they find any of this false peace; for the true doctrine holds that saints really persevere in love and faith; and that, falling from this, they have no ground of hope whatever. And it, instead of using God's promises of sustaining grace, they only pervert them to quiet their souls in sin, they are surely cheating themselves out of salvation!

Such persons are not prepared to die. If there is no truth in the Bible, they are sure to be lost, for the Bible pronounces their doom. If there were no truth on the Bible, they would be none the less *lost*, for they are not

prepared to dwell in heaven — not in the heaven revealed in the Bible, nor in any other place of real happiness!

They are fallen into impenitence, as our passage itself implies; for how else could the Savior call on them to “*repent?*” Can one who is impenitent go to heaven?

They are not prepared to live to any good purpose. So far as their influence is concerned, it were better they should die than live. To live, as to them, is only to curse others by their example, and to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath for themselves.

## V. THE ONLY REMEDY FOR THIS STATE OF THINGS;

The only remedy for this condition is given in the text: “Repent and do your first works.” Repent more deeply than ever before, for now there are new and more aggravated sins to be repented of. When one has waded through such a life, all his former sins, prior to his professed conversion, are as nothing compared with these. After being so far enlightened, and after having tasted the good word of God and his precious love — after having known God and Christ as revealed in the Gospel, and after having entered into covenant with God — then to violate this sacred covenant — to disown those solemn vows — to dishonor that ever-to-be-remembered name;- for all this, there can be no remedy short of coming down into the lowest dust before the Lord — lower than ever before — with confessions of greater guilt than ever before. Hence, it comes to pass that, where persons, once backslidden, do really return and repent, they are more thoroughly broken in spirit than they ever were before.

## REMARKS

Many persons keep just enough of what they call religion to fasten their delusions on their own souls. By dint of resolution and self-impulses, they keep up the forms of family prayer and of public worship, and by these means, they sustain the delusion that they are true Christians. If they had

dropped these forms and gone into open apostasy, they would have known themselves, and would not have once thought of maintaining a hope of personal religion. The delusion could not have existed. But those who maintain the forms of religion, and the forms only, cannot have the witness of God's Spirit — can have no evidence from their own daily experience, but content themselves to live on the most meagre allowance of testimony to their own piety. They dare not speak very confidently, yet they are hopeful. They love to bring up the case of persons who had a great many doubts, and yet, on the whole are esteemed good Christian people. Some of them live on the doctrine of election, or perseverance of saints. Some live on the case of those who were reclaimed just before death. They sing the backslider's hymns and pray the backslider's prayer. From every quarter they are picking up shreds of matter of every sort wherewith to feed their own delusion. Sometimes, to help themselves out of their trouble, they set themselves to pick flaws in better Christians than themselves. This avails to relieve their conscience a little.

This is a most common delusion. A minister related to me certain facts respecting a doctor of divinity whom I had myself known, and in whom, I must say, I had never seen much evidence of personal piety. When this doctor of divinity came to die, he was greatly concerned about himself. My informant said — He asked me to pray that he might be restored to his first love! *What!* one who had lived forty or fifty years in the church, and one of her honored ministers too, yet, on his death-bed, asks his friends to that he may be restored to his first love,- *really*, that he may be *converted!* If we have not even so much as first love — not so much as when we started, what are we? What state are we in, if we have not as much love as when first converted?

Many persons have occasionally strong exercises of mind — often a compound of anxiety about their final salvation, and conviction of sin — yet it falls short of true religion. They quite fail of coming into a state of true love to God or to Jesus Christ. There is feeling, action, energy; but *love* is wanting! That deep love which affectionately honors and recognizes God as supreme Lord and Father, and which then goes forth to embrace in its arms all his offspring; that love which “suffereth long and is kind”- which is never weary in well-doing — which finds its life in acts of kindness: — this is not there.

My beloved people, I have been your pastor now a long time. Going in and out before you as I have these many years, I have seen most of you pass through seasons that have been greatly interesting to me. In some of you I have seen grace developed and shining all the more clear and lovely for your trials; but of some of you I am constrained to ask — Have you not lost your first love? Is it not very difficult for you to live a Christian life? Some of you are in such a state that I have not seen you at a prayer-meeting for a year. You were not confined to your bed by sickness; you were not out of town; what was the matter? What is your spiritual state?

Of some of you who do come to the prayer meeting I must ask — What is your state? Is your experience daily becoming more rich, and more fresh, and more quickening? Do you live more closely on God? Are you daily walking more and more surely in newness of life?

## ON INJUSTICE TO CHARACTER

“Judge not, that ye be not judged, For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again, And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye.” — Matthew 7:1-3

This passage forbids us to judge persons; and our first inquiry should be — What is not intended in this prohibition?

I answer,

**(1.)** It does not forbid forensic judgments, for this would make the passage forbid what God elsewhere requires, and what is obviously essential to the ends of justice among men.

**(2.)** Nor, does it prohibit all forming opinions as to others. If we have the means of forming a correct opinion, and of circumstances render it fit and needful that we should form an opinion, obviously it cannot be forbidden. Plainly it does not prohibit the forming of righteous opinions whenever we have the means and it becomes necessary to form an opinion.

*What then does this passage mean?*

I answer, it means to prohibit injustice to character. It forbids unjust judgments.

Here it becomes necessary to inquire — Wherein does character consist? I answer, in the voluntary state of mind of an active agent. I say by his state, rather than by any individual volition. You must take the man and his acts as a whole in order to estimate his character. His character is as the voluntary state of his mind. If this be committed to good, such is his character; if not evil, his character is to be estimated accordingly. Character always pertains to ultimate purpose and intention, and should never be predicated on individual, abnormal acts, which are aside from the general strain of a man's life.

*How is character revealed?*

In the habitual life and temper, and not in any one individual act. Our Lord reveals the true doctrine when he says — “By their fruits ye shall know them,”

What is the rule of judgment?

Not to judge from single, insulated acts. To judge David only by his acts towards Uriah and his wife, would do him great injustice. In that transaction, David acted not in, but out of his general character. Hence, we are never to judge by occasional, irregular acts; such are aside from the common course of one's life; but by its general tenor. Some persons have their easily besetting sins, that do occasionally develop themselves; yet their general character should not be judged altogether from these. To do so, would greatly wrong them.

What are the sources of injustice to character? All prejudice towards character is injustice. It is prejudgment — forming an opinion in advance of adequate grounds for it. This is always wrong.

As to the sources whence unjust judgments arise, we may trace them,

**1.** To human selfishness. Men judge others by themselves. Being themselves selfish, they judge others to be so likewise. Nothing is more common than for men to regard others as selfish who will not give in to their own selfish demands. It is through their own selfishness that sinners mis-estimate God and withhold from Him the credit due for His loving-



kindness. In the same manner they mis-estimate better men than themselves. They mis-conceive everybody's motives if those motives are of a higher moral grade than they are conscious of possessing.

In the same manner self-will leads men to mis-estimate others. Becoming offended and irritated, they are in no state of mind to judge others fairly.

The selfish representations of others often mislead us into false judgments. We are little aware how often and how sorely we are misled in this way. Others mistake, and then lead us into the same false opinions. In such cases we are not responsible, provided we use our best judgment in all candor and kindness, being duly on our guard against being deceived and making all due allowance for this liability.

Another source is the absence of that love which would forbid us to do injustice to character. It is unnatural to love to do injustice to others. Love in our hearts secures us against this liability; but if love be wanting, we are almost sure to err. The absence of love leads to a want of consideration as to the value and sacredness of character. Often we see persons treat the character of others with a reckless levity, as if they had no due regard to its value and sacredness. Such persons are always inflicting wanton wrong on character.

Often persons misjudge because they form opinions without sufficient knowledge. They judge before they have any right to judge. No man has any right to judge the character of another until he has sufficient data. Especially should he cautiously refrain from an unfavorable judgment, if compelled to form an opinion on slender acquaintance. In such cases, let his mind by all means lean towards a favorable opinion and not its opposite.

Again, men should never be impetuous and rash in forming judgments of others. We sometimes see this in a most alarming degree. It is often a fruitful source of great wrong.

Any form of dishonesty in us works mis-judgment in regard to others. A man given to lying will have no confidence in other men's veracity. A hypocrite has no confidence in other people's piety, but will have it that others are as hypocritical as himself. The licentious man thinks others licentious; the ambitious man suspects everybody else of ambition. If

avaricious, he assumes that others are as much so; if given to over-reaching, he suspects others of the same tendency. Thus any special type of vice in his own character will surely affect his judgments of others.

Again, the state of one's feelings often prejudices the judgment. A wrong bias in one's feelings almost always results in injustice towards others.

Existing prejudice begets new and additional prejudice. One prejudice begets another. Under the influence of a first prejudice, it is almost impossible to avoid a second. A man already prejudiced, is in great measure incapacitated from right judgment, and consequently he goes on in one mistake and wrong after another, till he surrounds himself with an ocean of prejudice.

Let us next consider our danger of falling into this sin.

We are in danger of receiving too strong an impression from first acquaintance. Some are proud to say that they can read anyone's character on an acquaintance of five minutes. "Let me only see a person once — hear a single remark — I can read him through and through." They seem to pride themselves on their discernment, as if they had a superhuman power. But observe where you will, this is commonly a Satanic discernment — sure almost to be a false one, and to do injustice to character.

We shall almost certainly misjudge if we form our opinion from single facts. Suppose men should judge David thus on the case of Uriah; how greatly would they wrong him and themselves too? Yet there are persons who, having heard of one thing, say, That is enough? I know him now. They refuse to hear anything more; but leap to an unjust conclusion at once.

Often we suffer ourselves to be influenced by that which is no fact at all. We accept it on testimony which would by no means, in our view, have condemned a husband or a wife, a parent or a child, or any whom we love as ourselves. Then it ought not to be accepted against a stranger.

Of course we are in danger of mis-judgment when we form opinions without knowing all the essential facts in the case. We are specially culpable when we rush to a conclusion without first learning all the important facts within our reach. For this rash conduct, God will by no

means hold us guiltless. Manifestly we ought to suspend our judgment till we can and do know, and not be restive or rash. Some months since, I was favorably impressed with the course of a gentleman of deservedly high standing, to whom I had been presenting my views of the doctrine of sanctification. I had given him the outlines of the doctrine and of the grounds of it as it lay in my mind, and then asked him his opinion. He replied — I have been a judge on the bench for many years, and I have learned that it is never safe to form an opinion without hearing the other side. In the present case, I have not thought on the subject enough to form a reliable judgment. You have made out a fair case, but I want to hear all sides. You may be right; but how can I say I think you are till I have given the subject a thorough and all-sided investigation?

Now, in this case, it was, doubtless, important to hear all sides and give the question a patient and full investigation. How much more, if the case had involved personal character?

Where the question turns on the quality of an individual act, we are in danger of misjudging it by omitting to consider the individual's general character. For example, here is a good man, whom you have known to be such, and it is now said he has lied. Now, whether this be so or not so, you should certainly be very slow to admit it, and should by all means give him the credit of his previous good character, on the side of innocence. If there be testimony to outweigh this presumption, see that you examine it candidly, and be sure there is enough of it.

Public men are liable to be placed in circumstances where they cannot give to others the reason of their conduct. Suppose you were to judge such men without regard to their general character, and without the means of knowing their reasons. You surely would wrong them greatly.

Sometimes we are in great danger because we overlook our own state of mind. In such cases we shall doubtless be misled. It is of the utmost importance that we should be aware of our relation to the facts in the case, and the influence which this relation may have on our own judgment. Disregarding this, we shall most surely do injustice to character. For example, suppose a friend of ours is accused of crime. Our friendship for him arouses our feelings, and must have a strong influence on our judgment in the case.

Often we are biased by an undue regard to our own consistency. If we are not aware of the influence which this feeling has on our minds, we shall most surely be misled by it in the formation of our judgments.

I need not urge that we are in danger of being biased by those who themselves make mistakes; or by those who are dishonest; or who are reckless; or by the general injustice to character which prevails among mankind, in the midst of which we are born and influence of which it must be exceedingly difficult for us entirely to escape.

I must now call your attention *to the great wickedness of this sin.*

Character, as a condition of happiness, is the most valuable treasure in the universe. To each moral agent, his own character is the greatest good. If his character be not intrinsically upright, it must be a scorpion sting in his bosom. If it be bad in his own estimation, he can have no self-respect, and his very bosom becomes a sort of hell. Every man's happiness and usefulness, therefore, depend on his own character, and, to a great extent, on his reputation — that is, on the estimate that others shall form and express of his character. God, in His word, assumes that His honor and great name are a most sacred treasure. How could He govern His moral universe without it? Many persons forget that God has a character to sustain, and that He must, therefore, most severely punish every insult and wrong inflicted upon it. In like manner they forget that, out of sympathy with the slandered, if for no other reason, God will surely take vengeance on those who traduce their neighbors.

Injustice to character is in every point of view a most detestable and infamous crime. God hates and denounces it; it is an abomination in the eyes of all the good in the universe. The stealing of money is nothing compared to it. "Who steals my purse, steals trash; but he who steals my name steals that which nought enriches him, but makes me poor indeed."

The greatest injury we can inflict on anyone is to rob him of his good name. So, the greatest injustice we can do to God is to manifest want of confidence in Him. It is like taking hold of the pillars of the universe and shaking them to their foundations. Everywhere, this sin involves serious consequence beyond any other. It inflicts the greatest evil on the wronged party; the greatest on society. Suppose it falls on the character of one who

devotes his utmost powers to doing good; then it cripples his power, and wrongs the community out of the good he might otherwise do in it. No mischief that any moral agent can do is greater than this.

Next, let us notice some of the results of injustice to character, and first — to the authors of this injustice.

Those who commit this great wrong are sure to quench the Spirit. If they are impenitent sinners, they are sure to grieve the Spirit away. God regards character as sacred; — that of His own people, is to Him as the apple of His eye. “Touch not, says He, mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm.” The Bible is full of indications like this of God’s regard to the reputation of His people. Hence, we must infer that this sin is especially repugnant to the divine Spirit, who comes under the gentle, loving emblem of a “dove.”

This sin benumbs the religious sensibility. We should not wonder that one guilty of stealing should benumb his moral sensibility; and if he could bring his feelings to commit the crime of murder, we should expect him to be utterly callous to all tender and kind emotions; but it is too much overlooked — strangely indeed — that slanderers and all who can coolly inflict injustice on character, do utter violence to their own sensibility. They so benumb it that it refuses to move and act in its natural way. They become so hardened, they can sit under preaching that might almost electrify the very seats they sit on, and yet nothing moves their sensibility or their conscience. Go where you will among the churches, you see that this is one of their sorest evils. This sin fearfully stifles the voice of conscience, and perverts the moral judgment. Under its influence, men come to feel no compunction for this sin, and they also seem to lose that nice perception of evidence under which an unperverted mind judges uprightly of character. It is amazing to see of how slight evidence they will take up an evil report against a neighbor, and how incapable they become of judging righteously.

Again it augments the selfishness of the will. It is wonderful to see how the soul, under the sway of this sin, becomes committed to selfishness, loses all regard to others’ rights and interests, and thus shuts itself up to the eternal dominion of the basest, purest selfishness. There cannot be a worse obstacle to conversion or to sanctification than this.

It destroys one's influence. It wounds the feelings of others, and puts them beyond the reach of your influence. What good can a minister do, or a deacon, if they allow themselves to injure the good name of their people! Sometimes a whisper, or even a look, will paralyze all the power and influence which a brother may have. It may break the arm of its strength so that it shall ever after hang useless by his side.

Wrong done to the moral government of the universe spreads its mischief far and wide. Wrong done to the good name of God's people reaches indirectly His own good name and influence of His cause in the world, and thus favors hell and wrongs heaven!

## REMARKS

God sustains to the universe a very difficult and responsible position. The reasons of His policy cannot be fully explained to His finite subjects, and, therefore, are almost of necessity misunderstood. At least it is safe to say that His reasons for His course will not ever be fully understood. He cannot explain if He would; and often it may not be wise to explain all He could. On every side He has many and most unreasonable prejudices to overcome. No earthly monarch ever had such opposition to contend against; no, not all of them together have had so much trial, so much grief, so much strange and blind opposition from this source as God has had. In part, this is to be ascribed to human depravity, and in part to the relations of the Infinite to finite minds. Christ had occasion to say to His friends, "What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter." God often needs to say to His people — I cannot explain this to you now; you must have faith in Me.

This reveals the importance of faith in finite minds towards their Infinite Father. We know God is infinitely wise, and makes no mistakes. We equally know Him to be perfectly good, and, therefore, that He always acts with the best intentions; yet we cannot know all His reasons — cannot fathom all His plans. Here, then, is the struggle — here between unbelief and faith. Will you embrace all God's character and ways, so as to give Him the fullest credit for all He is and for all He does? This is the highest style of virtue; this most eminently pleases God.

As I have already said, no being in all the universe is the subject of so much injustice to character as God. He has reason to complain of His subjects, and to hold them responsible for their great sin in this thing. Rulers in all governments are in a very trying position. Civil magistrates, parents, teachers, — often have their motives impugned. Often they have reason to feel that theirs is a thankless position. They find it perhaps quite impossible to reconcile their convictions of duty with the wishes and expectations of their subjects. Persons in such relations must make up their minds to bear meekly all they are called to suffer. Every parent has this class of trials more or less. Sometimes they are unable to make their children appreciate their views.

Hence, both rulers and ruled should exercise great patience and forbearance, and should be slow to judge unfavorably of each other, even though there should seem to be real testimony looking towards an unfavorable decision.

Mutual love and consideration are demanded in all the relations of life. Everything that may qualify the motives of others should be candidly considered. There should be an abounding fullness of that love which hopeth all things, — since only this can prevent great injustice to character.

Violations of this precept are the greatest evils in general society. Who can bear to read the political newspapers? Sometimes the same objection lies equally against the religious papers. They are full of calumny; they reek with rankest abuse of character. Never since I have been a Christian have I been able to read a daily paper. I have never found one that was safe to read.

A great deal is said in professedly promoting reform which injures and retards reform. I have always supposed that the injustice done to character in the great reforms of the age has hindered these reforms more than everything else has done. For this reason, God is displeased with these movements, and suffers them to be frustrated, and truth, for the present, to fall to the ground; — this being a less evil than for Him to seem to sanction a spirit so utterly alien to genuine love.

This sin strengthens itself, and, therefore, is one of the hardest to overcome. He who commits himself to evil speaking against a neighbor,

will be strongly tempted to carry it out. He has said that neighbor is a bad man; now he must prove it. He must rake up more low and perhaps false scandal against him; — else his own reputation will suffer. So he plunges deeper and yet deeper into this sin. Perhaps if called to account, he replies — You think that statement of mine is not true; I will look the matter all over and see.” I tell you, he won’t! He will do no such thing as revise that opinion candidly. Far more likely his committal will blind him the more and he will become only the more confirmed in his sin at every step.

Many are so hardened as not to realize the relation of what they say to God and to the moral universes. They do not seem at all to appreciate the great evil of injustice to character. What sinner ever realizes the nature of his unbelief towards God? God says — “He that believeth not, makes Him a liar!” How terrible to destroy confidence in God! What an awful, mischievous, damning sin! Look at the wrong done to Christ by the Scribes and Pharisees, and the mischief it did in the world. But for their virulence and prejudice in rejecting Christ, the people would have embraced Him as their Messiah. To all human view, if they had received Christ candidly, and given Him their hearts, the nation would have been converted, and that nation, converted, would have sent the gospel at once all over the world. Such was their location, and such their relation to the nations of the earth, they would have given the gospel to all nations in a single generation, and long ago, shouts of salvation would have rolled over every mountain, and echoed through every valley in all the globe! Alas, hell gloats over the misery and all nature groans under the evils, wrought by injustice to character! Who can measure the depth, and length and breadth thereof!

If this sin were not so common, it would be universally disgraceful. If, according to its real turpitude, it were in as low repute as other sins, who would dare commit it?

It is most painful to come near one who is in the habit of taking up evil reports and casting them about him as “firebrands and arrows, saying — Am I not in sport?” You should avoid one who has this habit as you would a viper.

I have thought a mistake is working in community as to the manner in which we should treat persons who wrong society and manifest no repentance for this sin. It is easy and but too natural for us to put on a



plaster where we should put in a probe. Certainly we ought to mark the man who goes about slandering society. In this thing, there are two extremes; one consists in treating such offenders without any compassion; the other, in overlooking their great wickedness. Plainly we should try to avoid both extremes.

How great is the cruelty of injuring the character of another, and especially, of using an influence to crush it! Their words eat as doth a canker, annihilating those on whom they fall! O how much does it become us to take care what we say of others' character!

It is most cruel towards God to injure the character of His children. God Himself feels outraged by such abuse offered to those He loves. We who are parents know very well how it affects us to have our children slandered, even though they may be wicked.

It is specially cruel to injure those who labor for our good. Ingratitude in this case heightens to wrong.

What an awful amount of sin the conductors of the press have to answer for! Especially for their course on the eve of an election. Then we cannot, often, believe a word they say. It would almost seem that many of them lie then on principle and by system! Perhaps the election is carried by such slander, and the men who rule us in the places of civil power are there because their friends had superior skill in falsehood and slander! Before high heaven, what a nation of slanderers! I have often had occasion to say to editors who coin and pass on slanders just before election — If you allow a lie to go out from your press for election purposes, you must answer for it to God! Are you prepared to meet God for this thing?

A man not just to character is not just to anything! He is a totally dishonest man, and just to nothing. If he appears to be just, it is an appearance only. What an appalling thought! There can be no stronger proof of radical dishonesty of character, and unmitigated selfishness.

Some seem to regard confidence in those around us as a ridiculous weakness, if not crime. This is most unfortunate, for how much is he to be pitied — perhaps blamed too — who confides in no one, and lives in everlasting distrust of all mankind! The Psalmist once said, "All men are liars;" but he said it "in his haste," and we hope only when in haste.

When one shows a general want of confidence, he deserves none in himself. This is obvious as an axiom.

Perhaps in no other thing is frequent self-examination more demanded than in this matter of doing injustice to character. The temptation and tendency to violate the law of love is so great, we need to overhaul our practice continually. Evermore let us search our hearts and our words, asking — Do I deal justly with others even as I would have others do with me? Do I judge the motives of others only as I would have another judge mine?

No department of self-examination is more difficult than this. Hence, it needs to be pressed faithfully, with much self-distrust, and thoroughly, through all the circle of our formed and expressed opinions as to others. On no point is there more danger of delusion, and on none is this delusion more likely to prove fatal. Professed Christians are but too apt to forget that this is radically a dishonest state of mind, and hence, must be inevitably damning.

It is shocking to notice how evil reports are gotten up, spread abroad and received; how a lie passes round and round, and how rarely it meets with one kind, honest, loving heart, to impede its progress!

Men guilty of this sin, will die and be damned for it unless they are willing to repent, confess and make restitution. Who does not say — if a man steals but a horse or a sheep, and dies without confession and restitution, he cannot be saved. How much more must he die for such a sin as this, unrepented of and unforgiven!

This sin is so fearfully common, its great enormity is overlooked. Scarce anyone estimates it according to its real malignity. But suppose a sin of this kind should occur in heaven. Suppose one of the holy there should slander his brother unjustly! What a sensation! How would those pure and loving hearts be paralyzed with horror! And suppose society here were what it should be, how suddenly would men shut out from their fellowship one who could recklessly or maliciously traduce his brother! Is not this true? When we are really benevolent, what a shock comes over our feelings to hear one belch out an avalanche of venom! We are horrified! What! We say, is not this the spirit of hell?

In the great judgment God will show up this sin in its true light. Then He will place him that loves and him that receives, on a par with him that *makes*, a lie. The spirit of the act will give it its character then.

Where persons are really guilty, there is danger of doing them injustice. But God never falls into this danger. His judgment is eternally and perfectly just. And He would have us aim at entire justice. His word informs us that one of the loftiest angels did not bring a railing accusation against even the devil — but said — “The Lord rebuke thee.” This example in high places stands for our admonition. We should no more abuse and wrong an enemy than a friend.

We would be specially on our guard in cases where we differ from others in opinion. Here pride of opinion comes in to heighten the danger of doing injustice to others.

Often, (as our text suggests) God visits retribution for this sin on men visibly in the present life. He shapes His providence’s so that those who judge others censoriously, are themselves judged censoriously. But, if this retribution should not come down on men in this world, it surely will, (and only the more surely for the omission here,) in the world to come. God will judge those who thus judge their brother! And what a judgment must that be!

# GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN THE SINNER'S DEATH

“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his way and live? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore, turn yourselves, and live ye.”

— Ezekiel 18:23, 32.

“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil way, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” — Ezekiel 33:11.

In speaking upon these texts, I am to show,

- 1. WHAT THIS DEATH IS NOT;**
- 2. WHAT IT IS;**
- 3. WHY GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN IT;**
- 4. WHY HE DOES NOT PREVENT IT;**
- 5. THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH HE CAN PREVENT IT.**

**1.** The death spoken of in our texts cannot be that of the body. “It is appointed to all men once to die, and after this the judgment.” I need not say that men die a physical death none the less surely because they turn to God and live.

This cannot mean spiritual death either, for this death is nothing else than a sinful state of mind — a fixed habit and condition of sinning. If this had been the sense of the term death in these passages, they should have read — Why are ye already dead! — not, Why will ye die? The death referred to is manifestly an event yet future.

**2.** Positively, this death must be the opposite of that life which they would have if they would turn from their evil ways. Throughout the Bible

we are given to understand that this is eternal life — life in the sense of real blessedness. By the terms, death, and life, when used of the final rewards of the wicked and of the righteous, the Bible does not mean annihilation and existence. It does not teach that one class shall cease to exist and the other shall simply *continue* to exist; but most obviously implies that both alike have an immortal existence, which existence, however, is, in the one case, infinite misery; in the other, infinite blessedness.

**3.** God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner. He avers this, and even takes His solemn oath of it. Surely, it must have been His intention to make himself believed; and certainly He ought to be believed. “When He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself.” Such “an oath for confirmation should be an end to all strife” of conflicting opinions.

It is contrary to His very nature that He should take pleasure in the sinner’s death. Indeed such is the nature of all moral beings that none of them can take pleasure in the misery of others, in itself considered. If any of them could, then might devils in hell find happiness in the misery of those whom they have brought into that place of torment. But the very laws of moral nature are such that it is painful to witness misery. Even the sufferings of the wicked in hell only aggravate, instead of lessening, the misery of the devil. He did not entice them there to enjoy their misery, but to vent his selfish spite against God. Yet, as always must happen, selfishness punishes itself, and the very thing Satan has done out of selfish hatred of God, will only augment his own eternal anguish. It is intrinsically contrary to the moral nature of any moral agent to enjoy the spectacle of suffering, apart from any other collateral source of enjoyment.

On still higher grounds is it contrary to God’s nature that He should take pleasure in the sinner’s death, for His benevolence forbids it. He takes infinite delight in the happiness of His creatures, and, therefore, cannot take delight in their misery — in itself considered.

It is abundantly manifest that God loves sinners with the tenderest compassion. He pities them. So His word and His nature conspire to show. Christ manifested this towards the wicked Jews in most affecting words and even with tears, when He beheld that doomed city and wept over it, saying — “ If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy

day, the things that belong unto thy peace? But now they are hid from thine eyes.”

No doubt God will pity sinners in hell forever. He has given the highest evidence that He loves sinners. Think how long He spares them to live in their sins; at how great a sacrifice He sent His Son to die for them, even while they were yet enemies. What proof of love can be greater than this?

It must be that God regards the death of the wicked as a great evil in itself, for it surely is so, and He must regard things as they are, and according to truth. Misery is intrinsically a great evil in itself, and it must seem to Him to be so. Nay, more; it must seem a greater evil to Him than it can to you or to me, or to any other being besides Himself, in the universe. He never could have done what He has to save men if He had not viewed it so.

Again, God can have no pleasure in the sinner's death, because, after the penalty is inflicted, He can show the sinner no more favor forever. Under any efficient administration, after the authorities have passed the sentence of the law, they must not retract. The support of government forbids it. There could be no force in penalty, and no influence in law, if its penalties could be lightly set aside, or could be set aside for any other grounds that such as would amply sustain the dignity and the principles of the administration. Hence, after God has taken the sinner's life, in the sense of our text He can show him no more favor or mercy forever. This must be a sore trial to His feelings, mercy is so much His delight.

Sinners have had all their good things in this life. So Christ distinctly taught in the account He gives of the scenes after death, in the case of the rich man and Lazarus. He represents Abraham as saying to the rich man “Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.” This you bear in mind, was said in answer to his earnest entreaty that Lazarus might be sent to him and might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue, for, said he, “I am tormented in this flame.” To this Abraham replied, “Son, remember that thou, in thy life time, receivedst thy good things.” It is affecting to think that he had exhausted all his good things so utterly that not one drop of water remained to be given him now — not a drop! It must be greatly trying to God's feelings, after having so much enjoyed doing good to even sinners in this world, that, after death He can do them no more good forever? Yet this

is plainly the view which Christ gives of the case. It is the sinner's relations to God's government that preclude so utterly all further manifestation of mercy. He stands before that government in the relation of an enemy, one whom that government must punish as it would protect the rights and welfare of myriad's who depend on it for their happiness. It is truly an awful thought that the sinner must suffer so — so intensely and without the least possibility of mitigation forever; and that God, when the sinner cries for one drop of water, must forever reply — No, No, I have done you all the good I ever can do. You have had all your good things, even to the last drop of water!

Another reason why God can have no pleasure in the death of sinners is, that their depravity is henceforth unrestrained. To see this working itself out intensely and without restraint, as long as they exist, is sad indeed. Yet so it must be. God has done all He wisely could do to restrain it while yet they lived on the earth, and under all His efforts, it only waxed worse and worse. Now, therefore, He desists from all further efforts forever.

God can take no pleasure in the death of sinners, because, henceforward, their sufferings must be unmitigated and endless. Can God have any pleasure at all in this? What an everlasting accumulation of woe! Sorrow upon sorrow, swelling and expanding, deepening and strengthening, beyond all our powers of estimation or expression; — verily God can take no pleasure in this and well does He take His solemn oath to this effect — “As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked.

**4.** Why then, I am next to ask, does He not prevent it? The answer in one word is, because He cannot and yet be good. In fact, if God could wisely prevent it, He should have done so; else He could not be a good being. What wisdom allows to be done for the relief or prevention of suffering, love requires — else He forfeits His claim to goodness. In order to give virtue its utmost scope for development, moral agents are left free to obey or disobey, and then take the consequences. We cannot see how else a really moral government could be administered. Besides, the fact that God does govern thus, shows what He can wisely do, and all that He can wisely do. For it must be that God acts in accordance with His own sense of what is wise and good; — else He is not wise and good, for to have

wisdom and yet not act according to its dictates, is by no means to be wise. So also, to claim to be good, and yet not act according to goodness, is an absurd claim. Hence, if God is really wise and good, we know that all His acts must be in harmony with His own ideas of what is wise and good under the circumstances of every case. Hence, nothing that ever occurs under His government can be wisely prevented. If it could be, He would prevent it. No improvement can be made in His actual administration. You cannot suppose it to be changed for the better.

Hence, God cannot deal with sinners otherwise than He has without violating His own sense of what is wise and good.

Again, the death that sinners die, though so great an evil, is yet a less evil than any change in His government which might be necessary in order to prevent it. For example, it may be said that God could annihilate moral agents, instead of punishing them in hell eternally. To this, I answer, if this were a better way God would certainly have adopted it. Hence, we are driven to the conclusion that it is a less evil to let His government go on, and let penalty take its course. In fact, to annihilate moral agents, for their sin, instead of punishing them in hell, would be to abandon the idea of moral government, administered under law, by rewards and penalties. It would amount to an acknowledgment of a failure under this system.

Again, God knows He can make a good use of the sinner's death. He can turn it to good purpose. Such a manifestation before the universe of the terrible evil of sin, may be indispensable to the best interests of the masses — being the very influence they need to preserve them from falling themselves into sin. Under a government where so much depends upon developing and making all realize the idea of justice, what finite mind can fully estimate the useful results God may educe from the eternal death of sinners? This glorious idea of justice is manifestly most vital to a system of moral agents. Its importance to the universe is such as must greatly over-balance all the evil that can accrue from the punishment of sin.

These propositions I take to be altogether self-evident — so much so, that none who understand the meaning of the terms, can deny them. If you admit the attributes of God, all the rest follows by the strictest logical necessity. If God is admitted to be holy, just, wise and good, then He must



govern moral agents as He does; — and must reclaim to obedience and induce to accept of pardon.

**5.** How can the death of sinners be avoided? In no way that is inconsistent with the nature and character of God, or with His relations to His creatures. This is plain. You cannot expect that God will act inconsistently with His own attributes of character in order to save sinners from death, or that He will suffer any thing to be done that is thus inconsistent. Nothing can He either do or suffer to be done that shall interfere with the best interests of His government. It were the merest folly to expect this. Hence, it is plain that if the sinner would be saved at all, he must turn from his evil ways. He cannot expect God to turn from His good ways and ought not to desire it. Hence, the only alternative is — repent, or die. Every sinner must cease to sin and must meet God's conditions of life, or he must take death as his certain doom. To turn from his sin is the naturally necessary condition of being saved from eternal death. Who can doubt this? Who can rationally suppose that any sinner can possibly escape death unless he turns from his sins to God?

That this is the only possible way of life is further evident from the fact that sinners, continuing in their sins, must be wretched from the very nature of sin. The death of the body removes them from all physical enjoyment. Sin itself will then be left to bring forth its legitimate fruits of disquiet, trouble, remorse of conscience, — so that even if there were no punitive inflections from God, and no misery to be endured beyond the natural consequences of sin, the wicked would be only wretched.

But, let it be considered, we cannot set aside the governmental infliction of suffering, for this is a necessity of government that it should have a penalty attached to the violation of its laws, and should inflict this penalty. No government can exist which does not punish when justice demands it. Its authority is at once gone, and it ceases to be any government at all. Hence, God must punish as long as the sinner refuses to turn.

## REMARKS

**1.** The goodness of God is no argument against the punishment of sin, but the very reverse of this; — it is a reason why sin should be punished and will be. Men may say that God is too good to punish sin and may profess to hold that His goodness explodes the doctrine of future punishment. But really not one of these men is ever afraid that God will be unjust. Yet they fear him. And the thing they at heart fear is that He is good and too good to let sin pass unpunished. They are afraid He is good, and so good, that He cannot fail to punish sin.

**2.** Some will ask — Will not the great misery of sinners in hell abridge God's happiness? I answer no. God has done all He can wisely do to save them. So He solemnly avers; — “What more could I have done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?” Why, then, should He be unhappy in the death of sinners?

**3.** Having done all He wisely could, He will be content with this. To do the best and the utmost that infinite love and power can do, satisfies Him, and He will not be restive and uneasy, so long as this conviction reposes on His bosom.

**4.** He will rejoice in the realization of the great idea of justice, and in the results of its manifestation before all finite minds. He does not rejoice in the misery, but does rejoice in the other results which accrue from the sinner's death. He rejoices that the great idea of justice is brought out before the universe so that they shall see what sin is, and what an exceedingly bitter thing it is to rebel against God and goodness.

God will rejoice none the less really in this immense good resulting from punishment, because of the conditions under which it is realized. It costs something to develop the great idea of justice; — it necessarily must; it always does in any government. But the results are cheap even at such a cost. Hence, God rejoices in the use He can make of the sinner's death. Why should He not? He will be satisfied with Himself in view of all He has done, and satisfied with the results as a whole. Beholding them all He will say as of His original creation — all very good. There are indeed

incidental evils, but the good so indefinitely overbalances the evil that He cannot but be satisfied.

The death of the wicked will not abate the happiness of heaven. They will say that it could not have been wisely avoided. They know that every sinner richly deserves all the punishment he receives, and hence they will be content. They will not rejoice in the suffering, but will rejoice in the results of glory to God, stability to His throne — good influence over all the unfallen. According to the scriptures, they shout, Alleluia, as they see the smoke of their torment ascend up forever and ever.

There is a moral beauty in the display of justice and holiness that will enrapture all the inhabitants of heaven. It will seem to them so infinitely fit and right and wise that God should reign and should sustain His law by means of penalty, so as to secure the highest possible moral power to promote holiness and deter from sin; — how can they do otherwise than acquiesce and ever rejoice? But they discriminate — as we also should — between rejoicing in misery and rejoicing in its results. They rejoice, not in the misery, but in those glorious results which are so signally brought out before the universe.

It will be seen in heaven and felt throughout all eternity that God could have done no other way, wisely, than to punish sinners as He does. Hence, there will be no complaining.

Their sense of the wrong and mischief of sin is so just and so deep, and their sense of its ill-desert, also, will be so intense, that it will not abate from the eternal calmness of their souls to witness the execution of the law.

They will also see that it is the lest of two evils — a less evil than to use any other means, possible to God, such, for example, as annihilating the wicked. Hence, they will not regret that God should do the best He can. Any change that should set aside punishment for actual sin would only be a greater evil than the punishment it sets aside, and hence they could not desire it. They will always see that a good use is made of punishment, and that positive good is educed from it. Just as we see that good use is made of the gallows in civil government. It is made conducive to the greater

influence of the law to deter men from crime. Life is rendered more secure, and thus every important interest of life is promoted.

Here it should be borne in mind that it is not the object of government to do good to the criminal who is executed. In capital executions its only object is to do justice to the government. Punishment never has for its object to do good to the criminal. In so far forth as it is punishment, it has no aim specially towards the criminal, only to make of him an example for the good of the government and of the governed. That which aims at the good of the criminal is discipline. In this world God is administering discipline towards all sinners, and even towards His own children when they sin. In the next world all His treatment of the wicked will be penal, none of it disciplinary.

It is true that in human government, punishment and discipline are often blended, as in State's prison, where the criminal is undergoing the penal sentence of law, and yet the law also aims at his good, using means so far as may be for his correction of life and manners. But in capital executions all idea of discipline is dropped — especially it is so after the fatal hour has come. After that hour, government does all it can by delay of execution, to impel the sinner to prepare to meet his God. Persons often confound discipline and punishment, failing to make those essential discriminations to which I have now adverted. It is important to notice distinctly that all those features in God's administration towards sinners which contemplate their good are discipline, not punishment.

It is a great thing under God's government to execute His law. This is immensely important in its bearings upon the sentiments and feelings of moral agents, and upon their continued obedience. It is especially in this administration of God's law that they see God revealed and learn to regard Him as the great Father of His creatures, evermore watchful to secure their highest obedience and blessedness. This execution of law is indeed done at a great expense of suffering to the criminal; but the fact that they all deserve it — that there is no other way of sustaining law and its influence, and that an indefinitely great amount of good results from it, — these facts conspire to hush every murmur and will by no means allow the blessedness of heaven to be interrupted by the execution of law on the wicked.

God will make sinners very useful in life and in death; in this world and in the next. They do not mean it; they mean only evil; but God means all the good, and will take care to insure it. He can over-rule their sin so as to bring out great good from it, all along through the whole course of their existence. He will so control it that they shall not have lived in vain; so that they shall not die in vain, and shall not make their bed in hell forever, in vain. No thanks to them. They have done nothing meritorious. No thanks to Satan that he laid the corner-stone of human salvation when he tempted Judas to betray Jesus, that he might be put out of the way. God's plans went too deep for Satan; for, while Satan thought to frustrate those plans, he only fulfilled them. He did not understand God's scheme for saving sinners, else he had not taken a step so directly adapted to promote it. So always, God lays His plans too deep for sinners. They try to frustrate God's plans, but to their confusion, at length find that they only promoted those plans the more. It was said in reference to the plans laid by Joseph's brethren, — Ye meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, to save many people alive. God suffered their plans to go forward and seem to be fully executed but then He put forth His hand and turned the whole to the utmost good. So God is wont to do in regard to the plans of the wicked.

But it is time that I should present distinctly before you and press on your immediate regard the great question of my text, — “why will ye die?” To all who have not yet turned from your sins, God makes this earnest appeal. Fain would He know of you why it is that you will die. What answer will you give to this appeal? — What can you say? That there is no help for you, and therefore you must die? But that is not true, for glorious help is laid on one who is mighty to save.

Will you insist that there is none to pity you? That too, is utterly false. Does not the great God pity you? And Jesus Christ too; and every angel in heaven? And indeed all the holy in God's universe?

Or will you say, there is no mercy for me? That also is alike false. There has been most abundant mercy shown you in the gospel. Nothing can exceed that mercy and compassion; and even today, after so long an abuse of it, you may perhaps yet find it waiting to bless you.

Or will you say — I can't help myself? How can I turn to God? Doubtless you think you can turn at any time, or you would not so long have put it over to a convenient season. You intend at some time to turn to God; but when? Perhaps when it shall be forever too late! One day, or perhaps only one hour, too late!

I have perhaps mentioned in the hearing of some of you the case of a young man whose converted sister earnestly besought him to repent, and come at once to Christ. He put her off; she still entreated. Especially she pressed him one Sabbath, and felt that she could not be denied. At length, as he could not well do less, he said to her — I have to make a short journey on Monday, and shall return on Tuesday; when this is over, I will attend to it. On Wednesday I promise you, I will devote myself to this work. Thus he promised. Monday came, he started on horseback to accomplish his business and get all things ready to turn to the Lord. God had done waiting on him! He was thrown from his horse, brought home a corpse, and on Wednesday, his set day for repentance, his funeral was attended by sad friends, and his body committed to the grave. Alas, who shall give the history of the spirit that God summoned so fearfully away?

Many cases of a similar character I have met with, painfully showing that God is not well pleased that sinners should deliberately set aside His proposed time and adopt their own. I once heard a young lady say that she meant to be converted just before she graduated. In fact she had her plans laid very definitely. On the Sabbath before commencement, she was to unite with the church and sit down with them to the table of the Lord. See there! how she proposed to take her own course and set aside God's earnest call to repent now! But God will surely have His way and will as surely defeat your plans. You cannot have your way against God, labor for it ever so much. It would be wrong for God to endorse your plans when they designedly disown His, and you ought not to wish Him to do so. You ought rather to say — Lord, I do not wish Thee to come over to my wicked schemes. Let Thy perfect will be done! God forbid that I should die, if He has no pleasure in it. If thou, O God, hast no pleasure at all in my death, why should I have? Does not God know how awful a thing it is to die eternally?

Do you think, sinner, that God means to trifle with you? Ye who say that there is no danger of dying eternally for sin — say how is this, — that God should so solemnly ask you why you will die and under His solemn oath affirm that He has no pleasure in your death? Does God do all this to frighten you, when as you insinuate, there is really no death to fear? Is the great God deceiving you, or trying to disturb you with needless alarms? Is it not rather the case that you are deceiving yourself with hopes that are baseless and that must vanish away like the giving up of the ghost?

# GOD'S GOODNESS TOWARD MEN BASELY REQUITED

*“They have rewarded me evil for my good and hatred for my love”  
— Psalm 109:5.*

David is here speaking apparently of himself, yet really says much that is appropriately applicable to the Messiah. This is common to those ancient prophets who were, in a sort, types of the Messiah, and is especially developed in the case of David, who, as God's chosen king of his covenant people, was so extraordinary a precursor and model of Zion's greater King.

In one aspect, this and several other kindred passages, have been a stumbling-block to some, and a trial to many. They are thought to breathe a vindictive spirit. But there is really in them no occasion for stumbling, for, justly interpreted, they contain nothing inconsistent with the revealed character of God — nothing repugnant to the genius and spirit of the New Testament. These objections grow out of ignorance of God.

God is benevolent. But benevolence has many attributes, and justice is one of them. When occasion calls for it, justice must be revealed. The occasions are less frequent now than they will be at some future day — because this is a period of probation, of long-suffering and of mercy. Under the Gospel, and during the progress of this great experiment of mercy on depraved hearts, we need not expect the ordinary manifestations of justice, that must obtain, *in general*, under God's government.

It should never be forgotten that God is not *all* mercy. If He were to become so, He could be no longer good. Indeed, it is impossible for us to conceive of a being all mercy and no justice, or all justice and no mercy.

In this psalm, the special manifestations are those of justice. We hear the writer pleading for justice. The Spirit of Christ within the Psalmist is praying God to execute justice on the wicked. Of course the Spirit which indited prayer in David's mind, was well aware of the necessity of justice in the government of God. Why, then, should He not direct David's mind to offer prayer accordingly? In the case of truly spiritual Christians, led by



the Spirit of God, we see the same thing developed now. The soul demands the administration of justice. Under a deep conviction of its necessity as a means of the greatest good, strong desire is awakened, and this, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, assumes the spirit of prayer.

On all hands, it is conceded that God is good — perfectly, infinitely good; — in other words, is truly *love*. All unselfish, He is only and infinitely benevolent.

The text assumes that God does good to men, and affirms that they requite Him evil therefor. Let us now inquire,

**I. IN WHAT GOD'S GOODNESS AND LOVE TO MEN ARE MANIFESTED;**

**II. HOW THESE MANIFESTATIONS OUGHT TO BE RECEIVED;**

**III. HOW THEY ARE RECEIVED IN FACT;**

I. God manifested His love to man in creating him with a far nobler nature than He gave other animals. Man He made capable of knowing his Maker, and, in connection with this capability, made him capable, also, of loving and obeying Him, and of entering into His sympathies and views in regard to the welfare of His creatures. These glorious prerogatives, conferred on man by his Maker, are surely manifestations of His great love, and should be so regarded.

Again, this love appears, also, in His establishing over man a government, such as he greatly needed for his welfare. Beyond all doubt, such beings as we are, need to be trained. Even in Eden, holy man needed God's watchful care to keep him from sin. Much more does he need God's care and help, since his fall. If our children need parental training to make them good men and women, much more do we, under God, our Father, to make us holy and happy. If this training is an act of benevolence in parents, much more is it in God.

Again, God's goodness to men appears in the fact that He writes His law in man's very nature, giving him a conscience whose voice responds to the voice of God. Surely, it was good in our Father to bring His law so very near as to write it in our inmost mind. For, if holiness is happiness, and

hence, we must have God's law developed in all our moral being, then to give us a conscience on which this law should be written, is surely a development of real love.

Also, God reveals His love in giving man a written copy of this law. The case was that, by reason of sin, man did not like to retain God in his knowledge, and so, though he might have known, yet did not know God fully and rightly. Then that God should come down and spread out this law on the written page, was truly an act of love — love that would seek to vary the experiment in every way, and would use the best possible means for man's instruction and salvation.

And, yet further, after this law had been utterly broken, to open another door of hope through Jesus Christ — to throw it open so widely that none need fail of gaining admittance; — how significantly radiant with love is this!

But I have time only to glance at some of these things, passing unmentioned a great multitude of special developments. I might speak of His love in giving us a *Sabbath*. Suppose we were immersed in worldly business incessantly. What a calamity! Now we may return to God one day in seven -, and, oh, what a rest and blessing is this! It is striking to observe how much of our time is Sabbath. The very child seven years old has had one whole year of Sabbaths, and the young man or woman twenty-eight years old, has had four full years of Sabbaths! — enough to go through college! O, if you had only used it to complete your education for the everlasting Sabbath!

Observe these Sabbaths are not a *yoke*, but a *gift* — made for man, to minister to his welfare — a holy day, to conduce the more to his holiness and happiness. How sad the mistake of those who never call the Sabbath a “delight,” but only a “weariness!” Said a brother who had been sick — I had a new view of the Sabbath. I saw it to be a holiday, in which, like a weary laborer, I might go home and commune with my Father in heaven. I now thank God for Sabbaths!

God's goodness appears in all the means of grace He has appointed; in the blessings of His providence, also, in countless number and untold variety; in the restraints of His providence no less; in everything God does for us

and in regard for us. All the needful discipline, all the chastisements, rebukes, corrections — all come from a loving heart, designed in real wisdom for our highest good.

We might extend even this view, and add — the restraints of physical government, for, what would this world be without these restraints? The restraints of family government too; the means of education and the government necessary for their efficiency and for the formation of good habits; all these things have in view the development of what is good in man, and must, therefore, be put on our list among the manifestations of our Heavenly Father's love. All things — whatever God does or suffers — are intended for our good. Indeed, the kindness of God's intentions is absolutely infinite. You cannot measure it; you can in no wise measure up or appreciate its wonderful manifestations. And, let us add, also, that all these things manifest not only *love* but wisdom. They are not only done with good intent, but they are done *well*. As the purpose is good, so is the plan for its attainment, wise. All is love, and all is perfect.

## II. LET US NOW INQUIRE — HOW OUGHT THESE MANIFESTATIONS TO BE RECEIVED BY US?

As kindly as they were intended. Our gratitude should correspond to His loving-kindness. Our confidence should meet His goodness. For, how ought human government to be received in the family, the school, or the State? Plainly, if that government is framed in wisdom, to answer ends of love, it should be met with responsive love and gratitude; should be accepted in a grateful and obedient spirit. Why not?

So should we receive all God's administration in providence. Christian, did you never fall before God, saying — O, Lord, help me to receive this chastisement as kindly as Thou hast intended it. May I be as *grateful* for it as Thou hast been *good* in its administration.”

Sometimes children do not take discipline kindly, although they know they *ought* to. The fact that “no chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous,” but only grievous, creates a demand for some faith in the wisdom and loving-kindness of the Lord. This faith both honors and pleases God,

and surely ought never to be lacking. Manifestly, all the details of God's government over us, should be received in the same docile, humble, and trustful spirit. How do you feel in regard to the way in which your own children receive your discipline toward them? You know you are liable to err in judgment; so do *they* know this? Yet you are wont to feel strongly that so long as you bear your heart and hand toward them in love, and with your best wisdom, they ought to receive it kindly. You claim this as a parent; you feel the reasonableness of this claim all the more from the consciousness of loving them as your own soul. How reasonably, then, may God feel all this, and even more as His love is greater, and the sacrifices He has made for us are exceedingly more manifest and heart-revealing. Besides, He never lacks wisdom — never makes any mistakes. There is no occasion to which that His judgment were as wise as His heart is kind; — it *is* so, and we have nothing more to wish.

Then why not accept God's discipline as kindly as He gives it? Why should we not? What are we thinking of when we murmur, or question His wisdom or His love? How ought we to receive the *gospel*? Who can doubt *its* wisdom and *its* love? Shall we then receive it as if it were some attack on our habits and interests? How utterly strange this would be! Yet scarcely more so than to view God's providential discipline towards us as hard. For myself, I have often thought I did not want anything else but to receive all God's discipline toward me just as He gives and intends it — as grateful as He is good — my heart responsive evermore in confidence to His darkest dealings.

Again, how ought we to receive God's gift of a Sabbath? Shall we take it as an assault on our liberty? Shall we deem it only a burden and cry out — O, what a weariness it is? How strangely would this be standing in our own light, and accepting with suspicion what God gives in the purest wisdom and love! Therefore, all reason demands that, under the most afflictive rebukes of His providence, we should bow most trustfully and most humbly, knowing that all these things are intended in the utmost kindness and love. These very things are, more than all the rest, trying to our Heavenly Father's heart; yet they are so useful and even necessary to us, that He may not withhold them.

### III. HOW GOD'S ADMINISTRATION TOWARD US *OUGHT* TO BE RECEIVED BY US, BUT *HOW IT IS*

On this point, what are the facts?

The text has it — “They rewarded me evil for my good, and hatred for my love.” Is this in accordance with the facts? Let us look at the *position* which *sin* takes towards God and the interests of His great family. Sin consists in selfishness. In all selfishness, the mind holds on to its own particular interests, real or supposed, and disregards the general interests in comparison with its own. But God, the Father of all, loving all equally, cannot endure selfishness in any one of them, for the good reason that it is intrinsically unjust and ruinous to interests which He loves and defends. He cannot bear to see one of His family outraging the rights of another one out of mere selfishness. This is the reason why He hates and withstands sin. It is not selfish in Him to take care of all the interests of His great family, nor to regard their general interests as of supreme importance, for they are really so. Consequently, it cannot be selfish in Him to maintain His own honor as King and Lord of all; for, unless He did, how could He rule His subjects so as to ensure their highest good? Hence, to be truly wise and good, He must maintain His dignity and authority against all the insults and abuses of selfish beings, and against all their encroachments on the interests of His great family. It should never be forgotten, that sin and selfishness are intrinsically *unjust*; — unjust to God and unjust to His creatures. This injustice God must and ought to oppose. Consequently, every being, persisting in his own selfishness, will fret against God and be rased by unceasing collision with His righteous administration. It cannot be otherwise. A God who cares justly for all, must forever come into collision with creatures who care excessively for self. He will move on righteously; they will chafe and fret, selfishly; He, seeking evermore to secure the highest good of all; they seeking supremely the small and particular good of self as against all. Hence, it is impossible for a sinner remaining selfish, to deny that he renders to God evil for good. He opposes God for His *love* to all His great family. On this principle he opposes God's gospel — opposes His Law — opposes His Sabbaths — opposes His means of grace — opposes the course of His providence.

Mark any one of these forms of opposition to God. See, for example, how men complain of God's providence. For what? Has God done anything wrong? They do not even pretend that He has. They act like bad children in a family, who are forever restive under a government which they know to be right, yet *practically regard* as wrong. You know how such children thwart all attempts for their good, rewarding their parents evil for all the good done and attempted to be done for themselves. What is all this rasping and fretting against God? Only selfishness working itself out in requiting God with evil for good — resisting measures which God adopts to bless His great family.

In conclusion, let me ask some personal questions.

Would you, who remain in sin, be any better pleased if God should take a different course with you. What can He do to conciliate you? He would like to be at peace with you if He reasonably could, and never has sought a quarrel with you. Suppose He should abolish His law and not require you to obey Him in anything. Suppose He should not ask you to love your neighbor. Would this please you any better? To be released from all requisition from God to love your fellow-beings, would be quite a change; would you like it? You are not easy under His government now: would you have it reversed? Would you have God reverse the requisitions of His law and require you to hate instead of love your neighbor? Would you like this change? No. Your conscience would resist and condemn this new law not less than your selfish heart has resisted the old one. Yea, your whole moral nature would cry out against it. Especially when other selfish beings come down upon yourself, in obedience to this new law, you would exclaim against it as an infinite outrage. Nay, further, if God were merely to throw up the reins of government and leave every selfish being to prey upon your happiness as much as he pleased, you would cry out against even this as insufferable. You would say — Why does not God take care of His wicked creatures? Why does He not restrain their infamous selfishness? So, while you complain because God governs *you* to control your selfishness, you would complain infinitely more, and with some good reasons, too, if He were to do all what you demand for yourself! Let men alone, to be as selfish as they list.

Yet, again; would you have the penalty of His law altered? Would you have Him make it less? Would it better meet your demands then? But penalties, you know, are infinitely important. Law is good for nothing without them, and hence, their value is just as great as the value of the law itself. You would condemn the change which should annex a finite penalty to an infinitely valuable law. Of course you would, just as you would condemn a law which affixed a ten cent penalty to the crime of murder.

Can you suggest any change in His gospel? What change would improve it? Or can you say how His providence would be administered better? If so, explain how. You do not like its restraints, but suppose they were removed; would you be any the better? Does not your highest reason say there can be no change for the higher? Some of you, perhaps, do not like the restraints of his school, or of your own father's family; but does this prove that either is badly governed, or would be better if changed? Yet you cannot suggest any reasonable improvement. Your own reason affirms that all is as it should be, and that no change for the better can be made. No, in God's great kingdom, you cannot show that any change for the better can be made. Suppose I come to you as God's servant and say — What do you want? You are chafing and fretting against God; what would you have? What change would satisfy your demands? Can you name any change in His providence that would please you, and that you know would be on the whole an improvement? If so, what is it? What change do you demand in His gospel — or in His bible? Do you say, "It is so difficult for me to become a Christian!" What change shall God make to please you? Shall He forgive you without repentance? Would this please you? Shall He save you without faith on your part — without any confidence in Him? But this is a natural impossibility. Without confidence in God, you could not be happy anywhere in the universe.

What could be more unreasonable than your course toward God? He justly complains — "They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love." You know this is true! You cannot deny it. And your misbehavior has not been caused by any fault in God, for God's law is unselfish. His whole course towards you is full of lovingkindness, while yours towards Him has been altogether selfish and mean.

What can be more trying to God than your course towards Him. Think of the sacrifices His love has made to bless you, and then consider how you have requited those sacrifices. Nothing can be so painful to a benevolent heart as this. If anyone among you has ever labored to do good to a friend, and that good so benevolently intended, has been requited only with abuse and evil, you know how this agonizes your heart! You can understand, in some measure, how God must feel when sinners requite Him evil for good. God says to them — “Thou has spoken and done evil things, as thou couldest.” What worse could they do to Him than to abuse His love and repay His kindness with insult — His efforts to save with efforts to bring down on their own heads damnation?

So far as concerns God and the holy, it is infinitely better that you would make war on God for His goodness than for any wickedness. Therefore, it is not well that God should change to accommodate you. So of ourselves; if men will abuse us, let it be for our well-doing and not for our evil-doing. We must, by no means, do evil to accommodate them. It is an inexpressible consolation to God’s people that sinners never can have any occasion to find fault with God for anything cruel, tyrannical or severe. There is not the least danger that anything will ever appear in any part of the universe to God’s discredit;- nothing that can tarnish His name or reproach His administration, If there were the least reason to fear anything of the sort, it would clothe heaven in mourning, and thrill the hearts of the holy with horror.

Tell me, sinner, is not your course necessarily fatal, either to you or God? You oppose Him; He abhors you. If you are right, it will doubtless one day appear so, and then what can we say for God and His kingdom? But if God is right and you are wrong, you have within yourself the elements of the deepest ruin and destruction. You have such a moral nature — such powers of reason and conscience, that you will certainly condemn yourself, and load your own soul down eternally with self-reproaches and self-condemnation. Though all the universe beside you soul, were to caress you and shout your praises, yet your own conscience would come down on you with curses which no power in the universe can avert.

Then why not yield? Why not confess and repent? Come out now, in honesty and say — Lord, I have always been dreadfully wicked. I have



obeyed neither Thy law nor Thy gospel. I have not received kindly the things that Thou hast so kindly given. So far from this, I have only been rased and full of dissatisfaction. Have you ever gone before God to say — I have wronged Thee all my life by my suspicions? I have never realized that Thou has had kind intentions for me. To this day, my heart is hard as marble. I am only a wretch — a vile, ungrateful worm! Never have I received Thy blessings in a spirit corresponding to Thy love that gave them.” Now why do you not cast yourself down before God in this way, saying — Lord, I know Thou hast been good, but I have been utterly and only evil; Thou hast sought to bless me, but I have only resisted and abused Thee! O break my spirit down in penitence! Can you say -Lord, I am afraid there is something wrong in *Thy* heart? Said a woman to me not long since — “God is not my Father. My heart will say — I am so poor, God will not own me. He is my adversary to resist me on every hand. He comes and stands in the way, as He sent an angel to meet Baalam.” Now, I am aware that God’s dispensations towards individuals sometimes have this *appearance*, even as old Jacob said — “All these things are against me.” When God deals with them in real mercy, and strives to lead them in His own right way, they only rebel the more. Oh, how sad that men are so slow of heart to trust God!

Consider how Jesus Christ is treated, for it is He who speaks in the text. For His love, what hatred does He experience! He who has loved sinners, how strangely do sinners hate Him even to the ruin of their own souls!

But perhaps some of you will say — I know it all; my conscience is wounded desperately; where is any remedy for me? Where can I find any balm for my soul? How can I ever have peace again? My soul is so hard, and my conscience so dead, it surely must be that I am past hope — given over to be lost forever! But have you ever gone to that long-abused Savior, saying — Lord, is there any help for me? Can you persuade yourself to go humbly to *Him* for help? Mark what He says — Wilt Thou not from this time cry unto Me, — “My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth?” Do you say — May I call Him *Father*? Do you ask, Where is He, that I may come even to His seat and pour out my confessions and my sorrows into His ear? Broken-hearted sinner, He is near thee — even where thou art — in thy room — at thy right hand; and it is only for thee to *speak*, and He heareth thee!

# ON BEING ALMOST PERSUADED TO BE CHRISTIANS

*“Agrippa said unto Paul — almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”  
— Acts 26:28*

Discussing the subject presented here, I shall,

- I. NOTICE THE FACT THAT MEN ARE MADE CHRISTIANS BY PERSUASION.**
- II. SHOW WHAT ARE NOT REASONS WHY THEY ARE NOT ALTOGETHER PERSUADED.**
- III. WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY THEY ARE ONLY ALMOST AND NOT ALTOGETHER PERSUADED.**

I. You recollect the connection, which gives us the occasion and the circumstances of this remark. Paul had been arrested and brought before Agrippa to defend himself against the Jews. In this defense he gives his early history, a sketch of his conversion to the faith of Christ, then, of his labors and persecutions subsequent to that event, and finally appeals to Agrippa himself, as if assured that one, familiar with Judaism as he was, must believe the ancient prophets, and hence could not reasonably reject Jesus of Nazareth. “King Agrippa, said he, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.” “Agrippa answered, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” To which Paul nobly responds, “I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

Paul had so preached that Agrippa felt almost persuaded to become a Christian. Of course under Paul’s preaching, men naturally inferred that the change from being a sinner to being a Christian is wrought by persuasion. Assuming that Paul preached not only the true gospel, but in the truest method and with the soundest philosophy, we infer that *men become Christians by means of persuasion*. Consequently, they do not become Christians by virtue of any physical change in the substance of either soul or body. It is not, strictly speaking, by any act of creation, an

act which gives existence to either substance or qualities, not existent before. Persuasion requires no new creation of faculties. It supposes a mind already in existence and in action, capable of appreciating truth as a motive. Men are persuaded by truth — truth which addresses the intelligence and appeals to conscience or to some form of self-interest. Thus men are persuaded to become Christians.

Now here I do not by any means intend to say that this persuasion is merely human. Far otherwise. It is far more divine than human. There is such an interposition of divine agency as sets truth in order before the mind, and brings forth its strength. Thus to human persuasion is superadded the divine. Yet the influence is altogether of a *moral* nature.

We are compelled to the same conclusion by the nature of this change. If the change were in the substance of the soul, or in any of its original, created powers, we might then assume that the power by which the change is wrought is creative, not moral. But since the change consists entirely in the voluntary attitude of the mind towards God, we infer that it is caused by those agencies which are adapted to produce voluntary change in the mind's free action — viz., truth and argument, assuming the form of motive. Hence, in every point of view, it is plain that men are made Christians by *persuasion*.

## II. IT IS NEXT PERTINENT TO INQUIRE WHAT ARE NOT THE REASONS WHY MEN FAIL OF BEING PERSUADED TO BECOME CHRISTIANS

Ordinarily, it is not for want of intellectual conviction that they ought to become Christians. For the most part, in Christian lands, the gospel has been preached so fully and so truly that the general intelligence is enlightened, and all men know that they ought to put away sinning and embrace the salvation provided for them in the gospel. They fail to do this, not for want of sufficient reasons to carry conviction that they ought to. Especially, we may say, that almost everyone has light enough before his mind to carry conviction of this duty, if he were honest and would weigh this question seriously and with candor.

The real and exact difficulty is, they do not make up their mind to obey the decisions of conscience and their better judgment. They are not so persuaded as to determine to act *now*. For the most part they hope to become Christians *at some time*. As Agrippa, so they, do not yield to their convictions. Selfish considerations overrule their better judgment.

Here I may safely appeal to your own consciences. Let me come very near to you, even as if I were alone with you and were to urge upon your honest hearts this plain question. Is it not a matter of fact that you are in reason and conscience convinced that you ought to become Christians, but yet you suffer some selfish reasons to prevail over you, and deter you from doing manifest duty? You know you ought to do it; you know the reasons why you do not are utterly unsound — radically selfish!

### III. LET US SEE WHAT THESE REASONS ARE — THE REASONS WHY YOU ARE ONLY ALMOST PERSUADED TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

**1. Ambitious schemes.** This is the case especially with the young, and particularly with students. Often the young become students for the sake merely of distinction. They cherish worldly aims. They are determined that, for themselves, they will become something. They are to be prominent. Hence, when you come to such a young man with the gospel offers, his first thought is — how will my reception of these offers affect my cherished plans of aggrandizement? Ah, how can I become a Christian at the sacrifice of the favorite object of my life and labors? You exhort him to yield his will to God's so that henceforth he shall have no schemes but such as please God. Alas, he says, but I have schemes of my own that are too dear to my heart to be relinquished yet. Is it not even so with you who are yet young, but not converted? Have you not some ambitious schemes which you seek to realize, and which you suppose are in conflict with the higher claims of the gospel?

This is for many reasons more often the case with young men than with young women, yet is sufficiently apt to occur with the latter, in some seductive form, and of such power as to overrule all the demands of conscience.

**2.** Many are kept back from a full persuasion by some subtle form of self-righteousness. He cannot quite affirm to himself or to others that he has no sin; and yet he does allow himself to think he has never done anything so *very* wrong, but has always done about right. He has not been a liar, nor an adulterer. He can almost say with Saul of Tarsus, "I have lived in all good conscience before God." He thinks, and perhaps truly, that he has had many good feelings; kindly, humane impulses, and these he is sure are good. Really he has no heart to renounce all his self-righteousness as filthy rags that cannot profit. He might consent in a very general sense to be indebted to Christ for his salvation, but to renounce all self-righteousness and do all that is implied in being a Christian, he cannot.

**3.** Some have too much self-will. Often and for a long time, have they been urged and have resisted, until habitually ascendancy of the will has given it giant strength, and it can easily overrule every appeal which conscience or God can make.

Some even indulge resentment against God, or against His servants. Supposing themselves to have been abused because something has been done by somebody, they fancy they do well to be angry. Thus they harbor a spirit directly opposed to the spirit of the gospel, and this suffices to overrule all the arguments which are presented to induce them to become Christians.

Those who have advanced in age to middle life, have their schemes of ambition, or their plans of business, so that when you make your appeal to them, they have interests that repel it. To you who occupy this period of life, I appeal, if it be not even so. When the gospel has come to you, demanding your attention, and even the warmest reception you can give it, has not some scheme of business or ambition stood in your way and held you back? The political aspirant has too many hopes excited, and has committed himself too fully to his political friends; how can he turn away to be religious? Some years ago, I knew a young man of fine talents and extra-ordinary powers of persuasion, who, from a course of preparation for the ministry, was drawn into public life; studied law — lost his piety — claimed at first that benevolence called him into that department of labor, but soon he showed that he was ambitious as Caesar, and that really he had no conscience, but that of saleable politicians. Such men are in

political bondage. Like Agrippa, they owe their place to some higher functionaries, and are intensely sensitive to their own position and standing as before that higher influence. Agrippa held his place under Rome; so did Pilate; therefore neither of them had independence of soul enough, in a position of so much dependence, to be a whole man. Many now, like them, are in political bondage to Caesar. Mark how Pharisees and rulers of synagogues bore themselves towards Jesus and His cause, and you see, as in a mirror, true to nature, how most political men are in such bondage that they will not break away enough to comply with their sense of duty. I have in mind the case of a gentleman who became greatly disturbed in respect to his salvation. I saw him often and urged him to give himself to the service of God. That, he replied, is a step I can by no means take, without the consent of my political friends. I have long been in the habit of consulting them in all matters which might affect my standing before the community. Furthermore, all my religious friends think differently from you. And my worldly friends, I am quite sure, would be opposed to my becoming a Christian in this revival. How, said he, can I look my friends in the face if I were to become a Christian? I answered, "how can you look God in the face, if you do not?" He said. "I am always in the habit of consulting my friends in matters so important; I will do so in the present case, and then will see you again." I told him I already knew how such a course would result, and had no hopes that could be disappointed. And so it proved. I mention the case only as an illustration of the political bondage into which many fall.

Some men have a pride of personal character which prevents their becoming Christians. One says, "My wife has become converted, and I shall be deemed weak as a woman if I change now." I have heard men taunt one another, asking, "Will you be persuaded to be religious by such and such a preacher? Will you be one of his disciples?" So it might have been said to Agrippa, "Are you almost persuaded by the prisoner, Paul? By a man who stands before you in chains, and you the honorable judge upon the bench? Will you change your religion and go over to one whom all Jews hold to be a heretic?"

In some cases, the hindering cause is sheer infatuation. They know the truth on all important points; they will say, "I know it all." Why, then,

don't you yield? "I can't tell why." Then, the reason is, simple infatuation in sin.

Another reason is a *spirit of deep contempt for God*.

Those who feel this may not be fully conscious of it; but such is the fact. God's rights do not weigh, in their minds, as a straw. You may talk to them of God's right to govern them; you make no sort of impression. What is the reason of this? It is not that they regard God's claims as a dream of somebody's imagination, and deny the fact; but it is because they have a deep and overpowering contempt for God, and therefore no appeal on that ground reaches their sensibility — nothing arouses them to action. So deep and so utter is their want of moral honesty, every appeal based on God's rights falls powerless. In their esteem, moral obligation is equivalent to no obligation at all. There is in their minds a total lack of all honorable sentiments, feelings and principles of action, as towards God. Not one sentiment of honor toward the great God! Does honor bind the child to revere his parent? What would you say of one who had been dependent on you for everything, and yet should totally disregard all his obligations to you? Suppose the obligation to be the greatest possible from man to man; and the disregard to be as utter as the sinner manifests towards God, how would you feel? Horrified! You would have such feelings of indignation, you could scarcely think of the offender with calmness. And yet what are the utmost obligations of man to man, compared with those of all men towards God?

Add to this a *total destitution of true self-respect*. What? shall I shame my own face by refusing to do my duty? Can a man have true self-respect, who, knowing his obligation, refuses to become a Christian? Certainly if he respected himself, he never could disobey, refuse, and dishonor his God! What! shall I be such a wretch as to abuse my God? No! I would as soon leap into hell as dishonor Christ and pour contempt on my infinite Father! The very thought of so outraging His feelings is horrible. Sooner would I suffer anything in the world than the self-abhorrence and self-condemnation which must result from such contempt of God!

Add to this a total destitution of all benevolence, which must of course be the case with all those who will not become Christians.

Next, a total recklessness in regard to the evils of a course of impenitence. Said one man, as his eyes began to be opened to see himself, "The thought that I was giving my whole influence against Christ and against the salvation of souls, came home upon my conscience as an awful sin! I was appalled at myself!" Suppose a man could sit in his window, open towards the street, and there load and fire his rifle into the thronging masses, just for amusement. How horrible must his state of mind be! You, sinner, may not be firing leaden balls into quivering flesh, but you are sending forth streams of influence that damn souls to eternal death! You reply, "I do not tell them not to become Christians." Aye, not with your *lips*, perhaps, but with your *life!* — a thing far worse, more surely fatal and more widely and terrible destructive! Not those who say most, or sin most openly, do most hurt; but your most moral sinners, who are quite intelligent, and know best their duty, yet are far — O how far from doing it! A fair moral man, of high standing — what can he not do for mischief? Look at that young man, accomplished, popular and moral; he has such control over the minds of the young people in his village, that you can do nothing to turn them from sin to God. Is it said — then pray for him? You cannot. It will do no good. Preach a sermon to meet his case; he will pick it all to pieces. You cannot talk to him, he knows so much and frames his objections so skillfully. What makes all this mischief? That young man happens to possess the very attributes that give him the power to do great mischief. He can do more harm than all the rowdies in town.

So of a young woman who is accomplished and moral, yet withholds her heart from God. She is altogether in the way of saving souls, and all the more because she has so much morality. I saw a young lady of this description enter a sick room where lay one of her young associates, just passing away to the realities of another world. Calling forward this moral sinner, she reached forth her pale hand, saying, "I am not a Christian because I leaned on you. You were so moral and so happy in sin, you had the greatest influence over me, and I easily put off the claims of my God and Savior." That young lady trembled and begged to be excused that she might retire from such a scene, but the dying girl said, "No, no; you must hear me now, my last words. How could you let me go on in my sins! Oh, *my soul is lost!*"



The great difficulty with sinners is that they take a selfish view of the whole subject. Having fully committed themselves to their own interests, all considerations are viewed in a selfish light. They regard nothing, save as it addresses either their hopes or their fears. If this striking fact were properly considered, it would show the need and the character of the divine Spirit's influences.

Sinners, taking only a selfish view of God's claims, are not at all prepared to take a disinterested view of the subject. They are not prepared to become Christians, although they are quite prepared to look around and see if they cannot become more happy.

Once more, many are not fully persuaded now because they expect in some way to have another call and a better opportunity. Full of hope as to this, they consequently deceive themselves. Often conscious that they egregiously trifle with their own souls, they yet are so reluctant to meet God's claims today that they let it slide over. They say, "I am not yet persuaded to become a Christian, but when God's resistless power comes down upon me, then I shall yield."

In fact, when you get at the bottom of the case, you find they are desperately depraved. Their depravity is so deep, so radical, it bids defiance to all your motives for persuasion. Sometimes the sense of being greatly obliged, breaks down a really hard heart. But even this consideration many sinners can resist. The sense of being loved and pitied of God, makes some impression on their hearts, but often fails to move them much. So dead are they to the attractions of the morally beautiful and true, that much of the most glorious truth concerning God, seems to fall powerless upon their hearts. They seem incapable of being moved by anything save it be some hope of greater selfish good. For the honor of God they care not. If they could get anything from Him to promote their own selfish good, they would be ready to grasp it. For God, they care not. They would not care if He were dead. If their course were to bring mischief on Him, they would not care. They know they act meanly, cruelly, wickedly towards God; yet they are not persuaded to desist from this course and forsake their sins. Specify some particular form of sin; bring it before their mind; convince them they had better forsake it, yet they will not. In fact, a besotted *will not* is the only reason why they *do not*.

## REMARKS

Sin is the greatest mystery in this world. How can it be accounted for? I have often wondered at the case of men convinced of duty, who yet will persist in their sins, despite the utmost reason to forsake them. Sometimes they seem to be infatuated. In fact, they are. It is a spiritual infatuation!

How strange to hear sinners object to the mysteries of religion. Indeed! They assume that there is something vastly mysterious in religion, and therefore they cannot embrace it! There can be no greater mystery than *sin*! All the mysteries in religion are as nothing compared with the mystery of *sinning*! It is safe to say that if we had not facts to prove it, nobody could believe that men would persist in sin as they do, despite all conceivable reasons to the contrary course. What can be more strange? Sin is indeed a mystery so deep, who can tell what it is and why it is? Surely, no sinner can tell. See that sinner hold his soul, as it were, in his hand, play with it as with a top, and then in the face of Calvary, throw it into hell! Knowing full well that sin brings him no good, but only evil; assured, too, that all good is given by piety, he can yet throw his soul away, for nothing! Truly, this is one of the mysteries of the universe, to be resolved into the sovereignty of a free agent abusing his liberty of free action, having been created with power to abuse it at his own option.

The infatuation of the sinner is an obvious fact. People may abuse Adam and other agencies tending to sin, as much as they please. Yet they cannot help knowing that this infatuation is a matter of their own, and that whatever relation it may bear to any other beings or agencies in the universe, themselves alone are to blame for their own sin. They inwardly know that they are the sole authors of their own sin, how much so ever other agencies may have been its occasions and temptations. The dreadful infatuation lives and reigns in their own souls. Suppose you were to see thousands of people rushing towards and over a precipice, and should also see all sorts of influences thrown in their way to stop them; fathers and mothers rushing in before them with imploring cries, beseeching them to stop — pleading, rebuking, yet all in vain; on they go, and over, and down, down they plunge, with eyes wide open; how astonishing! Whole oceans of men, rushing down the steep of death — an *army of maniacs*! No

wonder that when Christians get their eyes open to this fearful scene, they almost *die!* They would if they were long subjected to this dreadful view without some sort of alleviation. You hear them saying, “Lord, I shall surely die unless Thou interpose to save these sinners, or in some way relieve me from this dreadful position of seeing souls perish before my very eyes!”

How shocking to hear sinners claim that they are doing about right, while yet they live in utter sin against God and the Lamb! They claim that they have none but honorable feelings and sentiments, and even talk of their *moral honesty!* What a burlesque upon the truth is all such talk as this! Especially, how strange is it that such sinners should set themselves up for reformers! There is something supremely ridiculous in these pretensions to be reformers. They, who have not the first particle of genuine benevolence — who can rob God of everything they owe Him, yet profess to love the poor slave and the poor inebriate! How deep does this love go down? Is there any moral bones in it at all? If I am morally honest, can I rob and abuse my own mother? Having done just this and all this, can I then turn around and make pretensions to honor and propriety? Yet the sinner, having robbed God all his life-time, pretends to honor, and even to practice, righteousness!

When a man has all needful convictions of duty, he is then and thenceforth, without excuse. Every honest man’s position is this: Show me what I ought to do, and I will do it. No other question need be asked than this one — *Ought I to do this?* This question settled, nothing more is needed. To settle the question of *oughtness*, and then stop there without doing duty, is to tempt God. It is to provoke Him to consuming wrath! Such a sinner is utterly without excuse. “I know, says he, that I ought to do this.” Then you *must do it* — as you would be a man, and would acquit yourself of a man’s responsibilities! Say — “Anything that is my duty, I will do at all hazards; if it be my duty, *I will begin now!*” But to see intelligent and moral beings throw all these obligations and convictions to the winds — how fearful!

For sinners to wait God’s time to repent, is infinitely absurd. God’s time is *now*; you wait, just to miss His time and provoke Him to deny you any more time at all. You are persuaded of your duty now. What more do you

ask of God than this? What more can you in reason desire of God than that He should reveal to you your condition, your peril, your way of escape, and the reasons which urge you to flee for help to the Lamb of Calvary? All this He has done; and now, in tones of love and pity, calls on you to give heed to His call. *Will you do it?*

# ADORNING THE DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR SAVIOR

*“But showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” Titus 2:10.*

In our last Friday prayer meeting, one of the brethren quoted this passage in prayer. It struck me with great force; indeed, I never had seen its beauty and power so fully before. It turned my mind upon this passage with so much interest, that I have concluded to present my views upon it in this morning’s discourse.

**1.** First, let us inquire, what *is* this doctrine of God our Savior?

The chapter in which the passage occurs, affords us all the answer we need. Paul is instructing Timothy how to teach and preach the gospel to his converts. He specially applies the gospel to “aged men,” “aged women,” “young women,” “young men,” to himself, as a “pattern of good words,” and to “servants;” and in this latter connection, comes in our text. This exhortation is then enforced as well as explained in these remarkable words: “For 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 Savior 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.”

Let this suffice to show what the doctrine is that Christians of every class in life should strive to adorn. The essential idea of the doctrine is that God’s infinite grace towards our lost world had for its aim to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself — in short, to make us holy.

**2.** We must next inquire — *what is it to adorn this doctrine?*

To adorn it is to *honor* it, and make it honorable before all. It implies that we commend it by being ourselves an illustration of its meaning, and by evincing to all its spirit and efficacy. We are to prove the excellence of the

doctrine by showing, in our own case, what it can do in the hands of the Holy Spirit to reform the world. The doctrine is good or otherwise, according to its practical results. If it accomplishes what it aims to, it is beyond expression valuable and glorious. That it can and does, is just the thing which God leaves for His people to prove by their lives. Hence, they must live so as to hold forth the excellence, beauty and power, of the gospel.

### 3. What are the *particular reasons* for our thus adorning the gospel?

Unless we adorn and honor the gospel, it will dishonor us. Paul said — “I magnify my office.” He honored the office of an apostle and it honored him. But if he had neglected and disparaged the office, it would have visited disgrace on him. So if we do not magnify our office, all will despise us — the devil and all the universe will count us too mean to be cared for. To have such responsibilities and then to heed them not; to be pressed with such motives, and yet have no sensibility to their pressure and force — this would show that our character has no worthy elements in it, and ought to subject us to dishonor. If you do not adorn the gospel, there must be a reason; and what is it? This — that you are playing the hypocrite!

Again, if we do not adorn the gospel, it will more deeply ruin us. The gospel, instead of blessing us, will only work for us a deeper damnation. There is no avoiding such a result from such a life.

It will greatly grieve the Savior. If we profess the gospel and yet do not adorn it, we do the worst thing we can do to injure His cause and wound His feelings. Accordingly, we find that He expresses the utmost displeasure and disgust towards those who profess to love and honor Him, yet do not. To one of the seven churches of Asia, He said — “I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth!” No such language can be found elsewhere in the Bible; from which we may infer that the Savior hates no other form of sin more intensely and with more utter loathing.

Again, if we do not adorn the gospel, we shall greatly hinder and retard its success. We shall stumble others who would enter the narrow way. Our life scandalizes the gospel which it should, but does not, adorn. He who,

professing the gospel, does not adorn it, gives his highest influence against it. He throws against it the whole weight of his example.

If you reply to this that it is better to profess religion and be a somewhat decent backslider, than to come out in open opposition, this is not true. No argument which an opposer can use against the gospel will have the weight that a protesting life will have. He who professes love but *lives* hatred; whose lips honor Christ, but whose life protests against Him, is Christ's worst enemy. The gospel does not suffer from any other foes as from him.

On the other hand, if we do adorn the gospel, it will surely adorn us. Let any one really adorn the gospel, it shall be to him a mantle of glory. If men witness in him the spirit of Christ, they will admire that spirit and honor him who exhibits it. Besides this, it will win others to love the Savior. If we illustrate it in our lives, it will carry conviction and persuasion too. It is true that in many things, the motives of Christians are liable to be misjudged. Sometimes, when they do right, false motives are imputed to them. Yet, though this be true, there will be many things which the world will be obliged to confess, and this reluctant testimony will be the more to their real honor. Wicked men cannot gainsay their living testimony to the power of the gospel on their own hearts, as manifest in their lives. A holy life will command the attention of the world, and they will inquire what this doctrine may be. They are forced to exclaim — How beautiful their lives are! And how sweet their temper! Who is this Savior whom they profess to follow, and to whose influence they attribute their peculiar spirit and life? If this doctrine begets such a spirit and such a life, we ought to know it and ought to have it!

So it will always be. If this doctrine is really adorned, it will be sure to create inquiry. It must arrest attention. There are probably few men of the least observation who have not known certain persons whose lives have arrested their attention. A man can hardly live anywhere without coming in contact with someone of whom he is constrained to ask — What is it that enables him to live so? What spirit is this? When they see its striking and beautiful manifestations, they are constrained to inquire thus for its causes, and are anxious to learn what they may be.

Mere philanthropists commonly ascribe everything to phrenological development, and make nothing of it but mere humanity. But let them come into contact with a living and earnest Christianity, and they will see the difference. They will see that while the Christian lays all due stress on the rights of man and of woman too, they lay yet more stress upon the rights of God, and ought to. They will see that God has a rightful claim to the homage of His creatures, and that no man deserves much praise for justice who does not give God His rights as well as man his. Thus, the presence of a living Christianity corrects the common mistake of the mere philanthropist. In fact, this class are wont to make this mistake only where they see no *living* Christianity, but only a *doctrinal* one — only one which has its embodiment in creeds and pulpit teachings — not in the spirit and life of its professors. Let them see the doctrine really *adorned*, and they will then know the difference.

It is remarkable that modern philanthropy goes out only to the animal part of our nature, being, in this respect, on a level with the sympathy of brutes towards their own species. It troubles not itself to save the soul — all this is dropped out. You may see these philanthropists exceedingly zealous in defence of mere earthly interests, solicitous about visible and bodily joys and sorrows, boiling over with excitement about the *body*; but call them to labor for the *soul*, they have no heart in it — no interest, no sympathy; those things lie beyond their sphere of care or concern.

Now let the doctrine of God our Savior be really adorned by those who believe it, and let no rights of man or woman be overlooked, and yet let all the rights of God be seen to be uppermost in their regards; then philanthropists will see their mistake.

Again, let this doctrine be steadfastly honored, and men will surely see the beauty and truth of the doctrine of sanctification. Let Christians persevere, and they will certainly overcome. Overcoming sin and Satan, they will certainly prove to all that there is a power in the gospel to save from sin. Here what they will say: “I have seen this man or woman now these years, and I know there must be something in them that I do not understand.” Said one man of my acquaintance concerning a young lady who had been several weeks in his family, and whose life eminently adorned the gospel — “Now, wife, I want you to tell me in what one thing that young woman



sinned while she was in our family! Did you see her do or hear her say any single thing that was not in harmony with the gospel? I must confess, I say and heard nothing out of the right way.” Yet he watched her with an eagle eye. He was not a Christian himself, and was by no means prejudiced in her favor as a Christian; but he could not help observing so peculiar a life, and he soon found that it commended itself most entirely to his moral feelings and judgements, so that he could say nothing against it.

Now, to produce such results, professors of religion need not be disputatious; they need only live out the spirit of the gospel in word and deed; so will it steadily confound gainsayers. The ungodly will see their need of the gospel, and the religion of the cross will work its way into the profound esteem of mankind.

One of the great reasons many give for not becoming religious is this — “If I should be converted, I could not *stand*; I should backslide and disgrace myself.” This objection is not so common here as elsewhere. Abroad I meet with it almost everywhere; men saying, “I am afraid to profess religion, lest I should disgrace it and myself too. I had rather not profess than profess, and not adorn it.” But, let me say, if the gospel be adorned by its professors, men will see that it *can* be honored in the profession — that men *can* live a holy, blameless life. When abroad among strangers, I often ask individuals, “Do you not know of some one or more within your personal acquaintance, who really honor the gospel?” Some, perhaps, will answer, no; but if you converse with them much, you are likely to conclude that they are either dishonest or untruthful. For, with most remarkable forethought, God, in His providence, has scattered some salt all abroad over Christian lands, so that every man shall have the moral trial of deciding whether he will or will not receive the lessons which it teaches.

Adorning the doctrine of Christ will encourage the impenitent to believe that there is something stable in religion. Beholding it in the real life, they will say, “*There* is something that I want. I know *that* must be true religion.” I now recollect the case of a lawyer not a professed Christian, one of the leading men in the State in his profession, who, though an entire stranger introduced himself to me while I was preaching from time to time in the city, saying — I have a friend whom I should like to have you see, and should be happy to have you go with me to her residence. Certainly,

said I, and with pleasure. I found her an elderly lady, but her heart running over with love to God and to all her fellow-creatures. As our conversation drew out her deep knowledge and experience of the gospel, I saw him dash the tear from his cheek, greatly moved at such a demonstration of the power of the gospel. After we had left the house, he said to me — “What do you think of that? Is not that the true religion of the Bible? I know *it is*, and am determined never to rest till I have it.

If we adorn this doctrine people who know our life and yet do not embrace religion will feel severely self-condemned. Whether they are ungodly men out of the church or backsliders in it, they will see that their own course is wrong and without excuse. It will beget a sense of guilt and shame that they do not themselves live so as to adorn the gospel. They will see that they must adorn this gospel in heart and life, or they cannot be saved. For this world also they will see that they must be either a blessing in society or an odious nuisance.

#### 4. *What are the conditions of so adorning this gospel?*

We must earnestly intend it. We must really set our hearts on being living epistles for God, and upon developing in our lives all that the gospel requires.

We must not be satisfied with merely having evidence of our acceptance with God. A hope that we are Christ's should not suffice, and certainly not, a hope which is weakened by much doubt. We ought to *know* that we have no right to hope unless we are truly in love with this gospel, and unless our heart is set upon adorning it in our temper and life. It will not do for us to rest with being about as good as most professors of religion. We are by no means to make any *man* our standard.

We should beware of legal motives lest we become unamiable in temper and come under the sway of a legal spirit instead of the spirit of peace, love and joy in the Holy Ghost. Such a temper as would represent the gospel as being unamiable in spirit is especially to be guarded against and deplored.

Beware of mistaking license for liberty; for this doctrine is designed to make us holy, and holiness surely can give no license to sin.

Guard against being in thought diverted from Christ. Let people do what they will, resolve ever so much, they never will live holy if Christ be left out. With Christ left out of one's thoughts, the gospel is left out, and there is no power left. You must give yourselves much to communion with Him. Rely upon this, that unless you look to Christ as the center and fountain of your life, you will not live, and all your promises and covenants and resolutions, will not give you life. When you have let Christ pass from your thoughts, He no longer influences you, and He will not save you. Hence, He must be your theme — the great center of your thoughts and of your heart's power.

You will be wise to keep in mind one passage standing in our context — “Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Remember that this was His object in dying for us — to make us a holy people in His own praise. For this end He endured all that mortal flesh could bear. Let us then strive to appreciate the value of this great end, even as He did. Let it be with us an omnipresent consideration, that Christ suffered for us to redeem us from all personal sin. Let no one fail to realize the worth of this great object, for none can bring their souls under the full pressure of gospel motives and gospel power unless they keep this great truth in the right place in their mind. You must realize that this is His object and should be yours also. Christ would have you take hold of Him for this result that He may take hold of you. David Brainard made a remark which, in my early Christian life, was a great stumbling block to me — to the effect that “he did not expect to make much progress in holiness in this life, sin was so strong.” Can this be according to the Bible? If so, then the provisions of grace for sanctification must be radically defective, and that fitness and fulness which so strikingly characterizes everything else in the gospel are strangely wanting here — *here*, just where we might expect them to be most abundant. This cannot possibly be true.

Do you believe that Christ wants you to be saved from sin as much as you desire to be? Some of you have come to me to inquire how you may and can be delivered from sin; and I now ask you if you suppose that you are more anxious to be rid of sin than Christ is to have you? Will you not believe that Christ is at the bottom of all those desires which you feel; that His own mind energizes within your soul; that He is always intensely

anxious to press this work along — always more interested by far in it than you ever are? What! Will you assume that Christ is so attracted and engrossed by the thundering hallelujahs of heaven that He loses sight of your struggles of a holy heart? Will you think that, when on a lovely Sabbath morning you lift up your heart before Him for holiness, he does not hear you? Has He backslidden? Has His love for His people below grown cold? Ah *never*, NEVER! On this subject His interest never wanes. It has been burning many thousand years, and never can be quenched. Every desire you feel for victory over sin is only reciprocated action, coming from its fountain in His bosom.

Fully expect Him to do all He has promised. Do not adopt that blasphemous assumption — that if you *expect* Him to fulfill His promises to you, you will be deceived. Away with that infidel absurdity! Do not insult God by such an assumption; an assumption that God is a liar!

Be sure to make use of all appropriate instrumentalities for light and life. The reason for this is that God uses them to accomplish His results in the soul of man; therefore, you should use them, that you may co-operate with Him. Yet do not rest in these means as having, in themselves, the power to save you. The power resides only and wholly in God. “According as His divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.”

It is affecting to think what an interest Christ must have in our character. Could He die for us to redeem us from all iniquity? Then His interest in our holiness is measured by nothing less than His own blood! An interest so deep that He did not even think His life too great a sacrifice for such an end! What a flood of light does this fact throw on His heart-interest for our sanctification!

What an interest every member of the true church must have that we should adorn the doctrine of God our Savior! Paul said — “Who is offended and I burn not?” If any were stumbled in their Christian course, it seemed to set his soul on fire!

What an interest the wicked world must have in the living piety of the church. That ungodly man who has a pious wife might say — I would not have her lose that piety of hers for a thousand worlds! I need it always

before me, a living example and rebuke. So may all wicked men say of their Christian neighbors. If there is to be any hope of their salvation, they must have these instrumentalities which God Himself has ordained.

What an interest it gives us in defending the character of Christians. Those who love Christ and His cause will not circulate slander against Christ's children. They feel too keenly alive to the interests that cluster around the Savior's name! Sometimes you find persons deeply distressed because they see Christ dishonored through His friends. Sometimes even the fear that He will be, greatly agonizes them, so deeply are their hearts set on His honor and praise. I could name to you facts that show the greatest distress felt by Christians in the supposed dishonor done to Christ through His children

To be careless about adorning this doctrine evinces hypocrisy. There can scarcely be a stronger proof of it than this.

When we really love this doctrine of God our Savior, how watchful we become of each other. Then how it strikes one to see Christ dishonored. But those who are not in sympathy with Christ can see His name continually dishonored, yet manifest no grief. They feel none.

But living Christians will be jealous and tender of each other's reputation. It will offend and grieve them to see the character of Christian brethren assailed. How can it be otherwise, so long as they see Christ thus wounded in the dishonor cast on His doctrine through His professed people?

**THE FINNEY SERMON COLLECTION**

**VOLUME III**

**SERMONS ON  
GOSPEL THEMES**

## PREFACE

These sermons were preached by Pres. Finney at Oberlin during the years 1845-1861, and reported from his lips by myself. In taking these reports I aimed to give the heads of the sermons and all the important statements verbatim, to retain always the substance of thought, and especially to seize upon the illustrations and present their essential points. Taken down in a species of short-hand, they were subsequently written out, and in every case read to Pres. Finney in his study for any corrections he might desire, and for his endorsement. Consequently these reports present truthfully the great doctrines preached, and in good measure it is believed the method and manner of his preaching.

Few preachers in any age have surpassed Pres. Finney in clear and well-defined views of conscience, and of man's moral convictions; few have been more fully at home in the domain of law and government; few have learned more of the spiritual life from experience and from observation; not many have discriminated the true from the false more closely, or have been more skillful in putting their points clearly and pungently. Hence, these sermons under God were full of spiritual power. They are given to the public in this form, in the hope that at least a measure of the same wholesome saving power may never fail to bless the reader.

**HENRY COWLES.**

# GOD'S LOVE FOR A SINNING WORLD

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” —  
John 3:16*

Sin is the most expensive thing in the universe. Nothing else can cost so much. Pardoned or unpardoned, its cost is infinitely great. Pardoned, the cost falls chiefly on the great atoning Substitute; unpardoned, it must fall on the head of the guilty sinner.

The existence of sin is a fact everywhere experienced everywhere observed. There is sin in our race everywhere and in awful aggravation.

Sin is the violation of an infinitely important law a law designed and adapted to secure the highest good of the universe. Obedience to this law is naturally essential to the good of creatures. Without obedience there could be no blessedness even in heaven.

As sin is a violation of a most important law, it cannot be treated lightly. No government can afford to treat disobedience as a trifle, inasmuch as everything the entire welfare of the government and of all the governed turns upon obedience. Just in proportion to the value of the interests at stake is the necessity of guarding law and of punishing disobedience.

The law of God must not be dishonored by anything He shall do. It has been dishonored by the disobedience of man; hence, the more need that God should stand by it, to retrieve its honor. The utmost dishonor is done to law by disowning, disobeying, and despising it, All this, sinning man has done. Hence, this law being not only good, but intrinsically necessary to the happiness of the governed, it becomes of all things most necessary that the law-giver should vindicate his law. He must by all means do it.

Hence, sin has involved God's government in a vast expense. Either the law must be executed at the expense of the well-being of the whole race, or God must submit to suffer the worst results of disrespect to His law results which in some form must involve a vast expense.



Take for example any human government. Suppose the righteous and necessary laws which it imposes are disowned and dishonored. In such a case the violated law must be honored by the execution of its penalty, or something else not less expensive, and probably much more so, must be endured. Transgression must cost happiness, somewhere, and in vast amount.

In the case of God's government it has been deemed advisable to provide a substitute one that should answer the purpose of saving the sinner, and yet of honoring the law. This being determined on, the next great question was How shall the expense be met?

The Bible informs us how the question was in fact decided. By a voluntary conscription shall I call it or donation? Call it as we may, it was a voluntary offering. Who shall head the subscription? Who shall begin where so much is to be raised? Who will make the first sacrifice? Who will take the first step in a project so vast? The Bible informs us. It began with the Infinite Father. He made the first great donation. He gave His only begotten Son this to begin with and having given Him first, He freely gives all else that the exigencies of the case can require. First, He gave His Son to make the atonement due to law; then gave and sent His Holy Spirit to take charge of this work. The Son on His part consented to stand as the representative, of sinners, that, He might honor the law, by suffering in their stead.

He poured out His blood, made a whole life of suffering a free donation on the altar withheld not His face from spitting, nor His back from stripes struck not from the utmost contumely that wicked men could heap on Him. So the Holy Ghost also devotes Himself to most self-denying efforts unceasingly, to accomplish the great object.

It would have been a very short method to have turned over His hand upon the wicked of our race, and sent them all down quick to hell, as once He did when certain angels "kept not their first estate." Rebellion broke out in heaven. Not long did God bear it, around His lofty throne. But in the case of man He changed His course did not send them all to hell, but devised a vast scheme of measures, involving most amazing self-denials and self-sacrifices, to gain men's souls back to obedience and heaven.

For whom was this great donation made? “God so loved the World,” meaning the whole race of men. By the “world in this connection cannot be meant any particular part only, but the whole race. Not only the Bible, but the nature of the case, shows that the atonement must have been made for the whole world. For plainly if it had not been made for the entire race, no man of the race could ever know that it was made for himself, and therefore not a man could believe on Christ in the sense of receiving by faith the blessings of the atonement. There being an utter uncertainty as to the persons embraced in the limited provisions which we now suppose to be made, the entire donation must fail through the impossibility of rational faith for its reception. Suppose a will is made by a rich man bequeathing certain property to certain unknown persons, described only by the name of “the elect.” They are not described otherwise than by this term, and all agree that although the maker of the will had the individuals definitely in his mind, yet that he left no description of them, which either the persons themselves, the courts, nor any living mortal can understand. Now such a will is of necessity altogether null and void. No living man can claim under such a will, and none the better though these elect were described as residents of Oberlin. Since it does not embrace all the residents of Oberlin, and does not define which of them, all is lost. All having an equal claim and none any definite claim, none can inherit. If the atonement were made in this way, no living man would have any valid reason for believing himself one of the elect, prior to his reception of the Gospel. Hence he would have no authority to believe and receive its blessings by faith. In fact, the atonement must be wholly void on this supposition unless a special revelation is made to the persons for whom it is intended.

As the case is, however, the very fact that a man belongs to the race of Adam the fact that he is human, born of woman, is all-sufficient. It brings him within the pale. He is one of the world for whom God gave His Son, that whosoever would believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

The subjective motive in the mind of God for this great gift was love, love to the world. God so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for it. God loved the universe also but this gift of His Son sprang from love to our world. True in this great act He took pains to provide for the interests of the universe. He was careful to do nothing that could in the least let

down the sacredness of His law. Most carefully did He intend to guard against misapprehension as to His regard for His law and for the high interests of obedience and happiness in his moral universe. He meant once for all to preclude the danger lest any moral agent should be tempted to undervalue the moral law.

Yet farther, it was not only from love to souls, but from respect to the spirit of the law of His own eternal reason, that He gave up His Son to die. In this the purpose to give up His Son originated. The law of His own reason must be honored and held sacred. He may do nothing inconsistent with its spirit.

He must do everything possible to prevent the commission of sin and to secure the confidence and love of His subjects. So sacred did He hold these great objects that He would baptize His Son in His own blood, sooner than peril the good of the universe. Beyond a question it was love and regard for the highest good of the universe that led Him to sacrifice His own beloved Son.

Let us next consider attentively the nature of this love. The text lays special stress on this God so loved His love was of such a nature, so wonderful and so peculiar in its character, that it led Him to give up His only Son to die. More is evidently implied in this expression than simply its greatness. It is most peculiar in its character. Unless we understand this, we shall be in danger of falling into the strange mistake of the Universalists, who are forever talking about God's love for sinners, but whose notions of the nature of this love never lead to repentance or to holiness. They seem to think of this love as simply good nature, and conceive of God only as a very good-natured being, whom nobody need to fear. Such notions have not the least influence towards holiness, but the very opposite. It is only when we come to understand what this love is in its nature that we feel its moral power promoting holiness.

It may be reasonably asked, If God so loved the world with a love characterized by greatness, and by greatness only, why did He not save all the world without sacrificing His Son? This question suffices to show us that there is deep meaning in this word so, and should put us upon a careful study of this meaning.

- 1.** This love in its nature is not complacency a delight in the character of the race. This could not be, for there was nothing amiable in their character. For God to have loved such a race complacently would have been infinitely disgraceful to Himself.
- 2.** It was not a mere emotion or feeling. It was not a blind impulse, though many seem to suppose it was. It seems to be often supposed that God acted as men do when they are borne away by strong emotion. But there could be no virtue in this. A man might give away all he is worth under such a blind impulse of feeling, and be none the more virtuous. But in saying this we do not exclude all emotion from the love of benevolence, nor from God's love for a lost world. He had emotion, but not emotion only. Indeed, the Bible everywhere teaches us that God's love for man, lost in his sins, was paternal the love of a father for his offspring in this case, for a rebellious, froward, prodigal offspring. In this love there must of course blend the deepest compassion.
- 3.** On the part of Christ, considered as Mediator, this love was fraternal. "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." In one point of view, He is acting for brethren, and in another for children. The Father gave Him up for this work and of course sympathizes in the love appropriate to its relations.
- 4.** This love must be altogether disinterested, for He had nothing to hope or to fear no profit to make out of His children if they should be saved. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of God as being selfish, since His love embraces all creatures and all interests according to their real value. No doubt He took delight in saving our race why should He not? It is a great salvation in every sense, and greatly does it swell the bliss of heaven greatly will it affect the glory and the blessedness of the Infinite God. He will eternally respect Himself for love so disinterested. He knows also that all His Holy creatures will eternally respect Him for this work and for the love that gave it birth. But let it also be said, He knew they would not respect Him for this great work unless they should see that He did it for the good of sinners.
- 5.** This love was zealous not that cold-hearted state of mind which some suppose not an abstraction, but a love deep, zealous, earnest, burning in his soul as a fire that nothing can quench.

**6.** The sacrifice was a most self-denying one. Did it cost the Father nothing to give up His own beloved Son to suffer, and to die such a death? If this be not self-denial, what can be? Thus to give up His Son to so much suffering is not this the noblest self-denial? The universe never could have the idea of great self-denial but for such an exemplification.

**7.** This love was particular because it was universal; and also universal because it was particular. God loved each sinner in particular, and therefore loved all. Because He loved all impartially, with no respect of persons, therefore He loved each in particular.

**8.** This was a most patient love. How rare to find a parent so loving his child as never to be impatient. Let me go round and ask, how many of you, parents, can say that you love all your children so well, and with so much love, and with love so wisely controlling, that you have never felt impatient towards any of them so that you can take them in your arms under the greatest provocations and love them down, love them out of their sins, love them into repentance and into a filial spirit? Of which of your children can you say, Thank God, I never fretted against that child of which, if you were to meet him in heaven, could you say, I never caused that child to fret? Often have I heard parents say, I love my children, but oh, how my patience fails me! And, after the dear ones are dead, you may hear their bitter moans, Oh, my soul, how could I have caused my child so much stumbling and so much sin!

But God never frets is never impatient. His love is so deep and so great that He is always patient.

Sometimes, when parents have unfortunate children poor objects of compassion they can bear with anything from them; but when they are very wicked, they seem to feel that they are quite excusable for being impatient. In God's case, these are not unfortunate children, but are intensely wicked intelligently wicked. But oh, His amazing patience so set upon their good, so desirous of their highest welfare, that however they abuse Him, He sets Himself to bless them still, and weep them down, and melt them into penitence and love, by the death of His Son in their stead!

**9.** This is a jealous love, not in a bad sense, but in a good sense in the sense of being exceedingly careful lest anything should occur to injure those He

loves. Just as husband and wife who truly love each other are jealous with ever wakeful jealousy over each other's welfare, seeking always to do all they can to promote each other's true interests.

This donation is already made made in good faith not only promised, but actually made. The promise, given long before, has been fulfilled. The Son has come, has died, has made the ransom and lives to offer it a prepared salvation to all who will embrace it.

The Son of God died not to appease vengeance, as some seem to understand it, but under the demands of law. The law had been dishonored by its violation. Hence, Christ undertook to honor it by giving up to its demands His suffering life and atoning death. It was not to appease a vindictive spirit in God, but to secure the highest good of the universe in a dispensation of mercy.

Since this atonement has been made, all men in the race have a right to it. It is open to every one who will embrace it. Though Jesus still remains the Father's Son, yet by gracious right He belongs in an important sense to the race to everyone; so that every sinner has an interest in His blood if he will only come humbly forward and claim it. God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world of whomsoever would believe and accept this great salvation.

God gives His Spirit to apply this salvation to men. He comes to each man's door and knocks, to gain admittance, if He can, and show each sinner that he may now have salvation. Oh, what a labor of love is this!

This salvation must be received, if at all, by faith. This is the only possible way. God's government over sinners is moral, not physical, because the sinner is himself a moral and not a physical agent. Therefore, God can influence us in no way unless we will give Him our confidence. He never can save us by merely taking us away to some place called heaven as if change of place would change the voluntary heart. There can, therefore, be no possible way to be saved but by simple faith.

'Now do not mistake and suppose that embracing the Gospel is simply to believe these historical facts without truly receiving Christ as your Savior. If this had been the scheme, then Christ had need only to come down and die; then go back to heaven and quietly wait to see who would believe the facts. But how different is the real case! Now Christ comes down to fill

the soul with His own life and love. Penitent sinners hear and believe the truth concerning Jesus, and then receive Christ into the soul to live and reign there supreme and for ever. On this point many mistake, saying, If I believe the facts as matters of history it is enough. No! No! This is not it by any means. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The atonement was indeed made to provide the way so that Jesus could come down to human hearts and draw them into union and sympathy with Himself so that God could let down the arms of His love and embrace sinners so that law and government should not be dishonored by such tokens of friendship shown by God toward sinners. But the atonement will by no means save sinners only as it prepares the way for them to come into sympathy and fellowship of heart with God.

Now Jesus comes to each sinner's door and knocks. Hark! what's that? what's that? Why this knocking? Why did He not go away and stay in heaven if that were the system, till men should simply believe the historical facts and be baptized, as some suppose, for salvation. But now, see how He comes down tells the sinner what He has done reveals all His love tells him how holy and sacred it is, so sacred that He can by no means act without reference to the holiness of His law and the purity of His government. Thus impressing on the heart the most deep and enlarged ideas of His holiness and purity, He enforces the need of deep repentance and the sacred duty of renouncing all sin.

## REMARKS

- 1.** The Bible teaches that sinners may forfeit their birthright and put themselves beyond the reach of mercy. It is not long since I made some remark to you on the manifest necessity that God should guard Himself against the abuses of His love. The circumstances are such as create the greatest danger of such abuse, and, therefore, He must make sinners know that they may not abuse His love, and cannot do it with impunity.
- 2.** Under the Gospel, sinners are in circumstances of the greatest possible responsibility. They are in the utmost danger of trampling down beneath their feet the very Son of God.

Come, they say, let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours. When God sends forth, last of all, His own beloved Son, what do they do? Add to all their other sins and rebellions the highest insult to this glorious Son! Suppose something analogous to this were done under a human government. A case of rebellion occurs in some of the provinces. The king sends his own son, not with an army, to cut them down quick in their rebellion, but all gently, meekly, patiently, he goes among them, explaining the laws of the kingdom and exhorting them to obedience. What do they do in the case? With one consent they combine to seize him and put him to death!

But you deny the application of this, and ask me, Who murdered the Son of God? Were they not Jews? Aye, and have you, sinners, had no part in this murder? Has not your treatment of Jesus Christ shown that you are most fully in sympathy with the ancient Jews in their murder of the Son of God? If you had been there, would any one have shouted louder than you, Away with Him crucify Him, crucify Him? Have you not always said, Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways?

**3.** It was said of Christ that, Though rich He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich. How strikingly true is this? Our redemption cost Christ His life; it found Him rich, but made Him poor; it found us infinitely poor, but made us rich even to all the wealth of heaven. But of these riches none can partake till they shall each for himself accept them in the legitimate way. They must be received on the terms proposed, or the offer passes utterly away, and you are left poorer even than if no such treasures had ever been laid at your feet.

Many persons seem entirely to misconceive this case. They seem not to believe what God says, but keep saying, If, if, if there only were any salvation for me if there were only an atonement provided for the pardon of my sins. This was one of the last things that was cleared up in my mind before I fully committed my soul to trust God. I had been studying the atonement; I saw its philosophical bearings saw what it demanded of the sinner; but it irritated me, and I said If I should become a Christian, how could I know what God would do with me? Under this irritation I said foolish and bitter things against Christ till my own soul was horrified at its



own wickedness, and I said I will make all this up with Christ if the thing is possible.

In this way many advance upon the encouragements of the Gospel as if it were only a peradventure, an experiment. They take each forward step most carefully, with fear and trembling, as if there were the utmost doubt whether there could be any mercy for them. So with myself. I was on my way to my office, when the question came before my mind What are you waiting for? You need not get up such an ado. All is done already. You have only to consent to the proposition give your heart right up to it at once this is all. Just so it is. All Christians and sinners ought to understand that the whole plan is complete that the whole of Christ His character, His work, His atoning death, and His ever-living intercession belong to each and every man, and need only to be accepted. There is a full ocean of it. There it is. You may just as well take it as not. It is as if you stood on the shore of an ocean of soft, pure water, famishing with thirst; you are welcome to drink, and you need not fear lest you exhaust that ocean, or starve anybody else by drinking yourself. You need not feel that you are not made free to that ocean of waters; you are invited and pressed to drink yea to drink abundantly! This ocean supplies all your need. You do not need to have in yourself the attributes of Jesus Christ, for His attributes become practically yours for all possible use. As saith the Scripture He is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. What do you need? Wisdom? Here it is. Righteousness? Here it is. Sanctification? Here you have it. All is in Christ. Can you possibly think of any one thing needful for your moral purity, or your usefulness which is not here in Christ? Nothing. All is provided here. Therefore you need not say, I will go and pray and try, as the hymn,

“I’ll go to Jesus tho’ my sin Hath like a mountain rose, Perhaps He will admit my plea; Perhaps will hear my prayer.” There is no need of any perhaps. The doors are always open. Like the doors of Broadway Tabernacle in New York, made to swing open and fasten themselves open, so that they could not swing back and shut down upon the crowds of people thronging to pass through. When they were to be made, I went myself to the workmen and told them by all means to fix them so that they must swing open and fasten themselves in that position.

So the door of salvation is open always fastened open, and no man can shut it not the Pope, even, nor the devil, nor any angel from heaven or from hell. There it stands, all swung back and the passage wide open for every sinner of our race to enter if he will.

Again, sin is the most expensive thing in the universe. Are you well aware, O sinner, what a price has been paid for you that you may be redeemed and made an heir of God and of heaven? O what an expensive business for you to indulge in sin.

And what an enormous tax the government of God has paid to redeem this province from its ruin! Talk about the poor tax of Great Britain and of all other nations superadded; all is nothing to the sin-tax of Jehovah's government that awful sin-tax! Think how much machinery is kept in motion to save sinners! The Son of God was sent down angels are sent as ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; missionaries are sent, Christians labor, and pray and weep in deep and anxious solicitude all to seek and save the lost. What a wonderful-enormous tax is levied upon the benevolence of the universe to put away sin and to save the sinner! If the cost could be computed in solid gold what a world of it a solid globe of itself! What an array of toil and cost, from angels, Jesus Christ, the Divine Spirit, and living men Shame on sinners who hold on to sin despite of all these benevolent efforts to save them! who instead of being ashamed out of sin, will say Let God pay off this tax; who cares! Let the missionaries labor, let pious women work their very fingers off to raise funds to keep all this human machinery in motion; no matter: what is all this to me? I have loved my pleasures and after them I will go! What an unfeeling heart is this

Sinners can very well afford to make sacrifices to save their fellow sinners. Paul could for his fellow sinners. He felt that he had done his part toward making sinners, and now it became him to do his part also in converting them back to God. But see there that young man thinks he cannot afford to be a minister, for he is afraid he shall not be well supported. Does he not owe something to the grace that saved his soul from hell? Has he not some sacrifices to make, since Jesus has made so many for him, and Christians too, in Christ before him did they not pray and suffer and toil for his soul's salvation? As to his danger of lacking bread in the Lord's work, let

him trust his Great Master. Yet let me also say that churches may be in great fault for not comfortably supporting their pastors. Let them know God will assuredly starve them if they starve their ministers. Their own souls and the souls of their children shall be barren as death if they avariciously starve those whom God in His providence sends to feed them with the bread of life.

How much it costs to rid society of certain forms of sin, as for example, slavery. How much has been expended already, and how much more yet remains to be expended ere this sore evil and curse and sin shall be rooted from our land! This is part of God's great enterprise, and He will press it on to its completion. Yet at what an amazing cost! How many lives and how much agony to get rid of this one sin!

Woe to those who make capital out of the sins of men! Just think of the rumseller tempting men while God is trying to dissuade them from rushing on in the ways of sin and death! Think of the guilt of those who thus set themselves in array against God! So Christ has to contend with rumsellers who are doing all they can to hinder His work.

Our subject strikingly illustrates the nature of sin as mere selfishness. It cares not how much sin costs Jesus Christ how much it costs the Church, how much it taxes the benevolent sympathies and the self-sacrificing labors of all the good in earth or heaven; no matter; the sinner loves self-indulgence and will have it while he can. How many of you have cost your friends countless tears and trouble to get you back from your ways of sin? Are you not ashamed when so much has been done for you, that you cannot be persuaded to give up your sins and turn to God and holiness?

The whole effort on the part of God for man is one of suffering and self-denial. Beginning with the sacrifice of His own beloved Son, it is carried on with ever renewed sacrifices and toilsome labors at great and wonderful expense. Just think how long a time these efforts have been protracted already how many tears, poured out like water, it has cost how much pain in many forms this enterprise has caused and cost yea, that very sin which you roll as a sweet morsel under your tongue! God may well hate it when He sees how much it costs, and say O do not that abominable thing that I hate!

Yet God is not unhappy in these self-denials. So great is His joy in the results, that He deems all the suffering but comparatively a trifle, even as earthly parents enjoy the efforts they make to bless their children. See them; they will almost work their very hands off; mothers sit up at night to ply their needle till they reel with fatigue and blindness; but if you were to see their toil, you would often see also their joy, so intensely do they love their children.

Such is the labor, the joy, and the self-denial of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in their great work for human salvation. Often are they grieved that so many will refuse to be saved. Toiling on in a common sympathy, there is nothing, within reasonable limits, which they will not do or suffer to accomplish their great work. It is wonderful to think how all creation sympathizes, too, in this work and its necessary sufferings. Go back to the scene of Christ's sufferings. Could the sun in the heavens look down unmoved on such a scene? O no, he could not even behold it but veiled his face from the sight! All nature seemed to put on her robes of deepest mourning. The scene was too much for even inanimate nature to bear. The sun turned his back and could not look down on such a spectacle!

The subject illustrates forcibly the worth of the soul. Think you God would have done all this if He had those low views on this subject which sinners usually have?

Martyrs and saints enjoy their sufferings filling up in themselves what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ; not in the atonement proper, but in the subordinate parts of the work to be done. It is the nature of true religion to love self-denial.

The results will fully justify all the expense. God had well counted the cost before He began. Long time before He formed a moral universe He knew perfectly what it must cost Him to redeem sinners, and He knew that the result would amply justify all the cost. He knew that a wonder of mercy would be wrought that the suffering demanded of Christ, great as it was, would be endured; and that results infinitely glorious would accrue therefrom.

He looked down the track of time into the distant ages where, as the cycles rolled along, there might be seen the joys of redeemed saints, who are singing their songs and striking their harps anew with the everlasting song, through the long, long, LONG eternity of their blessedness; and was not this enough for the heart of infinite love to enjoy? And what do you think of it, Christian? Will you say now, I am ashamed to ask to be forgiven? How can I bear to receive such mercy! It is the price of blood, and how can I accept it? How can I make Jesus so much expense?

You are right in saying that you have cost Him great expense but the expense has been cheerfully met the pain has all been endured, and will not need to be endured again, and it will cost none the more if you accept than if you decline; and moreover still, let it be considered Jesus Christ has not acted unwisely; He did not pay too much for the soul's redemption not a pang more than the interests of God's government demanded and the worth of the soul would justify.

O, when you come to see Him face to face, and tell Him what you think of it when you are some thousands of years older than you are now, will you not adore that wisdom that manages this scheme, and the infinite love in which it had its birth? O what will you then say of that amazing condescension that brought down Jesus to your rescue! Say, Christian, have you not often poured out your soul before your Savior in acknowledgment of what you have cost Him, and there seemed to be a kind of lifting up as if the very bottom of your soul were to rise, and you would pour out your whole heart. If anybody had seen you they would have wondered what had happened to you that had so melted your soul in gratitude and love.

Say now, sinners will you sell your birthright? How much will you take for it? How much will you take for your interest in Christ? For how much will you sell your soul? Sell your Christ! Of old they sold Him for thirty pieces of silver; and ever since, the heavens have been raining tears of blood on our guilty world. If you were to be asked by the devil to fix the sum for which you would sell your soul, what would be the price named? Lorenzo Dow once met a man as he was riding along a solitary road to fulfil an appointment, and said to him Friend, have you ever prayed? No. How much will you take never to pray hereafter? One dollar. Dow paid it

over, and rode on. The man put the money in his pocket, and passed on, thinking. The more he thought, the worse he felt. There, said he, I have sold my soul for one dollar! It must be that I have met the devil! Nobody else would tempt me so. With all my soul I must repent, or be damned forever!

How often have you bargained to sell your Savior for less than thirty pieces of silver! Nay, for the merest trifle!

Finally, God wants volunteers to help on this great work. God has given Himself, and given His Son, and sent His Spirit; but more laborers still are needed; and what will you give? Paul said, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Do you aspire to such an honor? What will you do what will you suffer? Say not, I have nothing to give. You can give yourself your eyes, your ears, your hands, your mind, your heart, all; and surely nothing you have is too sacred and too good to be devoted to such a work upon such a call! How many young men are ready to go? and how many young women? Whose heart leaps up, crying, Here am I! send me?

# ON TRUSTING IN THE MERCY OF GOD

*“I will trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.” Psalms 52:8.*

IN discussing this subject I shall enquire,

- I. WHAT MERCY IS.**
- II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN TRUSTING IN THE MERCY OF THE LORD FOREVER.**
- III. POINT OUT THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE MAY SAFELY TRUST IN GOD’S MERCY.**
- IV. ALLUDE TO SEVERAL MISTAKES WHICH ARE MADE ON THIS SUBJECT.**

## I. WHAT MERCY IS

**1.** Mercy as an attribute of God, is not to be confounded with mere goodness. This mistake is often made. That it is a mistake, you will see at once if you consider that mercy is directly opposed to justice, while yet justice is one of the natural and legitimate developments of goodness. Goodness may demand the exercise of justice; indeed it often does; but to say that mercy demands the exercise of justice, is to use the word without meaning. Mercy asks that justice be set aside. Of course mercy and goodness stand in very different relations to justice, and are very different attributes.

**2.** Mercy is a disposition to pardon the guilty. Its exercise consists in arresting and setting aside the penalty of law, when that penalty has been incurred by transgression. It is, as has been said, directly opposed to justice. justice treats every individual according to his deserts; mercy treats the criminal very differently from what he deserves to be treated. Desert is never the rule by which mercy is guided while it is precisely the rule of justice.

3. Mercy is exercised only where there is guilt. It always pre-supposes guilt. The penalty of the law must have been previously incurred, else there can be no scope for mercy.
4. Mercy can be exercised no farther than one deserves punishment. It may continue its exercise just as long as punishment is deserved, but no longer; just as far as ill desert goes, but no farther. If great punishment is deserved, great mercy can be shown; if endless punishment is due, there is then scope for infinite mercy to be shown, but not otherwise.

## II. I AM TO SHOW WHAT IS IMPLIED IN TRUSTING IN THE MERCY OF GOD

1. A conviction of guilt. None can properly be said to trust in the mercy of God unless they have committed crimes, and are conscious of this fact. Justice protects the innocent, and they may safely appeal to it for defense or redress. But for the guilty nothing remains but to trust in mercy. Trusting in mercy always implies a deep, heartfelt conviction of personal guilt.
2. Trust in mercy always implies that we have no hope on the score of justice. If we had anything to expect from justice, we should not look to mercy. The human heart is too proud to throw itself upon mercy while it presumes itself to have a valid claim to favor on the score of justice. Nay more, to appeal to mercy when we might rightfully appeal to justice is never demanded either by God's law or gospel, nor can it be in harmony with our relations to Jehovah's government. In fact, the thing is, in the very nature of the mind, impossible.
3. Trust in mercy implies a just apprehension of what mercy is. On this point many fail because they confound mercy with mere goodness, or with grace, considered as mere favor to the undeserving. The latter may be shown where there is no mercy, the term mercy being applied to the pardon of crime. We all know that God shows favor, or grace in the general sense, to all the wicked on earth. He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends His rain on the unjust as well as on the just. But to trust in this general favor shown to the wicked while on trial here is not



trusting in the mercy of God. We never trust in mercy till we really understand what it is pardon for the crimes of the guilty.

**4.** Trust in God's mercy implies a belief that He is merciful. We could not trust Him if we had no such belief. This belief must always lie at the foundation of real trust. Indeed, so naturally does this belief beget that outgoing of the soul and resting upon God which we call trust, that in the New Testament sense it commonly includes both. Faith, or belief, includes a hearty committal of the soul to God, and a cordial trust in Him.

**5.** "Trusting in the mercy of God forever and ever" implies a conviction of deserving endless punishment. Mercy is co-extensive with desert of punishment, and can in its nature go no farther. It is rational to rely upon the exercise of mercy for as long time as we deserve punishment, but no longer. A prisoner under a three years' sentence to State's prison may ask for the exercise of mercy in the form of pardon for so long a time; but he will not ask a pardon for ten years when he needs it only for three, or ask a pardon after his three years' term has expired. This principle is perfectly obvious; where desert of punishment ceases, there mercy also ceases and our trust in it. While desert of punishment continues, so may mercy, and our trust in its exercise. When therefore the Psalmist trusts in the mercy of God forever, he renounces all hope of being ever received to favor on the score of justice.

**6.** Trusting in mercy implies a cessation from all excuses and excuse-making. The moment you trust in mercy, you give up all apologies and excuses at once and entirely; for these imply a reliance upon God's justice. An excuse or apology is nothing more nor less than an appeal to justice; a plea designed to justify our conduct. Trusting in mercy forever implies that we have ceased from all excuses forever.

Thus a man on trial before a civil court, so long as he pleads justifications and excuses, appeals to justice; but if he goes before the court and pleads guilty, offering no justification or apology whatever, he throws himself upon the clemency of the court. This is quite another thing from self-justification. It sometimes happens that in the same trial, the accused party tries both expedients. He first attempts his own defense; but finding this vain, he shifts his position, confesses his crime and ill desert, and throws himself upon the mercy of the court. Perhaps he begs the court to

commend him to the mercy of the executive in whom is vested the pardoning power.

Now it is always understood that when a man pleads guilty he desists from making excuses, and appeals only to mercy. So in any private matter with my neighbor. If I justify myself fully, I surely have no confession to make. But if I am conscious of having done him wrong, I freely confess my wrong, and appeal to mercy. Self-justification stands right over against confession.

So in parental discipline. If your child sternly justifies himself, he makes no appeal to mercy. But the moment when he casts himself upon your bosom with tears, and says, I am all wrong, he ceases to make excuses, and trusts himself to mercy. So in the government of God. Trust in mercy is a final giving up of all reliance upon justice. You have no more excuses; you make none.

### III. POINT OUT THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE MAY SAFELY TRUST IN GOD'S MERCY

**1.** Public justice must be appeased. Its demands must be satisfied. God is a great public magistrate, sustaining infinitely responsible relations to the moral universe. He must be careful what He does.

Perhaps no measure of government is more delicate and difficult in its bearings than the exercise of mercy. It is a most critical point. There is eminent danger of making the impression that mercy would trample down law. The very thing that mercy does is to set aside the execution of the penalty of law; the danger is lest this should seem to set aside the law itself. The great problem is, How can the law retain its full majesty, the execution of its penalty being entirely withdrawn? This is always a difficult and delicate matter.

In human governments we often see great firmness exercised by the magistrate. During the scenes of the American Revolution, Washington was earnestly importuned to pardon André. The latter was eminently an amiable, lovely man; and his case excited a deep sympathy in the American army. Numerous and urgent petitions were made to Washington in his

behalf; but no, Washington could not yield. They besought him to see André, in hope that a personal interview might touch his heart; but he refused even to see him. He dared not trust his own feelings. He felt that this was a great crisis, and that a nation's welfare was in peril. Hence his stem, unyielding decision. It was not that he lacked compassion of soul. He had a heart to feel. But under the circumstances, he knew too well that no scope must be given to the indulgence of his tender sympathies. He dared not gratify these feelings, lest a nation's ruin should be the penalty.

Such cases have often occurred in human governments when every feeling of the soul is on the side of mercy and makes its strong demand for indulgence; but justice forbids.

Often in family government the parent has an agonizing trial; he would sooner bear the pain himself thrice told than to inflict it upon his son; but interests of perhaps infinite moment are at stake, and must not be put in peril by the indulgence of his compassions.

Now if the exercise of mercy in such cases is difficult how much more so in the government of God? Hence, the first condition of the exercise of mercy is that something be done to meet the demands of public justice. It is absolutely indispensable that law be sustained. However much disposed God may be to pardon, yet He is too good to exercise mercy on any such conditions or under any such circumstances as will impair the dignity of His law, throw out a license to sin, and open the very flood-gates of iniquity. Jehovah never can do this. He knows He never ought to.

On this point it only need be said at present that this difficulty is wholly removed by the atonement of Christ.

**2.** A second condition is that we repent, Certainly no sinner has the least ground to hope for mercy until he repents. Will God pardon the sinner while yet in his rebellion? Never. To do so would be most unjust in God most ruinous to the universe. It would be virtually proclaiming that sin is less than a trifle that God cares not how set in wickedness the sinner's heart is; He is ready to take the most rebellious heart, unhumbled, to His own bosom. Before God can do this He must cease to be holy.

**3.** We must confess our sins. "He that confesseth," and he only, "shall find mercy." Jehovah sustains such relations to the moral universe that He

cannot forgive without the sinner's confession. He must have the sinner's testimony against himself and in favor of law and obedience.

Suppose a man convicted and sentenced to be hung. He petitions the governor for pardon, but is too proud to confess, at least in public. "May it please your Honor," he says, "between you and me, I am willing to say that I committed that crime alleged against me, but you must not ask me to make this confession before the world. You will have some regard to my feelings and to the feelings of my numerous and very respectable friends. Before the world there. fore I shall persist in denying the crime. I trust, however, that you will duly consider all the circumstances and grant me a pardon." Pardon you, miscreant, the governor would say pardon you when you are condemning the whole court and jury of injustice, and the witnesses of falsehood; pardon you while you set yourself against the whole administration of justice in the State? Never! never! You are too proud to take your own place and appear in your own character; how can I rely on you to be a good citizen how can I expect you to be anything better than an arch villain?

Let it be understood, then, that before we can trust in the mercy of God, we must really repent and make our confession as public as we have made our crime.

Suppose again that a man is convicted and sues for pardon, but will not confess at all. O, he says, I have no crimes to confess; I have done nothing particularly wrong; the reason of my acting as I have is that I have a desperately wicked heart. I cannot repent and never could. I don't know how it happens that I commit murder so easily; it seems to be a second nature to me to kill my neighbor; I can't help it. I am told that you are very good, very merciful, he says to the governor; they even say that you are love itself, and I believe it; you surely will grant me a pardon then, it will be so easy for you and it is so horrible for me to be hung. You know I have done only a little wrong, and that little only because I could not help it; you certainly cannot insist upon my making any confession. What! have me bung because I don't repent? You certainly are too kind to do any such thing.

I don't thank you for your good opinion of me, must be the indignant reply; the law shall take its course; your path is to the gallows.

See that sinner; hear him mock God in his prayer: “trust in the mercy of God, for God is love.” Do you repent?

“I don’t know about repentance that is not the question God is love God is too good to send men to hell; they are Partialists and slander God who think that He ever sends anybody to hell.” Too good! you say; too good! so good that He will forgive whether the sinner repents or not; too good to hold the reins of His government firmly; too good to secure the best interests of His vast kingdom! Sinner, the God you think of is a being of your own crazy imagination not the God who built the prison of despair for hardened sinners not the God who rules the universe by righteous law and our race also on a Gospel system which magnifies that law and makes it honorable.

**4.** We must really make restitution so far as lies in our power. You may see the bearing of this in the case of a highway robber. He has robbed a traveler of ten thousand dollars, and is sentenced to State’s prison for life. He petitions for pardon. Very sorry he is for his crime; will make any confession that can be asked, ever so public; but will he make restitution? Not he; no he needs that money himself. He will give up half of it, perhaps, to the government; vastly patriotic is he all at once, and liberal withal; ready to make a donation of five thousand dollars for the public good! ready to consecrate to most benevolent uses a splendid sum of money; but whose money? Where is his justice to the man he has robbed? Wretch! consecrate to the public what you have torn from your neighbor and put it into the treasury of the government! No; such a gift would burn right through the chest! What would you think if the government should connive at such an abomination? You would abhor their execrable corruption.

See that man of the world, His whole business career is a course of over-reaching. He slyly thrusts his hands into his neighbor’s pockets and thus fills up his own. His rule is uniformly to sell for more than a thing is worth and buy for less. He knows how to monopolize and make high prices, and then sell out his accumulated stocks. His mind is forever on the stretch to manage and make good bargains. But this man at last must prepare to meet God. So he turns to his money to make it answer all things. He has a large gift for God. Perhaps he will build a church or send a missionary

something pretty handsome at least to buy a pardon for a life about which his conscience is not very easy. Yes, he has a splendid bribe for God. Ah, but will God take it? Never! God burns with indignation at the thought. Does God want your price of blood those gains of oppression? Go and give them back to the suffering poor whose cries have gone up to God against you. O shame to think to filch from thy brother and give to God! Not merely rob Peter to pay Paul, but rob man to pay God! The pardon of your soul is not bought so!

**5.** Another condition is that you really reform.

Suppose there is a villain in our neighborhood who has become the terror of all the region round about. He has already murdered a score of defenseless women and children; burns down our houses by night; plunders and robs daily; and every day brings tidings of his crimes at which every ear tingles. None feel safe a moment. He is an arch and bloody villain. At last he is arrested, and we all breathe more easily. Peace is restored. But this miscreant having received sentence of death, petitions for pardon. He professes no penitence whatever, and makes not even a promise of amendment; yet the governor is about to give him a free pardon. If he does it, who will not say, He ought to be hung up himself by the neck till he is dead, dead! But what does that sinner say? "I trust," says he, "in the great mercy of God. I have nothing to fear." But does he reform? No. What good can the mercy of God do him if he does not reform?

**6.** You must go the whole length in justifying the law and its penalty.

Mark that convicted criminal, He doesn't believe that government has any right to take life for any crime; he demurs utterly to the justice of such a proceeding, and on this ground insists that he must have a pardon. Will he get it? Will the governor take a position which is flatly opposed to the very law and constitution which he is sworn to sustain? Will he crush the law to save one criminal, or even a thousand criminals? Not if he has the spirit of a ruler in his bosom. That guilty man if he would have mercy from the Executive must admit the right of the law and of the penalty Else he arrays himself against the law and cannot be trusted in the community.

Now hear that sinner. How much he has to say against his ill desert and against the justice of eternal punishment. He denounces the laws of God as cruelly and unrighteously severe. Sinner, do you suppose God can forgive you while you pursue such a course? He would as soon repeal His law and vacate His throne. You make it impossible for God to forgive you.

**7.** No sinner can be a proper object of mercy who is not entirely submissive to all those measures of the government that have brought him to conviction,

Suppose a criminal should plead that there had been a conspiracy to waylay and arrest him; that witnesses had been bribed to give false testimony; that the judge had charged the jury falsely, or that the jury had given an unrighteous verdict; could he hope by such false allegations to get a pardon? Nay, verily. Such a man cannot be trusted to sustain law and order in a community, under any government, human or divine.

But hear that sinner complain and cavil. Why, he says, did God suffer sin and temptation to enter this world at all?

Why does God let the sinner live at all to incur a doom so dreadful? And why does God block up the sinner's path by His providence, and cut him down in his sins? Yet this very sinner talks about trusting in God's mercy! Indeed; while all the time he is accusing God of being an infinite tyrant, and of seeking to crush the helpless, unfortunate sinner! What do these cavils mean? What are they but the uplifted voice of a guilty rebel arraigning his Maker for doing good and showing mercy to His own rebellious creatures? For it needs but a moment's thought to see that the temptation complained of is only a good placed before a moral agent to melt his heart by love. Yet against this the sinner murmurs, and pours out his complaints against God, Be assured that unless you are willing to go the full length of justifying all God does, He never can give you pardon. God has no option to pardon a self-justifying rebel. The interests of myraids of moral beings forbid His doing it. When you will take the ground most fully of justifying God and condemning yourself, you place yourself where mercy can reach you, and then it surely will. Not before.

**8.** You must close in most cordially with the plan of salvation. This plan is based on the assumption that we deserve everlasting death and must be

saved, if ever, by sovereign grace and mercy. Nothing can save but mercy mercy which meets the sinner in the dust, prostrate, without an excuse or an apology, giving to God all the glory and taking to himself all the guilt and shame. There is hope for thee, sinner, in embracing this plan with all the heart.

## IV. WE NOW NOTICE SOME MISTAKES INTO WHICH MANY FALL

**1.** Many really trust in justice and not in mercy. They say, “God is just God will do me no injustice I mean to do as well as I can, and then I can safely leave myself in the hands of a just God.” True, God will do you no injustice. You never need fear that. But how terrible if God should do you strict justice! How fearful if you get no mercy! If God does not show you infinite mercy you are forever lost, as surely as you are a sinner! This trusting in God’s justice is a fatal rock. The sinner who can do it calmly has never seen God’s law and his own heart. The Psalmist did not say, I trust in the justice of God forever and ever.

**2.** Many trust professedly in the mercy of God without fulfilling the conditions on which only mercy can be shown.

They may hold on in such trusting till they die but no longer.

**3.** Sinners do not consider that God cannot dispense with their fulfilling these conditions. He has no right to do so.

They spring out of the very constitution of His government, from His very nature, and must therefore be strictly fulfilled. Sooner than dispense with their fulfillment, God would send the whole race, yea, the whole universe, to hell If God were to set aside these conditions and forgive a sinner while unhumbled, impenitent, and unbelieving, He would upset His throne, convulse the moral universe, and kindle another hell in His own bosom.

**4.** Many are defeating their own salvation by self-justification. Pleas that excuse self, and cavils that arraign God, stand alike and fatally in the way



of pardon. Since the world began it has not been known that a sinner has found mercy in this state.

**5.** Many pretend to trust in mercy who yet profess to be punished for their sins as they go along. They hope for salvation through mercy, and yet they are punished for all their sins in this life. Two more absurd and self-contradictory things were never put together. Punished as much as they deserve here, and yet saved through mercy! Why don't they say it out that they shall be saved after death through justice? Surely if they are punished all they deserve as they go along, justice will ask no more after death.

**6.** Persons who in the letter plead for mercy, often rely really upon justice. The deep conviction of sin and ill-desert does not sink into their soul till they realize what mercy is, and feel that they can rely on nothing else.

**7.** Some are covering up their sins, yet dream of going to heaven. Do they think they can hide those sins from the Omniscient Eye? Do they think to cover their sins and yet it prosper," despite of God's awful word?

**8.** We cannot reasonably ask for mercy beyond our acknowledged and felt guilt; and they mistake fatally who suppose that they can. Without a deep conviction of conscious guilt we cannot be honest and in earnest in supplicating mercy. Hear that man pray who thinks sin a trifle and its deserved punishment a small affair. "O Lord, I need a little mercy, only a little; my sins have been few and of small account; grant me, Lord, exemption from the brief and slight punishment which my few errors and defects may have deserved." Or hear that Universalist pray: "O Lord, Thou knowest that I have been punished for my sins as I have passed along; I have had a fit of sickness and various pains and losses, nearly or quite enough, Thou knowest, to punish all the sins I have committed; now, therefore, I pray Thee to give me salvation through Thy great mercy." How astonishing that sane men should hold such nonsense! How can a Universalist pray at all? What should they pray for? Not for pardon, for on their principles they have a valid claim to exemption from punishment on the score of justice, as the criminal has who has served out his sentence in the State's prison. The only rational prayer that can be made is that God will do them justice and let them off, since they have already been punished enough. But why should they pray for this? God may be trusted

to do justice without their praying for it. I don't wonder that Universalists pray but little; what have they to pray for? Their daily bread? Very well. But the mercy of God they need not on their scheme, for they suffer all they deserve. Pleasing delusion; flattering enough to human pride, but strange for rational minds and horribly pernicious! Restoration takes substantially the same ground, only leaving a part of the penalty to De worked out in purgatory, but claiming salvation on the ground of justice and not mercy. Mercy can have no place in any system of Universalism. Every form of this system arrays God in robes of justice inflexible, fearful justice yet these men trust, they say, in the mercy of God! But what have they done with the Gospel what with all the Bible says about free pardon to the guilty? They have thrust it out of the Bible; and what have they given us instead? Only justice, justice punishment enough for sin in this world, or at least in a few years of purgatory: sin a trifle government a mere farce God a liar hell a bugbear and a humbug! What is all this but dire blasphemy as ever came from hell?

If we ask for but little mercy, we shall get none at all. This may seem strange, but is none the less true. If we get anything, we must ask for great blessings. Suppose a man deserved to be hung, and yet asks only for a little favor; suppose he should say so, can he be forgiven? No. He must confess the whole of his guilt in its full and awful form, and show that he feels it in his very soul. So, sinner, must you come and confess your whole guilt as it is, or have no mercy. Come and get down, low, lower, infinitely low before God, and take mercy there. Hear that Universalist. All he can say at first is, "I thank God for a thousand things." But he begins to doubt whether this is quite enough. Perhaps he needs a little more punishment than he has suffered in this life; he sees a little more guilt; so he prays that God would let him off from ten years of deserved punishment in hell. And if he sees a little more guilt, he asks for a reprieve from so much more of punishment. If truth flashes upon his soul and he sees his own heart and life in the light of Jehovah's law, he gets down lower and lower, as low as he can, and pours out his prayer that God would save him from that eternal hell which he deserves. "O," he cries out, "can God forgive so great a sinner!" Yes, and by so much the more readily, by how much the more you humble yourself, and by how much the greater mercy you ask and feel that you need.

Only come down and take such a position that God can meet you. Recollect the prodigal son, and that father running, falling on his neck, weeping, welcoming, forgiving! O! how that father's heart gushed with tenderness!

It is not the greatness of your sins, but your pride of heart that forbids your salvation. It is not anything in your past life, but it is your present state of mind that makes your salvation impossible. Think of this.

You need not wait to use means with God to persuade Him to save you. He is using means with you to persuade you to be saved. You act as if God could scarcely be moved by any possible entreaties and submissions to exercise mercy. Oh, you do not see how His great heart beats with compassion and presses the streams of mercy forth in all directions, pouring the river of the waters of life at your very feet, creating such a pressure of appeal to your heart that you have to brace yourself against it, lest you should be persuaded to repent. O, do you see how God would fain persuade you and break your heart in penitence, that He may bring you where He can reach you with forgiving mercy where He can come and bless you without resigning His very throne!

To deny your desert of endless punishment is to render your salvation utterly impossible. God never can forgive you on this ground, because you are trying to be saved on the score of justice. You could not make your damnation more certain than you thus make it, if you were to murder every man you meet. You tie up the hands of mercy and will not let her pluck you from the jaws of death. It is as if your house were on fire and you seize your loaded rifle to shoot down every man that comes with his bucket to help you. You stand your ground amid the raging element until you sink beneath the flames. Who can help you? What is that man doing who is trying to make his family believe Universalism? It is as if he would shoot his rifle at the very heart of Mercy every time she comes in view. He seems determined to drive off Mercy, and for this end plies all the enginery of Universalism and throws himself into the citadel of this refuge of lies! O! what a work of death is this! Mercy shall not reach him or his family; so he seems determined and Mercy cannot come. See how she bends from heaven Jehovah smiles in love and weeps in pity and bends from the very clouds and holds out the pierced hand of the crucified One.

But no! I don't deserve the punishment; away with the insult of a pardon offered through mere mercy! What can be more fatal, more damning, more ruinous to the soul?

You see very clearly why all are not saved. It is not because God is not willing to save all, but because they defeat the efforts God makes to save them. They betake themselves to every possible refuge and subterfuge; resist conviction of guilt, and repel every call of mercy. What ails those young men? What are they doing? Has God come down in His red wrath and vengeance, that they should rally all their might to oppose Him? O, no, He has only come in mercy this is all and they are fighting against His mercy, not His just retributions of vengeance. If this were His awful arm of vengeance you would bow right soon or break beneath its blow. But God's mercy comes in its soft whispers (would you but realize it) it comes to win your heart; and what are you doing? You band yourselves together to resist its calls you invent a thousand excuses you run together to talk, and talk away all solemn thought you run to some infidel or Universalist to find relief for an uneasy conscience. Ah, sinner, this can do you no good. You flee away from God why? What's the matter? Is God pouring down the floods of His great wrath? No, no; but Mercy has come, and would fain gather you under her outspread wings where storms of wrath can never come. But no, the sinner pleads against it cavils, runs, fights, repels the angel of mercy dashes from his lips the waters of life. Sinner, this scene is soon to close. The time is short. Soon God comes death shakes his dart that young man is sick hear his groans. Are you going to die, my young friend? Are you ready? O, I don't know; I am in great pain. O! O! how can I live so? Alas, how can I die? I can't attend to it now too late too late! Indeed, young man, you are in weakness now.

God's finger has touched you. O, if I could only tell you some of the death-bed scenes which I have witnessed if I could make you see them, and hear the deep wailings of unutterable agony as the soul quivered, shuddered, and fain would shrink away into annihilation from the awful eye and was swept down swift to hell! Those are the very men who ran away from mercy! Mercy could not reach them, but death can. Death seizes its victim. See, he drags the frightened, shrieking soul to the gateway of hell; how that soul recoils groans what an unearthly groan and he is gone! The sentence of execution has gone out and there is no reprieve. Thai

sinner would not have mercy when he might; now he cannot when he would. All is over now.

Dying sinner, you may just as well have mercy today as not. All your past sins present no obstacle at all if you only repent and take the offered pardon. Your God proffers you life. "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure in your death; turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?" Why will you reject such offered life? And will you still persist? Be astonished, O ye heavens! Indeed, if there ever was anything that filled the universe with astonishment, it is the sinner's rejection of mercy. Angels were astonished when they saw the Son of God made flesh, and when they saw Him nailed to a tree how much more now to see the guilty sinner, doomed to hell, yet spurning offered pardon! What do they see! That sinner putting off and still delaying and delaying still, until what? Until the last curtain falls, and the great bell tolls, tolls, tolls the awful knell of the sinner's death eternal! Where is that sinner? Follow him down he goes, weeping, wailing, along the sides of the pit he reaches his own final home; in "his own place" now and forevermore! Mercy followed him to the last verge of the precipice, and could no longer. She has done her part.

What if a spirit from glory should come and speak to you five minutes a relative, say perhaps your mother what would she say? Or a spirit from that world of despair O could such a one give utterance to the awful realities of that prison house, what would he say? Would he tell you that the preacher has been telling you lies? Would he say, Don't be frightened by these made-up tales of horror? O, no, but that the half has not been told you and never can be. O, how he would press you, if he might, to flee from the wrath to come!

# THE WAGES OF SIN

*“The wages of sin is death.” — Romans 6:23*

THE death here spoken of is that which is due as the penal sanction of God’s law.

In presenting the subject of our text, I must-

- I. ILLUSTRATE THE NATURE OF SIN;**
- II. SPECIFY SOME OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE PENAL SANCTIONS OF GOD’S LAW;**
- III. SHOW WHAT THIS PENALTY MUST BE.**

## I. ILLUSTRATE THE NATURE OF SIN;

An illustration will give us the best practical view of the nature of sin. You have only to suppose a government established to secure the highest well-being of the governed, and of the ruling authorities also. Supposed the head of this government to embark all his attributes in the enterprise all his wealth, all his time, all his energies to compass the high end of the highest general good. For this purpose he enacts the best possible laws which, if obeyed, will secure the highest good of both subject and Prince. He then takes care to affix adequate penalties; else all his care and wisdom must come to naught. He devotes to the interests of his government all he is and all he has, without reserve or abatement.

But some of his subjects refuse to sympathize with this movement. They say, “Charity begins at home,” and they are for taking care of themselves in the first place; in short, they are thoroughly selfish.

It is easy to see what this would be in a human government. The man who does this becomes the common enemy of the government and of all its subjects. This is sin. This illustrates precisely the case of the sinner. Sin is selfishness, It sets up a selfish end, and to gain it uses selfish means; so that in respect to both its end and its means, it is precisely opposed to

God and to all the ends of general happiness which he seeks to secure. It denies God's rights; discards God's interests. Each sinner maintains that his own will shall be the law. The interest he sets himself to secure is entirely opposed to that proposed by God in His government.

All law must have sanctions. Without sanctions it would be only advice. It is therefore essential to the distinctive and inherent nature of law that it have sanctions.

These are either remuneratory or vindicatory. They promise reward for obedience, and they also threaten penalty for disobedience. They are vindicatory, inasmuch as they vindicate the honor of the violated law.

Again, sanctions may be either natural or governmental. Often both forms exist in other governments than the divine.

Natural penalties are those evil consequences which naturally result without any direct interference of government to punish. Thus in all governments the disrespect of its friends falls as a natural penalty on transgressors. They are the natural enemies of all good subjects.

In the divine government, compunctions of conscience and remorse fall into this class, and indeed many other things which naturally result to obedience on the one hand and to disobedience on the other.

There should also be governmental sanctions. Every governor should manifest his displeasure against the violation of his laws. To leave the whole question of obedience to mere natural consequences is obviously unjust to society.

Inasmuch as governments are established to sustain law and secure obedience, they are bound to put forth their utmost energies in this work.

Another incidental agency of government under some circumstances is that which we call discipline. One object of discipline is to go before the infliction of penalty, and force open unwilling eyes, to see that law has a government to back it up, and the sinner a fearful penalty to fear. Coming upon men during their probation, while as yet they have not seen or felt the fearfulness of penalty, it is designed to admonish them to make them think and consider. Thus its special object is the good of the subject on whom it falls and of those who may witness its administration. It does not

propose to sustain the dignity of law by exemplary inflictions. This belongs exclusively to the province of penalty. Discipline, therefore, is not penal in the sense of visiting crime with deserved punishment, but aims to dissuade the subject of law from violating its precepts.

Disciplinary agency could scarcely exist under a government of pure law, for the reason that such a government cannot defer the infliction of penalty. Discipline presupposes a state of suspended penalty. Hence penal inflictions must be broadly distinguished from disciplinary.

We are sinners, and therefore have little occasion to dwell on the remuneratory features of God's government. We can have no claim to remuneration under law, being precluded utterly by our sin. But with the penal features we have everything to do. I therefore proceed to enquire.

## II. WHAT ARE THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE PENAL SANCTIONS OF GOD'S LAW?

God has given us reason. This affirms intuitively and irresistibly all the great truths of moral government. There are certain attributes which we know must belong to the moral law, e.g., one is intrinsic justice. Penalty should threaten no more and no less than is just. Justice must be an attribute of God's law; else the whole universe must inevitably condemn it.

Intrinsic justice means and implies that the penalty be equal to the obligation violated. The guilt of sin consists in its being a violation of obligation. Hence the guilt must be in proportion to the magnitude of the obligation violated, and consequently the penalty must be measured by this obligation.

Governmental justice is another attribute. This feature of law seeks to afford security against transgression. Law is not governmentally just unless its penalty be so graduated as to afford the highest security against sin which the nature of the case admits. Suppose under any government the sanctions of law are trifling, not at all proportioned to the end to be secured. Such a government is unjust to itself, and to the interests it is committed to maintain. Hence a good government must be governmentally



just, affording in the severity of its penalties and the certainty of their just infliction, the highest security that its law shall be obeyed.

Again, penal sanctions should be worthy of the end aimed at by the law and by its author. Government is only a means to an end, this proposed end being universal obedience and its consequent happiness. If law is indispensable for obtaining this end, its penalty should be graduated accordingly.

Hence the penalty should be graduated by the importance of the precept. If the precept be of fundamental importance of such importance that disobedience to it saps the very existence of all government then it should be guarded by the greatest and most solemn sanctions. The penalties attached to its violation should be of the highest order.

Penalty should make an adequate expression of the lawgiver's views of the value of the end he proposes to secure by law; also of his views of the sacredness of his law; also of the intrinsic guilt of disobedience. Penalty aims to bring forth the heart of the lawgiver to show the earnestness of his desire to maintain the right, and to secure that order and well-being which depend on obedience. In the greatness of the penalty the lawgiver brings forth his heart and pours the whole influence of his character upon his subjects.

The object of executing penalty is precisely the same; not to gratify revenge, as some seem to suppose, but to act on the subjects of government with influences toward obedience. It has the same general object as the law itself has.

Penal sanctions should be an adequate expression of the lawgiver's regard for the public good and of his interest in it. In the precept he gave some expression; in the penalty, he gives yet more. In the precept we see the object in view and have a manifestation of regard for the public interests; in the penalty, we have a measure of this regard, showing us how great it is. For example, suppose a human law were to punish murder with only a trifling penalty. Under the pretense of being very tender-hearted, the lawgiver amerces this crime of murder with a fine of fifty cents! Would this show that he greatly loved his subjects and highly valued their life and interests? Far from it. You cannot feel that a legislator has done his duty

unless he shows how much he values human life, and unless he attaches a penalty commensurate in some good degree with the end to be secured.

One word as to the infliction of capital punishment in human governments. There is a difference of opinion as to which is most effective, solitary punishment for life, or death. Leaving this question without remark, I have it to say that no man ever doubted that the murderer deserves to die. If some other punishment than death is to be preferred, it is not by any means because the murderer does not deserve death. No man can doubt this for a moment. It is one of the unalterable principles of righteousness, that if a man sacrifices the interest of another, he sacrifices his own; an eye for an eye; life for life.

We cannot but affirm that no government lays sufficient stress on the protection of human life unless it guards this trust with its highest penalties. Where life and all its vital interests are at stake, there the penalty should be great and solemn as is possible.

Moral agents have two sides to their sensibility; hope and fear; to which you may address the prospect of good and the dread of evil. I am now speaking of penalty. This is addressed only to fear.

I have said in substance that penalty should adequately assert and vindicate the rightful authority of the lawgiver; should afford if possible an adequate rebuke of sin and should be based on a just appreciation of its nature. God's moral government embraces the whole intelligent universe, and stretches with its vast results onward through eternity. Hence the sweep and breadth of its interests are absolutely unlimited, and consequently the penalties of its law, being set to vindicate the authority of this government and to sustain these immeasurable interests, should be beyond measure dreadful. If anything beyond and more dreadful than the threatened penalty could be conceived, all minds would say, "This is not enough." With any just views of the relations and the guilt of sin, they could not be satisfied unless the penalty is the greatest that is conceivable.

Sin is so vile, so mischievous, so terribly destructive and so far-sweeping in its ruin, moral agents could not feel that enough is done so long as more can be.

### III. WHAT IS THE PENALTY OF GOD'S MORAL LAW?

Our text answers, "death." This certainly is not animal death, for saints die and animals also, neither of whom can be receiving the wages of sin. Besides, this would be no penalty if, after its infliction, men went at once to heaven. Such a penalty, considered as the wages of sin, would only be an insult to God's government.

Again, it cannot be spiritual death, for this is nothing else than a state of entire disobedience to the law. You cannot well conceive anything more absurd than to punish a man for disobedience by subjecting him to perpetual disobedience an effort to sustain the law by dooming such offenders to its perpetual violation and nothing more.

But this death is endless misery, corresponding to the death-penalty in human governments. Everybody knows what this is. It separates the criminal from society forever; debars him at once and utterly from all the privileges of the government, and consigns him over to hopeless ruin. Nothing more dreadful can be inflicted. It is the extreme penalty, fearful beyond any other that is possible for man to inflict.

There can be no doubt that death as spoken of in our text is intended to correspond to the death-penalty in human governments.

You will also observe that in our text the "gift of God" which is "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," is directly contrasted with death, the wages of sin. This fact may throw light on the question respecting the nature of this death. We must look for the antithesis of "eternal life."

Now this eternal life is not merely an eternal existence. Eternal life never means merely an eternal existence, in any case where it is used in Scripture; but it does mean a state of eternal blessedness, implying eternal holiness as its foundation. The use of the term "life" in Scripture in the sense of real life a life worth living i.e., real and rich enjoyment, is so common as to supersede the necessity of special proof.

The penalty of death is therefore the opposite of this viz., eternal misery.

I must here say a few words upon the objections raised against this doctrine of eternal punishment.

All the objections I have ever heard amount only to this, that it is unjust. They may be expressed in somewhat various phraseology, but this is the only idea which they involve, of any moment at all.

**(1.)** It is claimed to be unjust because “life is so short.”

How strangely men talk! Life so short, men have not time to sin enough to deserve eternal death! Do men forget that one sin incurs the penalty due for sinning? How many sins ought it to take to make one transgression of the law of God? Men often talk as if they supposed it must require a great many. As if a man must commit a great many murders before he has made up the crime of murder enough to fall under the sentence of the court! What? shall a man come before the court and plead that although he has broken the law to be sure, yet he has not lived long enough, and has not broken the law times enough, to incur its penalty? What court on earth ever recognized such a plea as proving any other than the folly and guilt of him who made it?

**(2.)** It is also urged that “man is so small, so very insignificant a being that he cannot possibly commit an infinite sin.” What does this objection mean? Does it mean that sin is an act of creation, and to be measured therefore by the magnitude of that something which it creates? This would be an exceedingly wild idea of the nature of sin. Does the objection mean that man cannot violate an obligation of infinite strength? Then his meaning is simply false, as everybody must know. Does he imply that the guilt of sin is not to be measured by the obligation violated? Then he knows not what he says, or wickedly denies known truth. What? man so little that he cannot commit much sin! Is this the way we reason in analogous cases? Suppose your child disobeys you. He is very much smaller than you are! But do you therefore exonerate him from blame? Is this a reason which nullifies his guilt? Can no sin be committed by inferiors against their superior? Have sensible men always been mistaken in supposing that the younger and smaller are sometimes under obligations to obey the older and the greater? Suppose you smite down the magistrate; suppose you insult, or attempt to assassinate the king is this a very small crime, almost too excusable to be deemed a crime at all, because forsooth, you are in a lower

position and he in a higher? You say, "I am so little, so very insignificant! How can I deserve so great a punishment?" Do you reason so in any other case except your own sins against God? Never.

**(3.)** Again, some men say, "Sin is not an infinite evil." This language is ambiguous. Does it mean that sin would not work infinite mischief if suffered to run on indefinitely? This is false, for if only one soul were ruined by it, the mischief accruing from it would be infinite. Does it mean that sin is not an infinite evil, as seen in its present results and relations? Suppose this admitted; it proves nothing to our purpose, for it may be true that the sum total of evil results from each single sin will not all be brought out in any duration less than eternity. How then can you measure the evil of sin by what you see today?

But there are still other considerations to show that the penalty of the law must be infinite. Sin is an infinite natural evil. It is so in this sense, that there are no bounds to the natural evil it would introduce if not governmentally restrained.

If sin were to ruin but one soul, there could be no limit set to the evil it would thus occasion.

Again, sin involves infinite guilt, for it is a violation of infinite obligation.

Here it is important to notice a common mistake, growing out of confusion of ideas about the ground of obligation. From this, result mistakes in regard to what constitutes the guilt of sin. Here I might show that when you misapprehend the ground of obligation, you will almost of necessity misconceive the nature and extent of sin and guilt. Let us recur to our former illustration. Here is a government, wisely framed to secure the highest good of the governed and of all concerned. Whence arises the obligation to obey? Certainly from the intrinsic value of the end sought to be secured. But how broad is this obligation to obey; or, in other words, what is its true measure? I answer, it exactly equals the value of the end which the government seeks to secure, and which obedience will secure, but which sin will destroy. By this measure of God the penalty must be graduated. By this the lawgiver must determine how much sanction, remuneratory and vindictory, he must attach to his law in order to meet the demands of justice and benevolence.

Now God's law aims to secure the highest universal good. Its chief and ultimate end is not, strictly speaking, to secure supreme homage to God, but rather to secure the highest good of all intelligent moral beings God, and all His creatures. So viewed, you will see that the intrinsic value of the end to be sought is the real ground of obligation to obey the precept. The value of this end being estimated, you have the value and strength of the obligation.

This is plainly infinite in the sense of being unlimited. In this sense we affirm obligation to be without limit.

The very reason why we affirm any obligation at all is that the law is good and is the necessary means of the highest good of the universe. Hence the reason why we affirm any penalty at all compels us to affirm the justice and necessity of an infinite penalty. We see that intrinsic justice must demand an infinite penalty for the same reason that it demands any penalty whatever. If any penalty be just, it is just because law secures a certain good. If this good aimed at by the law be unlimited in extent, so must be the penalty. Governmental justice thus requires endless punishment; else it provides no sufficient guaranty for the public good.

Again, the law not only designs but tends to secure infinite good. Its tendencies are direct to this end. Hence its penalty should be infinite. The law is not just to the interests it both aims and tends to secure unless it arms itself with infinite sanctions.

Nothing less than infinite penalty can be an adequate expression of God's view of the value of the great end on which His heart is set. When men talk about eternal death being too great a penalty for sin, what do they think of God's efforts to restrain sin all over the moral universe? What do they think of the death of His well-beloved Son? Do they suppose it possible that God could give an adequate or a corresponding expression to His hatred of sin by any penalty less than endless?

Nothing less could give an adequate expression to His regard for the authority of law. O, how fearful the results and how shocking the very idea, if God should fail to make an adequate expression of His regard for the sacredness of that law which underlies the entire weal of all His vast kingdom?

You would insist that He shall regard the violation of His law as Universalists do. How surely he would bring down an avalanche of ruin on all His intelligent creatures if He were to yield to your demands! Were He to affix anything less than endless penalty to His law, what holy being could trust the administration of His government!

His regard to the public good forbids His attaching a light or finite penalty to His law. He loves His subjects too well. Some people have strange notions of the way in which a ruler should express his regard for his subjects. They would have him so tender-hearted toward the guilty that they should absorb his entire sympathy and regard. They would allow him perhaps to fix a penalty of sixpence fine for the crime of murder, but not much if anything more. The poor murderer's wife and children are so precious you must not take away much of his money, and as to touching his liberty or his life neither of these is to be thought of. What! do you not know that human nature is very frail and temptable. and therefore you ought to deal very sparingly with penalties for murder? Perhaps they would say, you may punish the murderer by keeping him awake one night just one, no more; and God may let a guilty man's conscience disturb him about to this extent for the crime of murder! The Universalists do tell us that they will allow the most High God to give a man conscience that shall trouble him a little if he commits murder a little, say for the first and perhaps the second offence; but they are not wont to notice the fact that under this penalty of a troubling conscience, the more a man sins, the less he has to suffer. Under the operation of this descending scale, it will soon come to this that a murderer would not get so much penalty as the loss of one night's sleep. But such are the notions that men reach when they swing clear of the affirmations of an upright reason and of God's revealing Word.

Speaking now to those who have a moral sense to affirm the right as well as eyes to see the operation of law, I know you cannot deny the logical necessity of the death-penalty for the moral law of God. There is a logical clinch to every one of these propositions which you cannot escape.

No penalty less than infinite and endless can be an adequate expression of God's displeasure against sin and of His determination to resist and punish it. The penalty should run on as long as there are subjects to be affected by

it as long as there is need of any demonstration of God's feelings and governmental course toward sin.

Nothing less is the greatest God can inflict, for He certainly can inflict an endless and infinite punishment. If therefore the exigency demands the greatest penalty He can inflict, this must be the penalty banishment from God and endless death.

But I must pass to remark that the Gospel everywhere assumes the same. It holds that by the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified before God. Indeed, it not only affirms this, but builds its entire system of atonement and grace upon this foundation. It constantly assumes that there is no such thing as paying the debt and canceling obligation and therefore that the sinner's only relief is forgiveness through redeeming blood.

Yet again, if the penalty be not endless death, what is it? Is it temporary suffering? Then how long does it last? When does it end? Has any sinner ever got through; served out his time and been taken to heaven? We have no testimony to prove such a case, not the first one; but we have the solemn testimony of Jesus Christ to prove that there never can be such a case. He tells us that there can be no passing from hell to heaven or from heaven to hell. A great gulf is fixed between, over which none shall ever pass. You may pass from earth to heaven, or from earth to hell; but these two states of the future world are wide extremes, and no man or angel shall pass the gulf that divides them.

But you answer my question What is the penalty? by the reply It is only the natural consequences of sin as developed in a troubled conscience. Then it follows that the more a man sins the less he is punished, until it amounts to an infinitesimal quantity of punishment, for which the sinner cares just nothing at all. Who can believe this? Under this system, if a man fears punishment, he has only to pitch into sinning with the more will and energy; he will have the comfort of feeling that he can very soon get over all his compunctions, and get beyond any penalty whatever! And do you believe this is God's only punishment for sin? You cannot believe it.

Universalists always confound discipline with penal sanctions. They overlook this fundamental distinction and regard all that men suffer here in this world as only penal. Whereas it is scarcely penal at all, but is chiefly



disciplinary. They ask, What good will it do a sinner to send him to an endless hell? Is not God perfectly benevolent; and if so, how can He have any other object than to do the sinner all the good He can?

I reply, Punishment is not designed to do good to that sinner who is punished. It looks to other, remoter, and far greater good. Discipline, while he was on earth, sought mainly his personal good; penalty looks to other results. If you ask, Does not God aim to do good to the universal public by penalty? I answer, Even so; that is precisely what He aims to do.

Under human governments, the penalty may aim in part to reclaim. So far, it is discipline. But the death-penalty after all suspension is past and the fatal blow comes, aims not to reclaim, and is not discipline, but is only penalty. The guilty man is laid on the great public altar and made a sacrifice for the public good. The object is to make a fearful, terrible impression on the public mind of the evil of transgression and the fearfulness of its consequences. Discipline looks not so much to the support of law as to the recovery of the offender. But the day of judgment has nothing to do with reclaiming the lost sinner. That and all its issues are purely penal. It is strange that these obvious facts should be overlooked.

There is yet another consideration often disregarded, viz., that, underlying any safe dispensation of discipline, there must be a moral law, sustained by ample and fearful sanctions, to preserve the law-giver's authority and sustain the majesty and honor of his government. It would not be safe to trust a system of discipline, and indeed it could not be expected to take hold of the ruined with much force; if it were not sustained by a system of law and penalty. This penal visitation on the unreclaimed sinner must stand forever, an appalling fact, to show that justice is realized, law vindicated, God honored; and to make an enduring and awful impression of the evil of sin and of God's eternal hostility against it.

## REMARKS

We hear a great many cavils against future punishment. At these we should not so much wonder, but for the fact that the Gospel assumes this truth, and then proposes a remedy. One would naturally suppose the mind would shrink from those fearful conclusions to which it is pressed when

the relations of mere laws are contemplated; but when the Gospel interposes to save, then it becomes passing strange that men should admit the reality of the Gospel, and yet reject the law and its penalties. They talk of grace; but what do they mean by grace? When men deny the fact of sin, there is no room and no occasion for grace in the Gospel. Admitting nominally the fact of sin, but virtually denying its guilt, grace is only a name. Repudiating the sanctions of the law of God, and laboring to disprove their reality, what right have men to claim that they respect the Gospel? They make it only a farce or at least a system of amends for unreasonably severe legislation under the legal economy. Let not men who so traduce the law assume that they honor God by applauding His Gospel!

The representations of the Bible with regard to the final doom of the wicked are exceedingly striking. Spiritual truths are revealed by natural objects: e.g., the gates and walls of the New Jerusalem, to present the splendors and glories of the heavenly state. A spiritual telescope is put into our hands; we are permitted to point it towards the glorious city “whose builder and Maker is God;” we may survey its inner sanctuary, where the worshipping hosts praise God without ceasing. We see their flowing robes of white the palms of victory in their hands the beaming joy of their faces the manifestations of ineffable bliss in their souls. This is heaven portrayed in symbol. Who supposes that this is intended as hyperbole? Who arraigns these representations as extravagant in speech, as if designed to overrate the case, or raise unwarrantable expectations? No man believes this. No man ever brings this charge against what the Bible says of heaven. What is the object in adopting this figurative mode of representation? Beyond question, the object is to give the best possible conception of the facts.

Then we have the other side. The veil is lifted, and you come to the very verge of hell to see what is there. Whereas on the one hand all was glorious, on the other all is fearful, and full of horrors.

There is a bottomless pit. A deathless soul is cast therein it sinks and sinks and sinks, going down that awful pit which knows no bottom, weeping and wailing as it descends, and you hear its groans as they echo and re-echo from the sides of that dread cavern of woe!

Here is another image. You have a “lake of fire and brimstone,” and you see lost sinners thrown into its waves of rolling fire; and they lash its burning shore, and gnaw their tongues for pain. There the worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched, and “not one drop of water” can reach them to “cool their tongues” “tormented in that flame.”

What think you? Has God said these things to frighten our poor souls? Did He mean to play on our fears for His own amusement? Can you think so?

Nay, does it not rather grieve His heart that He must build such a hell, and must plunge therein the sinners who will not honor His law will not embrace salvation from sinning. through His grace? Ah, the waves of death roll darkly under the eye of the Holy and compassionate One! He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner! But He must sustain His throne, and save His loyal subjects if He can.

Turn to another scene. Here is a death-bed. Did you ever see a sinner die? Can you describe the scene? Was it a friend, a relative, dear, very dear to your heart? How long was he dying? Did it seem to you the death-agony would never end? When my last child died, the struggle was long; O, it was fearfully protracted and agonizing twenty-four hours in the agonies of dissolving nature! It made me sick I could not see it! But suppose it had continued till this time. I should long since have died myself under the anguish and nervous exhaustion of witnessing such a scene. So would all our friends. Who could survive to the final termination of such an awful death? Who would not cry out, “My God, cut it short, cut it short in mercy!” When my wife died, her death- struggles were long and heart-rending. If you had been there, you would have cried mightily to God, “Cut it short! O, cut it short and relieve this dreadful agony! But suppose it had continued, on and on, by day and by night-day after day, through its slow moving hours, and night after night long nights, as if there could be no morning. The figure of our text supposes an eternal dying. Let us conceive such a case. Suppose it should actually occur in some dear circle of sympathizing friends. A poor man cannot die! He lingers in the death agony a month, a year, five years, ten years till all his friends are broken down, and fall into their graves under the insupportable horror of the scene: but still the poor man cannot die! He outlives one generation then

another and another; one hundred years he is dying in mortal agony, and yet he comes no nearer to the end! What would you think of such a scene? It would be an illustration that is all a feeble illustration of the awful “second death!”

God would have us understand what an awful thing sin is, and what fearful punishment it deserves. He would fain show us by such figures how terrible must be the doom of the determined sinner. Did you ever see a sinner die? and did you not cry out Surely the curse of God has fallen heavily on this world! Ali, this is only a faint emblem of that heavier curse that comes in the “second death!”

The text affirms that death is the “wages of sin.” It is just what sin deserves. Labor earns wages, and creates a rightful claim to such remuneration. So men are conceived as earning wages when they sin. They become entitled to their pay. God deems Himself holden to give them their well-deserved wages.

As I have often said, I would not say one word in this direction to distress your souls, if there were no hope and no mercy possible. Would I torment you before the time? God forbid! Would I hold out the awful penalty before you, and tell you there is no hope? No. I say these things to make you feel the need of escaping for your life.

Think of this: “the wages of sin is death!” God is aiming to erect a monument that shall proclaim to all the universe Stand in awe and sin not! So that whenever they shall look on this awful expression, they shall say What an awful thing sin is! People are wont to exclaim O, how horrible the penalty! They are but too apt to overlook the horrible guilt and ill-desert of sin! When God lays a sinner on his death-bed before our eyes, He invites us to look at the penalty of sin. There he lies, agonizing, groaning, quivering, racked with pain, yet he lives, and lives on. Suppose he lives on in this dying state a day, a week, a month, a year, a score of years, a century, a thousand years, a thousand ages, and still he lives on, “dying perpetually, yet never dead:” finally, the universe passes away; the heavens are rolled together as a scroll and what then? There lies that sufferer yet. He looks up and cries out, “How long, O HOW LONG?” Like the knell of eternal death, the answer comes down to him, “Eternally, ETERNALLY.”

Another cycle of eternal ages rolls on, and again he dares to ask, how long? and again the answer rolls back, “Eternally, ETERNALLY!” O how this fearful answer comes down thundering through all the realms of agony and despair.

We are informed that in the final consummation of earthly scenes, “the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened.” We shall be there, and what is more, there to close up our account with our Lord and receive our allotment. Which will you have on that final settlement day? The wages of sin? Do you say, “Give me my wages give me my wages; I will not be indebted to Christ? “Sinner, you shall have them. God will pay you without fail or stint. He has made all the necessary arrangements, and has your wages ready. But take care what you do! Look again before you take your final leap. Soon the curtain will fall, probation close, and all hope will have perished. Where then shall I be? And you, where? On the right hand or on the left?

The Bible locates hell in the sight of heaven. The smoke of their torment as it rises up forever and ever, is in full view from the heights of the Heavenly City. There, you adore and worship; but as you cast your eye afar off toward where the rich man lay, you see what it costs to sin. There, not one drop of water can go to cool their burning tongues. Thence the smoke of their torment rises and rises for evermore. Take care what you do today!

Suppose you are looking into a vast crater, where the surges of molten lava boil and roll up, and roll and swell, and ever and anon belch forth huge masses to deluge the plains below. Once in my life, I stood in sight of Etna, and dropped my eye down into its awful mouth. I could not forbear to cry out “tremendous, TREMENDOUS!” There, said I, is an image of hell! O, sinner, think of hell, and of yourself thrust into it. It pours forth its volumes of smoke and flame forever, never ceasing, never exhausted. Upon that spectacle the universe can look and read, “The wages of sin is death! O, sin not, since such is the doom of the unpardoned sinner!” Think what a demonstration this is in the government of God! What an exhibition of His holy justice, of His inflexible purpose to sustain the interests of holiness and happiness in all His vast dominions! Is not this worthy of God, and of the sacredness of His great scheme of moral government?

Sinner, you may now escape this fearful doom. This is the reason why God has revealed hell in His faithful Word. And now shall this revelation, to you, be in vain and worse than in vain?

What would you think if this whole congregation were pressed by some resistless force close up to the very brink of hell: but just as it seemed that we are all to be pushed over the awful brink, an angel rushes in, shouting as with seraphic trump, "Salvation is possible Glory to God, GLORY TO GOD, GLORY TO GOD!"

You cry aloud Is it possible? Yes, yes, he cries, let me take you up in my broad, loving arms, and bear you to the feet of Jesus, for He is mighty and willing to save!

Is all this mere talk? Oh, if I could wet my lips with the dews of heaven, and bathe my tongue in its fountains of eloquence, even then I could not describe the realities.

Christian people, are you figuring round and round to get a little property, yet neglecting souls? Beware lest you ruin souls that can never live again! Do you say I thought they knew it all? They reply to you, "I did not suppose you believed a word of it yourselves. You did not act as if you did. Are you going to heaven? Well, I am going down to hell! There is no help for me now. You will sometimes think of me then, as you shall see the smoke of my woe rising up darkly athwart the glorious heavens. After I have been there a long, long time, you will sometimes think that I, who once lived by your side, am there. O remember, you cannot pray for me then; but you will remember that once you might have warned and might have saved me."

O methinks, if there can be bitterness in heaven, it must enter through such an avenue and spoil your happiness there!

## THE SAVIOR LIFTED UP, AND THE LOOK OF FAITH

*“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” — John 3:14, 15.*

*“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (This he said, signifying what death he should die.)” — John 12:32, 33.*

IN order to make this subject plain, I will read the passage referred to—Numbers 21:6-9.

“And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

This is the transaction to which Christ alluded in the text. The object in both cases was to save men from the bite of the serpent, its influence being unchecked, is the death of the body: the effects of sin, unpardoned and uncleansed from the heart, are the ruin of the soul. Christ is lifted up, to the end that sinners, believing in Him, may not perish, but may have eternal life. In such a connection, to perish cannot mean annihilation, for it must be the antithesis of eternal life, and this is plainly much more than eternal existence. It must be eternal happiness real life in the sense of exquisite enjoyment. The counterpart of this, eternal misery, is presented under the term “perish.” It is common in the Scriptures to find a state of endless misery contrasted with one of endless happiness.

We may observe two points of analogy between the brazen serpent and Christ.

- 1.** Christ must be lifted UP as the serpent was in the wilderness. From the passage quoted above out of John 12. it is plain that this refers to His being raised up from the earth upon His cross at His crucifixion.
- 2.** Christ must be held up as a remedy for sin, even as the brazen serpent was as a remedy for a poison. It is not uncommon in the Bible to see sin represented as a malady. For this malady, Christ had healing power. He professed to be able to forgive sin and to cleanse the soul from its moral pollution. Continually did He claim to have this power and encourage men to rely upon Him and to resort to Him for its application. In all His personal instructions He was careful to hold up Himself as having this power, and as capable of affording a remedy for sin.

In this respect the serpent of brass was a type of Christ. Whoever looked upon this serpent was healed. So Christ heals not from punishment only, for to this the analogy of healing is less pertinent but especially from sinning from the heart to sin. He heals the soul and restores it to health. So it was said by the announcing angel, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. His power avails to cleanse and purify the soul.

Both Christ and the serpent were held up each as a remedy. and let it be specially noted as a full and adequate remedy, The ancient Hebrews, bitten by fiery serpents, were not to mix up nostrums of their own devising to help out the cure: it was all-sufficient for them to look up to the remedy of God's own providing. God would have them understand that the healing was altogether His own work.

The serpent on a pole was the only external object connected with their cure; to this they were to look, and in this most simple way only by an expecting look, indicative of simple faith, they received their cure.

Christ is to be lifted up as a present remedy. So was the serpent. The cure wrought then was present, immediate. It involved no delay.

This serpent was God's appointed remedy. So is Christ, a remedy appointed of God, sent down from heaven for this express purpose. It was



indeed very wonderful that God should appoint a brazen serpent for such a purpose such a remedy for such a malady; and not less wonderful is it that Christ should be lifted up in agony and blood, as a remedy for both the punishment and the heart-power of sin.

The brazen serpent was a divinely-certified remedy; not a nostrum gotten up as thousands are, under high-sounding names and flaming testimonials; but a remedy prepared and brought forth by God Himself, under His own certificate of its ample healing virtues.

So was Christ. The Father testifies to the perfect adequacy of Jesus Christ as a remedy for sin.

Jesus Christ must now be held up from the pulpit as one crucified for the sins of men. His great power to save lay in His atoning, death.

He must not only be held up from the pulpit, but this exhibition of His person and work must be endorsed, and not contradicted by the experience of those who behold Him.

Suppose that in Moses' time many who looked were seen to be still dying; who could have believed the unqualified declaration of Moses, that "every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live?" So here in the Gospel and its subjects. Doubtless the Hebrews had before their eyes many living witnesses who had been bitten and yet bore the scars of those wounds; but who, by looking, had been healed. Every such case would go to confirm the faith of the people in God's word and in His own power to save. So Christ must be represented in His fullness, and this representation should be powerfully endorsed by the experience of His friends. Christ represents Himself as one ready and willing to save. This, therefore, is the thing to be shown. This must be sustained by the testimony of His living witnesses, as the first point of analogy is the lifting up of the object to be looked upon, the second is this very looking itself.

Men looked upon the serpent, expecting divine power to heal them. Even those ancient men, in that comparatively dark age, understood that the serpent was only a type, not the very cause in itself of salvation.

So is there something very remarkable in the relation of faith to healing. Take, for illustration, the case of the woman who had an issue of blood.

She had heard something about Jesus, and somehow had caught the idea that if she could but touch the hem of His garment, she should be made whole. See her pressing her way along through the crowd, faint with weakness, pale, and trembling; if you had seen her you would perhaps have cried out, What would this poor dying invalid do?

She knew what she was trying to do. At last unnoticed of all, she reached the spot where the Holy One stood and put forth her feeble hand and touched His garment. Suddenly He turns Himself and asks, Who was it that touched me? Somebody touched me: who was it? The disciples, astonished at such a question, put under such circumstances, reply The multitude throng Thee on every side, and scores are touching Thee every hour; why then ask Who touched me?

The fact was, somebody had touched Him with faith to be healed thereby, and He knew that the healing virtue had gone forth from Himself to some believing heart. How beautiful an illustration this of simple faith! And how wonderful the connection between the faith and the healing!

Just so the Hebrews received that wonderful healing power by simply looking toward the brazen serpent. No doubt this was a great mystery to them, yet it was none the less a fact. Let them look; the looking brings the cure, although not one of them can tell how the healing virtue comes. So we are really to look to Christ, and in looking, to receive the healing power. It matters not how little we understand the mode in which the looking operates to give us the remedy for sin.

This looking to Jesus implies that we look away from ourselves. There is to be no mixing up of quack medicines along with the great remedy. Such a course is always sure to fail. Thousands fail in just this way, forever trying to be healed partly by their own stupid, self-willed works, as well as partly by Jesus Christ. There must be no looking to man or to any of man's doings or man's help. All dependence must be on Christ alone. As this is true in reference to pardon, so is it also in reference to sanctification. This is done by faith in Christ. It is only through and by faith that you get that divine influence which sanctifies the soul the Spirit of God; and this in some of its forms of action was the power that healed the Hebrews in the wilderness.

Looking to Christ implies looking away from ourselves in the sense of not relying at all on our own works for the cure desired, not even on works of faith. The looking is toward Christ alone as our all-prevalent, all-sufficient and present remedy.

There is a constant tendency in Christians to depend on their own doings, and not on simple faith in Christ. The woman of the blood-issue seems to have toiled many years to find relief before she came to Christ; had no doubt tried everybody's prescriptions, and taxed her own ingenuity besides to its utmost capacity, but all was of no avail. At last she heard of Jesus. He was said to do many wonderful works. She said within herself This must be the promised Messiah who was to "bear our sicknesses" and heal all the maladies of men. O let me rush to Him, for if I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole. She did not stop to philosophize upon the mode of the cure; she leaned on no man's philosophy, and had none of her own; she simply said I have heard of One who is mighty to save, and I flee to Him.

So of being healed of our sins. Despairing of all help in ourselves or in any other name than Christ's, and assured there is virtue in Him to work out the cure, we expect it of Him and come to Him to obtain it.

Several times within the last few years, when persons have come to me with the question, Can I anyhow be saved from my sins actually saved, so as not to fall again into the same sins, and under the same temptations? I have said Have you ever tried looking to Jesus? O yes.

But have you expected that you should be actually saved from sin by looking to Jesus, and be filled with faith, love, and holiness? No; I did not expect that.

Now, suppose a man had looked at the brazen serpent for the purpose of speculation. He has no faith in what God says about being cured by looking, but he is inclined to try it. He will look a little and watch his feelings to see how it affects him. He does not believe God's word, yet since he does not absolutely know but it may be true, he will condescend to try it. This is no looking at all in the sense of our text. It would not have cured the bitten Israelite; it can. not heal the poor sinner. There is no faith in it.

Sinners must look to Christ with both desire and design to be saved. Salvation is the object for which they look.

Suppose one had looked towards the brazen serpent, but with no willingness or purpose to be cured. This could do him no good. Nor can it do sinners any good to think of Christ otherwise than as a Savior, and a Savior for their own sins.

Sinners must look to Christ as a remedy for all sin. To wish to make some exception, sparing some sins, but consenting to abandon others, indicates rank rebellion of heart, and can never impose on the All- seeing One. There cannot be honesty in the heart which proposes to itself to seek deliverance from sin only in part.

Sinners may look to Christ at once without the least delay. They need not wait till they are almost dead under their malady. For the bitten Israelite, it was of no use to wait and defer his looking to the serpent till he found himself in the jaws of death. He might have said I am wounded plainly enough, but I do not see as it swells much yet; I do not feel the poison spreading through my system; I cannot look yet, for my case is not yet desperate enough; I could not hope to excite the pity of the Lord in my present condition, and therefore I must wait. I say, there was no need of such delay then and no use of it. Nor is there any more need or use for it in the sinner's case now.

We must look to Christ for blessings promised, not to works, but to faith. It is curious to see how many mistakes are made on this point. Many will have it that there must be great mental agony, long fasting, many bitter tears and strong crying for mercy before deliverance can be looked for. They do not seem to think that all these manifestations of grief and distress are of not the least avail, because they are not simple faith, nor any part of faith, nor indeed any help toward faith: nor are they in anywise needed for the make of acting on the sympathies of the Savior. It is all as if under the serpent-plague of the wilderness, men had set their wits at work to get up quack remedies; fixing up plasters, and ointments, and plying the system with depletions, cathartics, and purifiers of the blood. All this treatment could avail nothing; there was but one effective cure, and if a man were only bitten and knew it, this would be the only preparatory step necessary to his looking as directed for his cure.

So in the case of the sinner. If he is a sinner and knows it, this constitutes his preparation and fitness for coming to Jesus. It is all of no avail that he should go about to get up quack prescriptions, and to mix up remedies of his own devising with the great Remedy which God has provided. Yet there is a constant tendency in religious efforts toward this very thing toward fixing up and relying upon an indefinite multitude and variety of spiritual quack remedies. See that sinner. How he toils and agonizes. He would compass heaven and earth to work out his own salvation, in his own way, to his own credit, by his own works. See how he worries himself in the multitude of his own devisings! Commonly before he arrives at simple faith, he finds himself in the deep mire of despair. Alas, he cries, There can be no hope for me! O! my soul is lost!

But at last the gleam of a thought breaks through the thick darkness, “possibly Jesus can help me! If He can, then I shall live, but not otherwise, for surely there is no help for me but in Him.” There he is in his despair bowed in weariness of soul, and worn out with his vain endeavors to help himself in other ways. He now bethinks himself of help from above. “There is nothing else I can do but cast myself utterly in all my hopelessness upon Jesus Christ. Will He receive me? Perhaps He will; and that is enough for me to know.” He thinks on a little further, “Perhaps, yes, perhaps He will; nay, more, I think He will, for they tell me He has done so for other sinners. I think He will yes, I know He will and here’s my guilty heart! I will trust Him yea, though He slay me, I will trust in Him.”

Have any of you experienced anything like that?

“Perhaps He will admit my plea. Perhaps will hear my prayer.”

This is as far as the sinner can dare to go at first. But soon you hear him crying out He says He will; I must believe Him! Then faith gets hold and rests on promised faithfulness, and, ere he is aware, his “soul is like the chariots of Amminadab,” and he finds his bosom full of peace and joy as one on the borders of heaven.

## REMARKS

- 1.** When it is said in John 12., “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me,” the language is indeed universal in form, but cannot be construed as strictly universal without being brought into conflict with Bible truth and known facts. It is indeed only a common mode of speaking to denote a great multitude. I will draw great numbers a vast “multitude that no man can number.” There is nothing here in the context or in the subject to require the strictly universal interpretation.
- 2.** This expedient of the brazen serpent was no doubt designed to try the faith of the Israelites. God often put their faith to the test, and often adapted His providences to educate their faith to draw it out and develop it. Many things did He do to prove them. So now. They had sinned. Fiery serpents came among them and many were poisoned and dying on every hand. God said, Make a brazen serpent and set it upon a pole, and raise it high before the eyes of all the people. Now let the sufferers look on this serpent and they shall live. This put their faith to the test.
- 3.** It is conceivable that many perished through mere unbelief, although the provisions for their salvation were most abundant. We, look at a serpent of brass they might say scornfully as if there were not humbugs enough among the rabble, but Moses must give us yet another! Perhaps some set themselves to philosophizing on the matter. We, they say, will much sooner trust our tried physicians than these “old wives’ fables.” What philosophical connection can any man see between looking upon a piece of brass and being healed of a serpent’s bite?

So, many now blow at the gospel. They wonder how any healing power can come of Gospel faith. True, they hear some say they are healed, and that they know the healing power has gone to their very soul, and they cry, “I looked to Jesus and I was healed and made whole from that very hour.” But they count all this as mere fanatical delusion. They can see none of their philosophy in it.

But is this fanaticism? Is it any more strange than that a man bitten of poisonous serpents should be healed by looking at God’s command on a brazen serpent?

**4.** Many are stumbled by the simplicity of the Gospel. They want something more intelligible! They want to see through it. They will not trust what they cannot explain. It is on this ground that many stumble at the doctrine of sanctification by faith in Christ. It is so simple their philosophy cannot see through it.

Yet the analogy afforded in our text is complete. Men are to look to Jesus that they may not perish, but may have eternal life. And who does not know that eternal life involves entire sanctification?

**5.** The natural man always seeks for some way of salvation that shall be altogether creditable to himself. He wants to work out some form of self-righteousness and does not know about trusting in Christ alone. It does not seem to him natural or philosophical.

**6.** There is a wonderful and most alarming state of things in many churches abroad: almost no Christ in their experience. It is most manifest that He holds an exceedingly small space in their hearts. So far from knowing what salvation is as a thing to be attained by simply believing in Christ, they can only give you an experience of this sort. How did you become a Christian? I just made up my mind to serve the Lord. Is that all? That's all. Do you know what it is to receive eternal life by simply looking to Jesus? Don't know as I understand that. Then you are not a Christian. Christianity, from beginning to end, is received from Christ by simple faith. Thus, and only thus, does the pardon of sin come to the soul, and thus only can come that peace of God, passing all understanding, which lives in the soul with faith and love. Thus sanctification comes through faith in Christ.

What, then, shall we think of that religion which leaves Christ out of view?

Many are looking for some wonderful sign or token, not understanding that it is by faith they are to be brought completely into sympathy with Christ and into participation with His own life. By faith Christ unites them to Himself. Faith working by love, draws them into living union with His own moral being. All this is done by the mind's simply looking to Christ in faith.

When the serpent was up, no doubt many perished because they would not accept and act upon so simple a plan of remedy. Many perished because they did not and would not realize their danger. If they saw men

cured, they would say We don't believe it was done by the brazen serpent on the pole. Those men were not much poisoned would not have died anyhow. They assume that those who ascribe their cure to the power of God are mistaken.

Many perished also from delay. They waited to see whether they were in danger of dying. And still they waited till they were so bedizened and crazed, they could only lie down and die.

So now in regard to the Gospel. Some are occupied with other matters more important just now, and of course they must delay. Many are influenced by others' opinions. They hear many stories. Such a man looked and yet lost his life. Another man did not look and yet was saved. So men have different opinions about their professedly Christian neighbors, and this stumbles many. They hear that some set out strong for religion, but seem to fail. They looked as they thought, but all in vain. Perhaps it was so; for they might have looked without real faith. Some will philosophize till they make themselves believe it is all a delusion to look. They think they see many pretend to look and appear to look, who yet find no healing. Who can believe where there are so many stumbling-blocks?

These discouraging appearances drove some into despair in the wilderness, we may suppose; and certainly we see that the same causes produce these effects here in the case of sinners. Some think they have committed the unpardonable sin. They class themselves among those who "having been once enlightened," "there remains for them no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain looking for of vengeance and fiery indignation." Some are sure it is too late for them now. Their heart is hard as the nether mill-stone. All is dark and desolate as the grave. See him; his very look is that of a lost soul! Ah, some of you are perhaps reasoning and disbelieving in this very way!

Many neglected because they thought they were getting better. They saw some change of symptoms, as they supposed. So with sinners; they feel better for going to meeting, and indeed there is so much improvement, they take it they are undoubtedly doing well.

Many of the ancient Hebrews may have refused to look because they had no good hope; because, indeed, they were full of doubts. If you had been



there you would have found a great variety of conflicting views, often even between brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, parents and children. Some ridicule; some are mad; some wont believe anyhow. And must I say it some sinners who ought to be seeking Christ are deterred by reasons fully as frivolous and foolish as these.

It is easy for us all to see the analogy between the manner of looking and the reasons for not looking at the brazen serpent and to Christ the Savior. I need not push the analogy into its minute particulars any further. But the question for you all now is: Do you really believe that as "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so is the Son of man lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but shall have eternal life." Do you understand the simple remedy of faith? Perhaps you ask What were they to believe? This, that if they really looked at the brazen serpent on the pole, they should certainly experience the needed healing. It was God's certified remedy, and they were so to regard it. And what are you now to believe? That Christ is the great antitype of that serpent lifted up in the wilderness, and that you are to receive from Him by simple faith all the blessings of a full and free salvation. By simple faith, I say, and do you understand this? Do I hear you say to these things What, may I, a sinner, just fix my eye in simple faith on Jesus? Who who may do this? Is it I? How can it be that I should have this privilege?

I see here today the faces of some whom I saw last fall in the meetings for inquiry. What have you been doing? Have you been trying to work yourselves into some certain state of mind? Are you wishing intensely that you could only feel so and so according to some ideal you have in your mind? Do you understand that you are really to look by faith, and let this look of faith be to you as the touch of the poor woman with an issue of blood was to her dying body, believing that if you look in simple trust He surely will receive you, and give you His divine love and peace and life and light, and really make them pulsate through your whole moral being? Do you believe it? Nay, don't you see that you do not believe it? Oh, but you say, "It is a great mystery!" I am not going to explain it, nor shall I presume that I can do so, any more than I can explain how that woman was healed by touching the hem of the Savior's garment. The touch in this case and the looking in that, are only the means, the media, by which the power is to be received. The manner in which God operates is a thing of

small consequence to us; let us be satisfied that we know what we must do to secure the operations of His divine Spirit in all things that pertain to life and godliness.

You have doubtless had confused notions of the way of salvation, perhaps contriving and speculating, and working upon your own feelings. Now you pray, and having prayed, you say, Now let me watch and see if this prayer has given me salvation! This course is much as if the Hebrew people when bitten by serpents and commanded to look to the serpent of brass, had gone about to apply here a plaster, there a blister, and then a probe, all the time losing sight of just that one thing which God told them would infallibly cure. Oh! why should men forget, and why not understand that all good needed by us comes from God to simple faith? When we see any want, there is Christ, to be received by faith alone; and His promises leave no want unprovided for.

Now, if this is the way of salvation, how wonderful that sinners should look every other way but toward Christ, and should put forth all other sorts of effort except the effort to look at once in simple faith to their Savior! How often do we see them discouraged and confounded, toiling so hard and so utterly in vain. No wonder they should be so greatly misled. Go round among the churches and ask. Did you ever expect to be saved from sin in this world? No; but you expect to be saved at death. Inasmuch as He has been quite unsuccessful in His efforts to sanctify your soul during your life, you think He will send death on in season to help the work through!

Can you believe this?

While Christians disown the glorious doctrine of sanctification by faith in Christ, present, and according to each man's faith so done to him. it cannot be expected that they will teach sinners with intelligible clearness how to look to Christ in simple faith for pardon. Knowing so little of the power of faith in their own experience, how can they teach others effectively, or even truthfully? Thus blind leading blind, it is no wonder that both are found together where the Bible proverb represents both the leaders and the led as terminating their mutual relations,

There seems to be no remedy for such a finality except for professing Christians to become the light of the world; and for this end, to learn the meaning and know the experience of simple faith. Faith once learned, they will experience its transforming power, and be able to teach others the way of life.

# THE EXCUSES OF SINNERS CONDEMN GOD

*“Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” — Job 40:8.*

ALTHOUGH in the main, Job had spoken correctly of God, yet in his great anguish and perturbation under his sore trials, he had said some things which were hasty and abusive. For these the Lord rebuked him. This rebuke is contained in our context:

“Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct Him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.

“Then Job answered the Lord, and said Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.

“Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said Gird up thy loins now like a man; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?” Job 40:1-8

It is not, however, my object to discuss the original purpose and connection of these words, but rather to consider their present application to the case of sinners. In pursuing this object, I shall

- I. SHOW THAT EVERY EXCUSE FOR SIN CONDEMNS GOD.**
- II. CONSIDER SOME OF THESE EXCUSES IN DETAIL.**
- III. SHOW THAT EXCUSE FOR SIN ADDS INSULT TO INJURY.**

## I. EVERY EXCUSE FOR SIN CONDEMNS GOD

This will be apparent if we consider,

**1.** That nothing can be sin for which there is a justifiable excuse.

This is entirely self-evident. It therefore needs neither elucidation nor proof.

**2.** If God condemns that for which there is a good excuse, He must be wrong. This also is self-evident. If God condemns what we have good reason for doing, no intelligence in the universe can justify Him.

**3.** But God does condemn all sin. He condemns it utterly, and will not allow the least apology or excuse for it. Hence, either there is no apology for it, or God is wrong.

**4.** Consequently, every excuse for sin charges blame upon God, and virtually accuses Him of tyranny. Whoever pleads an excuse for sin, therefore, charges God with blame.

## II. WE WILL CONSIDER SOME OF THESE EXCUSES,

and see whether the principles I have laid down are not just and true.

**1. INABILITY.** No excuse is more common. It is echoed and re-echoed over every Christian land, and handed down age after age, never to be forgotten. With unblushing face it is proclaimed that men cannot do what God requires of them.

Let us examine this and see what it amounts to God, it is said, requires what men cannot do. And does He know that men cannot, do it? Most certainly. Then He has no apology for requiring it, and the requisition is most unreasonable. Human reason can never justify it. It is a natural impossibility.

But again, upon what penalty does God require what man cannot do? The threatened penalty is eternal death! Yes, eternal death, according to the

views of those who plead inability as an excuse. God requires me, on pain of eternal death, to do that which He knows I cannot do. Truly this condemns God in the worst sense. You might just as well charge God outright with being an infinite tyrant.

Moreover, it is not for us to say whether on these conditions we shall or shall not charge God with infinite tyranny, for we cannot help it. The law of our reason demands it.

Hence, those who plant themselves upon these grounds charge God with infinite tyranny. Perhaps, sinner, you little think when you urge the excuse of inability, that you are really arraigning God on the charge of infinite tyranny. And you, Christian, who make this dogma of inability a part of your "orthodox" creed, may have little noticed its blasphemous hearings against the character of God; but your failure to notice it alters not the fact. The black charge is involved in the very doctrine of inability, and cannot be explained out of it.

I have intimated that this charge is blasphemous against, God and most truly. Far be it from God to do any such thing! Shall God require natural impossibilities, and denounce eternal death upon men for not doing what they have no natural power to do? Never! Yet good men and bad men agree together to charge God with doing this very thing, and doing it not once or twice only, but uniformly through all ages, with all the race, from the beginning to the end of time! Horrible! Nothing in all the government of God ever so insulted and abused Jehovah! Nothing was ever more blasphemous and false! God says, "his commandments are not grievous;" but you, by this excuse of inability, proclaim that God's words are false. You declare that His commands are not only grievous, but are even naturally impossible! Hark! what does the Lord Jesus say? "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." And do you deny this? Do you rise up in the very face of His words and say, "Lord, Thy yoke is so hard that no man can possibly endure it; Thy burden is so heavy that no man can ever bear it?" Is not this gainsaying and blaspheming Him who can not lie?

But you take the ground that no man can obey the law of God. As the Presbyterian Confession of Faith has it, "No man is able, either by himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and

deed.” Observe, this affirms not only that no man is naturally able to keep God’s commands, but also that no man is able to do it “by any grace received in this life;” thus making this declaration a libel on the Gospel as well as a palpable misrepresentation of the law of its Author, and of man’s relations to both. It is only moderate language to call this assertion from the Confession of Faith a libel. If there is a lie, either in hell or out of hell, this is a lie, or God is an infinite tyrant. If reason be allowed to speak at all, it is impossible for her to say less or otherwise than thus. And has not God constituted the reason of man for the very purpose of taking cognizance of the rectitude of all his ways?

Let God be true though every man be proved a liar! In the present case, the remarkable fact that no man can appease his own conscience and satisfy himself that he is truly unable to keep the law, shows that man lies, not God.

**2.** A second excuse which sinners make is want of time.

Suppose I tell one of my sons, “Go, do this or that duty, on pain of being whipped to death.” He replies, “Father, I can’t possibly do it, for I have not time.

I must be doing that other business which you told me to do; and besides, if I had nothing else to do, I could not possibly do this new business in the time you allow.” Now if this statement be the truth, and I knew it when I gave him the command, then I am a tyrant. There is no evading this charge. My conduct toward my son is downright tyranny.

So if God really requires of you what you have not time to do, He is infinitely to blame. For He surely knows how little time you have, and it is undeniable that He enforces His requisitions with most terrific penalties. What! is God so reckless of justice, so regardless of the well-being of His creatures, that He can sport with red-hot thunder-bolts, and burl them, despite of justice and right, among His unfortunate creatures? Never! NEVER! This is not true; it is only the false assumption which the sinner makes when he pleads as his excuse, that he has not time to do what God demands of him.

Let me ask you, sinner, how much time will it take you to do the first great duty which God requires namely, give Him your heart? How long will this

take? How long need you be in making up your mind to serve and love God? Do you not know that this, when done, will be done in one moment of time? And how long need you be in persuading yourself to do it?

Your meaning may be this: Lord, it takes me so long to make up my mind to serve thee, it seems as if I never should get time enough for this; even the whole of life seems almost too short for me to bring my mind to this unwelcome decision. Is this your meaning, sinner?

But let us look on all sides of the subject. Suppose I say to my son, "Do this now, my son;" and he replies, "I can't, father, for I must do that other thing you told me to do." Does God do so? No. God only requires the duty of each moment in its time. This is all. He only asks us to use faithfully just all the power He has given us nothing more. He only requires that we do the best we can. When He prescribes the amount of love which will please Him, He does not say Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with the powers of an angel with the burning heart of a seraph no, but only "with all thy heart" this is all. An infinitely ridiculous plea is this of the sinner's, that he can not do as well as he can not love God with all his own heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. Thou shalt do the best that thou art able to do, says God to the sinner. Ah, says the sinner, I am not able to do that. Oh, what stupid nonsense!

You charge that God is unreasonable. The truth is, God is the most reasonable of all beings. He asks only that we should use each moment for Him, in labor, or in rest, whichever is most for His glory. He only requires that with the time, talents, and strength which He has given us, we should do all we can. to serve Him.

Says that mother, "How can I be religious? I have to take care of all my children." Indeed! and can't you get time to serve God? What does God require of you? That you should forsake and neglect your children? No, indeed; He asks you to take care of your children good care of them; and do it all for God. He says to you Those are my children; and He puts them into your hands, saying Take care of them for Me, and I will give thee wages. And now will it require more time to take care of your children for God, than to take care of them for yourself? O, but you say, I cannot be religious, for I must be up in the morning and get my breakfast. And how much longer will it take you to get your breakfast ready to please God,



than to do the same to please yourself? How much longer time must you have to do your duties religiously, than to do them selfishly?

What, then, do you mean by this plea? The fact is, all these excuses show that the excuser is mad not insane, but mad. For what does God require so great that you should be unable to do it for want of time? Only this, that you should do all for God.

Persons who make this plea seem to have entirely overlooked the real nature of religion, and of the requisitions that God makes of them. So it is with the plea of inability. The sinner says, I am unable." Unable to do what? Just what you can do for God never requires anything beyond this. Unless, therefore, you assume that God requires of you more than you can do, your plea is false, and even ridiculous. If, on the other hand, you do not assume this, then your plea, if true, would not show God to be unjust.

But I was saying that in this plea of having no time to be religious, men entirely overlook or pervert the true idea of religion. The farmer pleads, "I can't be religious; I can't serve God I must sow my wheat." Well, sow your wheat but do it for the Lord. O but you have so much to do! Then do it all for the Lord. Another can't be religious for he must get his lesson. Well, get your lesson, but get it for the Lord, and this will be religious. The man who should neglect to sow his wheat or neglect to get his lessons because he wants to be religious, is crazy. He perverts the plainest things in the worst way. If you are to be religious, you must be industrious. The farmer must sow his wheat, and the student must get his lesson. An idle man can no more be religious than the devil can be. This notion that men can't be religious, because they have some business to do, is the merest nonsense. It utterly overlooks the great truth that God never forbids our doing the appropriate business of life, but only requires that we shall do all for Himself. If God did require us to serve Him in such a way as would compel us to neglect the practical duties of life, it would be truly a hard case. But now the whole truth is, that He requires us to do precisely these duties, and do them all honestly and faithfully for Him, and in the best possible manner. Let the farmer take care of his farm, and see that he does it well, and above all, do it for God. It is God's farm, and the heart of every farmer is God's heart, therefore let the farm be tilled for God, and the heart be devoted to Him alone.

**3.** Men plead a sinful nature for their excuse. And pray, what is this sinful nature? Do you mean by it that every faculty and even the very essence of your constitution were poisoned and made sinful in Adam, and came down in this polluted state by inheritance to you? Do you mean that you were so born in sin that the substance of your being is all saturated with it, and so that all the faculties of your constitution are themselves sin? Do you believe this?

I admit if this were true, it would make out a hard case. A hard case indeed! Until the laws of my reason are changed, it would compel me to speak out openly and say Lord, this is a hard case, that Thou shouldst make my nature itself a sinner, and then charge the guilt of its sin upon me! I could not help saying this; the deep echoings of my inner being would proclaim it without ceasing, and the breaking of ten thousand thunderbolts over my head would not deter me from thinking and saying so. The reason God has given me would forever affirm it.

But the dogma is an utter absurdity. For, pray, what is sin? God answers, "transgression of law." And now you hold that your nature is itself a breach of the law of God nay, that it has always been a breach of God's law, from Adam to the day of your birth; you hold that the current of this sin came down in the veins and blood of your race and who made it so? Who created the veins and blood of man? From whose hand sprang this physical constitution and this mental constitution? Was man his own creator? Did sin do a part of the work in creating your physical and your mental constitution? Do you believe any such thing? No you ascribe your nature and its original faculties to God, and upon Him, therefore, you charge the guilty authorship of your sinful nature."

But how strange a thing is this! If man is in fault for his sinful nature, why not condemn man for having blue or black eyes? The fact is, sin never can consist in having a nature, nor in what nature is; but only and alone in the bad use which we make of our nature. This is all. Our Maker will never find fault with us for what He has Himself done or made; certainly not.

He will not condemn us, if we will only make a right use of our powers of our intellect, our sensibility, and our will. He never holds us responsible for our original nature. If you will observe, you will find that God has given no law prescribing what sort of nature and constitutional powers we

should have. He has given no law on these points, the transgression of which, if given, might somewhat resemble the definition of sin. But now since there is no law about nature, nature cannot be a transgression.

Here let me say, that if God were to make a law prescribing what nature or constitution a man must have, it could not possible be otherwise than unjust and absurd, for the reason that man's nature is not a proper subject for legislation, precept, and penalty, inasmuch as it lies entirely without the pale of voluntary action, or of any action of man at all. And yet thousands of men have held the dogma that sin consists in great part in having a sinful nature. Yes, through long ages of past history, grave theologians have gravely taught this monstrous dogma; it has resounded from pulpits, and has been stereotyped for the press, and men have seemed to be never weary of glorifying this dogma as the surest test of sound orthodoxy! Orthodoxy!! There never was a more infamous libel on Jehovah! It would be hard to name another dogma which more violently outrages common sense. it is nonsense absurd and utter NONSENSE! I would to God that it were not even worse than nonsense! Think what mischief it has wrought! Think how it has scandalized the law, the government, and the character of God! Think how it has filled the mouths of sinners with excuses from the day of its birth to this hour

Now I do not mean to imply that the men who have held this dogma have intelligently insulted God with it. I do not imply that they have been aware of the impious and even blasphemous bearings of this dogma upon Jehovah: I am happy to think that some at least have done all this mischief ignorantly. But the blunder and the mischief have been none the less for the honest ignorance in which they were done.

**4.** Sinners, in self-excuse, say they are willing to be Christians. They are willing, they say, to be sanctified. O yes, they are very willing; but there is some great difficulty lying further back or something else perhaps they do not know just where but it is somewhere, and it will not let them become Christians.

Now the fact is, if we are really willing, there is nothing more which we can do. Willing is all we have to do morally in the case, and all we can do. But the plea, as in the sinner's mouth, maintains that God requires of us what is naturally impossible. It assumes that God requires of us something

more than right willing; and this, be it what it may, is, of course, to us, an impossibility. If I will to move my muscles, and no motion follows, I have done all I can do; there is a difficulty beyond my reach, and I am in no blame for its existence, or for its impediment. Just so, if I were to will to serve God, and absolutely no effect should follow, I have done my utmost, and God never can demand anything more. In fact, to will is the very thing which God does require. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted." Do tell me, parent, if you had told your child to do anything, and you saw him exerting himself to the utmost, would you ask anything more? If you should see a parent demanding and enforcing of a child more than he could possibly do, however willing, would you not denounce that parent as a tyrant? Certainly you would. The slave-driver, even, is not wont to beat his slave, if he sees him willing to do all he can.

This plea is utterly false, for no sinner is willing to be any better than he actually is. If the will is right, all is right; and universally the state of the will is the measure of one's moral character. Those men, therefore, who plead that they are willing to be Christians while yet they remain in their sins, talk mere nonsense.

**5.** Sinners say they are waiting God's time. A lady in Philadelphia had been in great distress of mind for many years. On calling to see her, I asked, "What does God require of you? What is your case?" "Oh," said she,

God waited on me a long time before I began to seek Him at all, and now I must wait for Him as long as He did for me.

So my minister tells me. You see, therefore, that I am waiting in great distress for God to receive me."

Now what is the real meaning of this? It comes to this; God urges me to duty, but is not ready for me to do it; He tells me to come to the Gospel feast, and I am ready; but He is not ready to let me in.

Now does not this throw all the blame upon God? Could anything do so more completely than this does? The sinner says, "I am ready, and willing, and waiting; but God is not yet ready for me to stop sinning. His hour has not yet come.

When I first began to preach, I found this notion almost universal. Often, after pressing men to duty, I have been accosted, "What, you throw all the blame upon the sinner!" "Yes, indeed I do," would be my reply. An old lady once met me after preaching and broke out, "What! you set men to getting religion themselves! You tell them to repent themselves? You don't mean so, do you? Indeed I do," said I. She had been teaching for many years that the sinner's chief duty is to await God's time.

**6.** Sinners plead in excuse, that their circumstances are very peculiar. I know my duty well enough, but my circumstances are so peculiar. And does not God understand your circumstances? Nay, has not His providence been concerned in making them what they are? If so, then you are throwing blame upon God. You say, "O Lord, Thou art a hard master, for Thou hast never made any allowance for my circumstances."

But how much, sinner, do you really mean in making this plea? Do you mean that your circumstances are so peculiar that God ought to excuse you from becoming religious, at least for the present? If you do not mean as much as this, why do you make your circumstances your excuse at all? If you do mean this, then you are just as much mistaken as you can be. For God requires you, despite of your circumstances, to abandon your sin. If, now, your circumstances are so peculiar that you cannot serve God in them, you must abandon them or lose your soul. If they are such as admit of your serving God in them, then do so at once.

But you say, "I can't get out of my circumstances." I reply, You can; you can get out of the wickedness of them; for if it is necessary in order to serve God, you can change them; and if not, you can repent and serve God in them.

**7.** The sinner's next excuse is that his temperament is peculiar. "Oh," he says, I am very nervous; or my temperament is very sluggish I seem to have no sensibility." Now what does God require? Does He require of you another or a different sensibility from your own? Or does He require only that you should use what you have according to the law of love?

But such is the style of a multitude of excuses. One has too little excitement; another, too much; so neither can possibly repent and serve

God! A woman came to me, and pleaded that she was naturally too excitable, and dared not trust herself; and therefore could not repent.

Another has the opposite, trouble too sluggish scarce ever sheds a tear and therefore could make nothing out of religion if he should try. But does God require you to shed more tears than you are naturally able to shed? Or does He only require that you should serve Him? Certainly this is all. Serve Him with the very powers He has given you. Let your nerves be ever so excitable, come and lay those quivering sensibilities over into the hands of God pour out that sensibility into the heart of God! This is all that He requires. I know how to sympathize with that woman, for I know much about a burning sensibility; but does God require feeling and excitement? Or only a perfect consecration of all our powers to Himself?

**8.** But, says another, my health is so poor that I can't go to meeting, and therefore can't be religious.

Well, what does God require? Does He require that you should go to all the meetings, by evening or by day, whether you have the requisite health for it or not? Infinitely far from it. If you are not able to go to meeting, yet you can give God your heart. If you can not go in bad weather, be assured that God is infinitely the most reasonable being that ever existed. He makes all due allowance for every circumstance. Does He not know all your weakness? Indeed He does. And do you suppose that He comes into your sickroom and denounces you for not being able to go to meeting, or for not attempting when unable, and for not doing all in your sickness that you might do in health? No, not He; but He comes into your sick-room as a Father. He comes to pour out the deepest compassions of His heart in pity and in love; and why should you not respond to His loving-kindness? He comes to you and says, "Give me your heart, my child." And now you reply, "I have no heart." Then He has nothing to ask of you He thought you had; and thought, too, that He had done enough to draw your heart in love and gratitude to Himself He asks, "What can you find in all my dealings with you that is grievous? If nothing, why do you bring forward pleas in excuse for sin that accuse and condemn God?"

**9.** Another excuse is in this form, "My heart is so hard, that I can not feel." This is very common, both among professors and non- professors. In reality it is only another form of the plea of inability. In fact, all the

sinner's excuses amount only to this, "I am unable", "I can't do what God requires." If the plea of a hard heart is any excuse at all, it must be on the ground of real inability.

But what is hardness of heart? Do you mean that you have so great apathy of the sensibility that you can not get up any emotion? Or, do you mean that you have no power to will or to act right? Now on this point, it should be considered that the emotions are altogether involuntary.

They go and come according to circumstances, and therefore are never required by the law of God, and are not, properly speaking, either religion itself, or any part of it. Hence, if by a hard heart you mean a dull sensibility, you mean what has no concern with the subject. God asks you to yield your will, and consecrate your affections to Himself, and He asks this, whether you have any feeling or not.

Real hardness of heart, in the Bible use of the phrase, means stubbornness of will. So in the child, a hard heart means a will set in fixed stubbornness against doing its parent's bidding. The child may have in connection with this, either much or little emotion. His sensibilities may be acute and thoroughly aroused, or they may be dormant; and yet the stubborn will may be there in either case.

Now the hardness of heart of which God complains in the sinner is precisely of this sort. The sinner cleaves to his self-indulgence, and will not relinquish it, and then complains of hardness of heart. What would you think of a child, who, when required to do a most reasonable thing, should say, "My heart is so hard, I can't yield." "O," he says, "my will is so set to have my own way that I cannot possibly yield to my father's authority."

This complaint is extremely common. Many a sinner makes it, who has been often warned, often prayed with and wept over, who has been the subject of many convictions. And does he really mean by this plea that he finds his will so obstinate that he can not make up his mind to yield to God's claims? Does he mean this, and does he intend really to publish his own shame? Suppose you go to the devils in hell, and press on them the claims of God, and they should reply, "O, my heart is so hard, I can't" what would be their meaning? Only this: I am so obstinate my will is so

set in sin, that I can not for a moment indulge the thought of repentance. This would be their meaning, and if the sinner tells the truth of himself, and uses language correctly, he must mean the same. But oh, how does he add insult to injury by this declaration! Suppose a child should plead this I can not find it in my heart to love my father and my mother; my heart is so hard towards them; I never can love them; I can feel pleasure only in abusing them, and trampling down their authority. What a plea is this? Does not this heap insult upon wrong? Or suppose a murderer arraigned before the court, and permitted before his sentence to speak, if he had ought to say why sentence should not be passed: suppose he should rise and say, "May it please the court, my heart for a long time has been as hard as a millstone. I have murdered so many men, and have been in the practice so long, that I can kill a man without the least compunction of conscience. Indeed, I have such an insatiable thirst for blood that I can not help murdering whenever I have a good opportunity. In fact, my heart is so bard that I find I like this employment full as well as any other."

Well, how long will the court listen to such a plea? "Hold there! hold!" the judge would cry, "you infamous villain, we can hear no more such pleas! Here, sheriff, bring in a gallows, and hang the man within these very walls of justice, for I will not leave the bench until I see him dead! He will murder us all here in this house if he can!"

Now what shall we think of the sinner who says the same thing? O God, he says, my heart is so hard I never can love Thee. I hate Thee so sincerely I never can make up my mind to yield this heart to Thee in love and willing submission.

Sinners, how many of you (in this house) have made this plea, "My heart is so hard, I can't repent. I can't love and serve God!" Go write it down; publish it to the universe make your boast of being so hard-hearted that no claims of God can ever move you. Methinks if you were to make such a plea, you would not be half through before the whole universe would hiss you from their presence and chase you from the face of these heavens till you would cry out for some rocks or mountains to hide you from their scathing rebukes! Their voice of indignation would rise up and ring along the arch of heaven like the roar of ten thousand tornadoes, and overwhelm you with unutterable confusion and shame! What, do you insult and abuse the



Great Jehovah? Oh! do you condemn that very God who has watched over you in unspeakable love fanned you with His gentle zephyrs in your sickness feasted you at His own table, and you would not thank Him, or even notice His providing hand? And then when the sympathy of your Christian friends has pressed you with entreaties to repent, and they have made you a special subject of their prayers when angels have wept over you, and unseen spirits have lifted their warning voices in your pathway to hell you turn up your face of brass towards Jehovah, and tell Him your heart is so hard you can't repent, and don't care whether you ever do or not! You seize a spear and plunge it into the heart of the crucified One, and then cry out, "I can't be sorry, not I; my heart is hard as a stone! I don't care, and I will not repent What a wretch you are, sinner, if this is your plea.

But what does your plea amount to? Only this that your heart is fully set to do evil. The sacred writer has revealed your case most clearly, "Because vengeance against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." You stand before the Lord just in this daring, blasphemous attitude fully set in your heart to do evil.

**10.** Another form of the same plea is, My heart is so wicked

I can't. Some do not hesitate to avow this wickedness of heart. What do they mean by it? Do they mean that they are so hardened in sin, and so desperately wicked, that they will not bow? This is the only proper sense of their language, and this is the precise truth.

Since you bring this forward, sinner, as your excuse, your object must be to charge this wickedness of heart upon God. Covertly, perhaps, but really, you imply that God is concerned in creating that wicked heart! This is it, and this is the whole of it. You would feel no interest in the excuse, and it would never escape your lips but for this tacit implication that God is in fault for your wicked heart. This is only the plea of inability, coupled with its twin sister, original sin, coming down in the created blood and veins of the race, under the Creator's responsibility.

**11.** Another kindred plea is My heart is so deceitful. Suppose a man should make this excuse for deceiving his neighbor, "I can't help cheating

you. I can't help lying to you and abusing you; my heart is so deceitful! "Would any man in his senses ever suppose that this could be an apology or excuse for doing wrong? Never. Of course, unless the sinner means in this plea to set forth his own guilt and condemn himself, he must intend it as some sort of justification; and, if so, he must, in just so far, cast the blame upon God. And this is usually his intention. He does not mean sincerely to confess his own guilt; no, he charges the guilt of his deceitful heart upon God.

**12.** Another excuses himself by the plea, I have tried to become a Christian. I have done all I can do; I have tried often, earnestly, and long.

You have tried, then, you say, to be a Christian; what is being a Christian? Giving your heart to God. And what is giving your heart to God? Devoting your voluntary powers to Him; ceasing to live for yourself and living for God. This is being a Christian the state you profess to have been trying to attain.

No excuse is more common than this. And what is legitimately implied in this trying to be a Christian. A willingness to do your duty is always implied; that the heart, that is, the will is right already; and the trying refers only to the such a God! Why not say with the man who dreamed that he was just going to hell, and as he was parting with his brother going, as his dream had it, to heaven, he said, "I am going down to hell, but I want you to tell God from me that I am greatly obliged to Him for ten thousand mercies which I never deserved; He has never done me the least injustice; give Him my thanks for all the unmerited good He has done me." At this point he awoke, and found himself bathed in tears of repentance and gratitude to his Father in heaven. O, if men would only act as reasonably as that man dreamed, it would be noble it would be right. If, when they suppose themselves to have sinned away the day of grace, they would say, "I know God is good I will at least send Him my thanks He has done me no injustice." If they would take this course they might have at least the satisfaction of feeling that it is a reasonable and a fit one in their circumstances. Sinner, will you do this?

**14.** Another, closely pressed, says, "I have offered to give my heart to Christ, but He won't receive me. I have no evidence that He receives me or ever will." In the last inquiry meeting, a young woman told me she had

offered to give her heart to the Lord, but He would not receive her. This was charging the lie directly upon Christ, for He has said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." You say, I came and offered myself, and He would not receive me. Jesus Christ says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man" not if some particular, some favored one but if any man "hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." And yet when you offered Him your heart, did He spurn you away? Did He say Away, sinner, BEGONE? No, sinner, He never did it, never. He has said He never would do it. His own words are, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." "He that seeketh, findeth: to him that knocketh it shall be opened." But you say, I have sought and I did not find. Do you mean to make out that Jesus Christ is a liar?

Have you charged this upon Him to His very face? Do you make your solemn affirmation, "Lord, I did seek I laid myself at Thy gate and knocked but all in vain?" And do you mean to bring this excuse of yours as a solemn charge of falsehood against Jesus Christ and against God? This will be a serious business with you before it is done with.

**15.** But another says, "There is no salvation for me." Do you mean that Christ has made no atonement for you? But he says, He tasted death for every man. It is declared that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whomsoever believeth on Him shall have eternal life. And now do you affirm that there is no salvation provided and possible for you,? Are you mourning all your way down to hell because you cannot possibly have salvation? When the cup of salvation is placed to your lips, do you dash it away, saying, That cannot be for me? And do you know this? Can you prove it even against the word of God Himself? Stand forth, then, if there be such a sinner on this footstool of God speak it out, if you have such a charge against God, and if you can prove it true. Ah, is there no hope? none at all? Oh, the difficulty is not that there is no salvation provided for and offered to you, but that there is no heart for it. "Wherefore is there a price put into the hands of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart for it?"

**16.** But perhaps you say in excuse, "I cannot change my own heart." Cannot? Suppose Adam had made this excuse when God called him to repent after his first sin. "Make you a new heart and a right spirit," said

the Lord to him. "I cannot change my own heart myself," replies Adam. Indeed, responds his Maker, how long is it since you changed your heart yourself? You changed it a few hours ago from holiness to sin, and will you tell your Creator that you can't change it from sin to holiness?

The sinner should consider that the change of heart is a voluntary thing. You must do it for yourself or it is never done. True, there is a sense in which God changes the heart, but it is only this: God influences the sinner to change, and then the sinner does it. The change is the sinner's own voluntary act.

**17.** You say, again, you can't change your heart without more conviction. Do you mean by this that you have not knowledge enough of your duty and your sin? You cannot say this. You do know your sin and your duty. You know you ought to consecrate yourself to God. What, then, do you mean? Can't you do that which you know you ought to do? Ah, there is the old lie that shameless refuge of lies that same foul dogma of inability. What is implied in this new form of it? This that God is not willing to convict you enough to make it possible for you to repent. There is a work and a responsibility for God, and He will not do His work will not bear His responsibility. Hence, you, alas, have no alternative but to go down to hell. And because God will not do His part towards your salvation! Do you really believe that, sinner.

**18.** Again, you say in excuse, that you must first have more of the Spirit. And yet you resist the Spirit every day. God offers you His Spirit, nay, more, God bestows His Spirit but you resist it. What, then, do you mean when you pretend to want more of the Spirit's influence?

The truth is, you do not want it you only want to make it appear that God does not do His part to help you to repent, and that as you can't repent without His help, therefore the blame of your impenitence rests on God. It is only another refuge of lies another form of the old slander upon God He has made me unable and won't help me out of my inability.

**19.** The sinner also excuses himself by saying God must change my heart. But in the sense in which God requires you to do it, He cannot do it Himself God is said to change the heart only in the sense of persuading you to do it.

As in a man's change of politics, one might say, "Such a man changed my heart he brought me over," which, however, by no means implies that you did not change your own mind. The plain meaning is that he persuaded, and you yielded.

But this plea made by the sinner as his excuse implies that there is something more for God to do before the sinner can become religious. I have heard many professors of religion take this very ground. Yes, thousands of Christian ministers, too, have said to the sinner, "Wait for God He will change your heart in His own good time; you can't do it yourself, and all that you can do is to put yourself in the way for the Lord to change your heart. When this time comes, He will give you a new heart, while you are asleep, perhaps, in a state of unconsciousness. God acts in this matter as a sovereign, and does His own work in His own way.

So they teach filling the mouth of the sinner with excuses and making his heart like an adamant against the real claims of God upon his conscience.

**20.** The sinner pleads, again "I can't live a Christian life if I were to become a Christian. It is unreasonable for me to expect to succeed where I see so many fail." I recollect the case of a man who said, "It is of no use for me to repent and be a Christian, for it is altogether irrational for me to expect to do better than others have done before me." So sinners who make this excuse come forward very modestly and tell God, "I am very humble; Thou seest, Lord, that I have a very low opinion of myself; I am so zealous of Thine honor, and so afraid that I shall bring disgrace upon Thy cause; it does not seem at all best for me to think of becoming a Christian, I have such a horror of dishonoring Thy name.

Yes; and what then? "Therefore, I will sin on and trample the blessed Gospel under my feet. I will persecute Thee, O my God, and make war on Thy cause, for it is better by far not to profess religion than to profess and then disgrace my profession." What logic! Fair specimen of the absurdity of the sinner's excuses.

This excuse assumes that there is not grace enough provided and offered to sustain the soul in a Christian life. The doctrine is, that it is irrational to expect that we can, by any grace received in this life, perfectly obey the law of God. There is not. grace and help enough afforded by God! And

this is taught as BIBLE THEOLOGY! Away with such teaching to the nether pit whence it came!

What! is God so weak that He can't hold up the soul that casts itself on Him? Or is He so parsimonious in bestowing His gracious aid that it must be expected always to fall short of meeting the wants of His dependent and depending child? So you seem to suppose. So hard to persuade the Lord to give you a particle of grace Can't get grace enough to live a Christian life with honor What is this but charging God of withholding sufficient grace.

But what say the word and the oath of Jehovah? We read that "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." You say, however, "If I should flee and lay hold of this hope I should fail for want of grace. I could have no 'consolation' in reposing upon the word of Him who cannot lie. The oath of the immutable God can never suffice for me."

So you belie the word of God, and make up a miserably slim and guilty apology for your impenitence.

**21.** Another excuse claims that this is a very dark, mysterious subject. This matter of faith and regeneration I can't understand it.

Sinner, did you ever meet the Lord with this objection, and say, "Lord, Thou hast required me to do things which I can't understand?" You know that you can understand well enough that you are a sinner that Christ died for you that you must believe on Him and break off your sins by repentance. All this is so plain that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." Your plea, therefore, is as false as it is foul. It is nothing better than a base libel on God!

**22.** But you say, "I can't believe." You mean (do you?) that you can't believe a God of infinite veracity as you can believe a fellow man? Would you imply that God asks you to believe things that are really incredible things so revolting to reason that you cannot admit them on any testimony that even God himself can adduce?

And do you expect to make out this case against God? Do you even believe the first point in it yourself?

But you urge again that you can't realize these things. You know these things to be true, but you can't realize you can't realize that the Bible is true that God does offer to forgive that salvation is actually provided and placed within your reach. What help can there be for a case like yours? What can make these truths more certain? But, on your own showing, you do not want more evidence. Why not, then, act upon the known truth? What more can you ask?

Do you ever carry your case before God and say, "O Lord, Thou sayest that Christ died for me, but I can't realize that it is so; and, therefore, Lord, I can't possibly embrace Him as my Savior?" Would this be a rational excuse?

But you also plead that you can't repent. You can't be sorry you have abused God. You can't make up your mind now to break off from all sin. If this be really so, then you cannot make up your mind to obey God, and you may as well make up your mind to go to hell! There is no alternative!

But at any rate, you can't become a Christian now. You mean to be converted some time, but you can't make up your mind to it Now. Well, God requires it now, and of course you must yield or abide the consequences.

But do you say, You can't now? Then God is very much to blame for asking it. If, however, the truth be that you can, then the lie is on your side, and it is a most infamous and abusive lie against your Maker.

### III. ALL EXCUSES FOR SIN ADD INSULT TO INJURY

**1.** A plea that reflects injuriously upon the court or the lawgiver is an aggravation of the original crime. It is always so regarded in all tribunals. It must be pre-eminently so between the sinner and his infinite Lawgiver and Judge.

**2.** The same is true of any plea made in self-justification. If it be false, it is considered an aggravation of the crime charged. This is a case which sometimes happens, and whenever it does, it is deemed to add fresh insult and wrong. For a criminal to come and spread out his lie upon the records of the court to declare what he knows to be false; nothing can prejudice his case so fearfully.

On the other hand, when a man before the court appears to be honest, and confesses his guilt, the judge, if he has any discretion in the case, puts down his sentence to the lowest point possible.

But if the criminal resorts to dodging if he equivocates and lies, then you will see the strong arm of the law come down upon him. The judge comes forth in all the thunders of judicial majesty and terror, and feels that he may not spare his victim. Why? The man has lied before the very court of justice. The man sets himself against all law, and he must be put down, or law itself is down.

**3.** It is truly abominable for the sinner to abuse God, and then excuse himself for it. Ah, this is only the old way of the guilty. Adam and Eve in the garden fled and hid themselves when they heard the voice of the Lord approaching. And what had they done? The Lord calls them out and begins to search them: "Adam, what hast thou done? Has thou eaten of the forbidden tree in the center of the garden?" Adam quailed, but fled to an excuse: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." God, he says, gave him his tempter. God, according to his excuse, had been chiefly to blame in the transaction.

Next He turns to the woman: "What is that thou hast done?" She, too, has an excuse: "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." Ah, this perpetual shuffling the blame back upon God! It has been kept up through the long line of Adam's imitators down to this day. For six thousand years God has been hearing it, and still the world is spared, and the vengeance of God has not yet burst forth to smite all His guilty calumniators to hell! O! what patience in God! And who have ever abused His patience and insulted Him by their excuses more than sinners in this house?



## REMARKS

**1.** No sinner under the light of the Gospel lives a single hour in sin without some excuse, either tacit or avowed, by which he justifies himself. It seems to be a law of man's intelligent nature that when accused of wrong, either by his conscience or by any other agent, he must either confess or justify. The latter is the course taken by all impenitent sinners. Hence, the reason why they have so much occasion for excuses, and why they find it convenient to have so great a variety. It is remarkable with what facility they fly from one to another, as if these refuges of lies might make up in number what they lack in strength. Conscious that not one of all the multitude is valid in point of truth and right, they yet, when pressed on one, fly to another, and when driven from all in succession they are ready to come back and fight the same ground over again. It is so hard to abandon all excuses and admit the humbling truth that they themselves are all wrong and God all right.

Hence, it becomes the great business of a Gospel minister to search out and expose the sinner's excuses; to go all round and round, and, if possible, demolish the sinner's refuges of lies, and lay his heart open to the shafts of truth.

**2.** Excuses render repentance impossible. For excuses are justifications; and who does not know that justification is the very opposite of confession and repentance? To seek after and embrace excuses, therefore, is to place one's self at the farthest possible remove from repentance.

Of course the self-accusing sinner makes it impossible for God to forgive him. He places the Deity in such a position toward himself, and, I might say, places himself in such an attitude toward the government of God, that his forgiveness would be ruin to the very throne of God. What would heaven say, and hell too, and earth besides, if God were to forgive a sinner while he, by his excuses, is justifying himself and condemning his Maker?

**3.** Sinners should lay all their excuses at once before God. Surely this is most reasonable. Why not? If a man owed me, and supposed he had a reasonable excuse for not paying the debt, he should come to me and let me

understand the whole case. Perhaps he will satisfy me that his views are right.

Now, sinner, have you ever done so in regard to God? Have you ever brought up one excuse before the Lord, saying, "Thou requirest me to be holy, but I can't be; Lord, I have a good excuse for not obeying Thee?" No, sinner; you are not in the habit of doing this probably you have not done it the first time yet in all your life. In fact, you have no particular encouragement to carry your excuses before God, for you have not one yet that you yourself believe to be good for anything except to answer the purpose of a refuge of lies. Your excuses won't stand the ordeal of your own reason and conscience. How then can you hope they will stand before the searching eye of Jehovah? The fact that you never come with your excuses to God shows that you have no confidence in them.

**4.** What infinite madness to rest on excuses which you dare not bring before God now! How can you stand before God in the judgment, if your excuses are so mean that you cannot seriously think of bringing one of them before God in this world? O, sinner, that coming day will be far more searching and awful than anything you have seen yet. See that dense mass of sinners drawn up before the great white throne far as the eye can sweep they come surging up a countless throng; and now they stand, and the awful trump of God summons them forward to bring forth their excuses for sin. Ho, sinners any one of you, all what have you to say why sentence should not be passed on you? Where are all those excuses you were once so free and bold to make? Where are they all? Why don't you make them now? Hark! God waits; He listens; there is silence in heaven all through the congregated throng for half an hour an awful silence that may be felt; but not a word not a moving lip among the gathered myriads of sinners there; and now the great and dreadful Judge arises and lets loose His thunders. O, see the waves of dire damnation roll over the ocean masses of self-condemned sinners! Did you ever see the judge rise from his bench in court to pass sentence of death on a criminal? There, see, the poor man reels he falls prostrate there is no longer any strength in him, for death is on him and his last hope has perished!

O, sinner, when that sentence from the dread throne shall fall on thee!  
Your excuses are as millstones around your neck as you plunge along down  
the sides of the pit to the nethermost hell!

**5.** Sinners don't need their excuses. God does not ask for even one. He does not require you to justify yourself not at all. If you needed them for your salvation I could sympathize with you, and certainly would help you all I could. But you don't need them. Your salvation does not turn on your successful self-vindication. You need not rack your brain for excuses. Better say, I don't want them don't deserve them have not one that is worth a straw.

Better say, "I am wicked. God knows that's the truth, and it were vain for me to attempt to conceal it. I AM WICKED, and if I ever live, it must be on simple mercy!"

I can recollect very well the year I lived on excuses, and how long it was before I gave them up. I had never heard a minister preach on the subject. I found, however, by my experience, that my excuses and lies were the obstacles in the way of my conversion. As soon as I let these go utterly, I found the gate of mercy wide open. And so, sinner, would you.

**6.** Sinners ought to be ashamed of their excuses, and repent of them. Perhaps you have not always seen this as plainly as you may now. With the light now before you it becomes you to beware. See to it that you never make another excuse, unless you intend to abuse God in the most horrible manner. Nothing can be a more grievous abomination in the sight of God than excuses made by a sinner who knows they are utterly false and blasphemous. O, you ought to repent of the insult you have already offered to God and Now, too, lest you find yourself thrust away from the gate of mercy.

**7.** You admit your obligation, and of course are estopped from making excuses. For if you have any good excuse, you are not under obligation. If any one of you has a good excuse for disobeying God, you are no longer under obligation to obey. But since you are compelled to admit obligation, you are also compelled to relinquish excuses.

**8.** Inasmuch as you do and must admit your obligation, then if you still plead excuses you insult God to His face. You insult Him by charging Him with infinite tyranny.

Now, what use do you calculate to make of this sermon? Are you ready to say, "I will henceforth desist from all my excuses, now and for ever; and God shall have my whole heart? What do you say? Will you set about to hunt up some new excuse? Do you at least say, "Let me go home first don't press me to yield to God here on the spot let me go home and then I will?" Do you say this? And are you aware how tender is this moment how critical this passing hour? Remember it is not I who press this claim upon you but it is God. God Himself commands you to repent today this hour. You know your duty you know what religion is what it is to give God your heart. And now I come to the final question: Will you do it? Will you abandon all your excuses, and fall, a self-condemned sinner, before a God of love, and yield to him yourself your heart, and your whole being, henceforth and for ever? WILL YOU COME?

# THE SINNER'S EXCUSES ANSWERED

*Elihu also proceeded and said, Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker." Job 36:1-3*

ELIHU was present and heard the controversy between Job and his friends. The latter maintained that God's dealings with Job proved him wicked. This Job denied, and maintained that we could not judge men to be good or bad, from God's providential dealings with them, because facts show that the present is not a state of rewards and punishments. They, however, regarded this as taking part with the wicked, and hence did not shrink from accusing Job of doing this.

Elihu had previously said My desire is that Job may be tried in regard to what he has said of wicked men. But ere the discussion closed, he saw that Job had confounded his three friends, maintaining unanswerably that it was not because of any hypocrisy or special guilt that he was so signally scourged. Yet plainly even Job had not the key to explain the reason of God's dealings with him. To him it was still a mystery. He did not see that God might have been seeking to test and discipline his piety, or even to make an example of his integrity and submissiveness to confound the devil with.

Elihu purposed to speak in God's behalf and ascribed righteousness to his Maker. It is my present object to do the same in regard to sinners who refuse to repent, and who complain of God's ways. But before I proceed, let me advert to a fact. Some years since, in my labors as an evangelist, I became acquainted with a man prominent in the place of his residence for his general intelligence, and whose two successive wives were daughters of Old School Presbyterian clergymen. Through them he had received many books to read on religious subjects, which they and their friends supposed would do him good, but which failed to do him any good at all. He denied the inspiration of the Bible, and on grounds which those books did not in his view obviate at all. Indeed, they only served to aggravate his objections.

When I came into the place, his wife was very anxious that I should see and converse with him. I called; she sent for him to come in and see the new minister; to which he replied that he was sure he could do him no good, since he had conversed with so many and found no light on the points that so much stumbled him; but upon her urgent entreaty, he consented for her sake to come in. I said to him in the outset, "Don't understand me as having called here to have a quarrel with you, and provoke a dispute. I only wish at your wife's request to converse with you, if you are perfectly willing, upon the great subject of divine revelation." He signified his pleasure to have such a conversation, and accordingly I asked him to state briefly his position. He replied "I admit the truths of natural religion, and believe most fully in the immortality of the soul, but not in the inspiration of the Scriptures. I am a Deist." But, said I, on what ground do you deny the inspiration of the Bible? Said he, I know it cannot be true. How do you know that? It contradicts the affirmations of my reason. You admit and I hold that God created my nature, both physical and moral. Here is a book, said to be from God, but it contradicts my nature. I therefore know it cannot be from God.

This of course opened the door for me to draw from him the particular points of his objection to the Bible as teaching what his nature contradicted. These points and my reply to them will constitute the body of my present discourse.

**1.** The Bible cannot be true because it represents God as unjust. I find myself possessed of convictions as to what is just and unjust. These convictions the Bible outrages. It represents God as creating men and then condemning them for another's sin.

Indeed, said I, and where? Say, where does the Bible affirm this?

Why, does it not? said he. No. Are you a Presbyterian? said he? Yes. He then began to quote the catechism. Stop, stop, said I, that is not, the Bible. That is only a human catechism. True, said he, but does not the Bible connect the universal sin of the race with the sin of Adam? Yes, said I, it does in a particular way, but it is quite essential to our purpose to understand in what way. The Bible makes this connection incidental and not direct; and it always represents the sinner condemned as really sinning himself, and as condemned for his own sin.

But, continued he, children do suffer for their father's sins. Yes said I, in a certain sense it is so, and must be so. Do you not see yourself, everywhere, that children must suffer for the sins of their parents? and he blessed also by the piety of their parents? You see this and you find no fault with it. You see that children must be implicated in the good or ill conduct of their parents; their relation as children makes this absolutely unavoidable. Is it not wise and good that the happiness or misery of children should depend on their parents, and thus become one of the strongest possible motives to them to train them up in virtue? Yet it is true that the son is never rewarded or punished punitively for his parents' sins. The evil that befalls him through his connection with his parents is always disciplinary never punitive.

Again, he said, the Bible certainly represents God as creating men sinners, and as condemning them for their sinful nature. No, replied I; for the Bible defines sin as voluntary transgression of law, and it is absurd to suppose that a nature can be a voluntary transgressor. Besides, it is in the nature of the case impossible that God should make a sinful nature. It is in fact doubly impossible, for the thing is a natural impossibility, and if it were not, it would yet be morally impossible that he should do it. He could not do it for the same reason that He can not sin.

In harmony with this is the fact that the Bible never represents God as condemning men for their nature, either here or at the judgment. Nowhere in the Bible is there the least intimation that God holds men responsible for their created nature, but only for the vile and pertinacious abuse of their nature. Other views of this matter, differing from this, are not the Bible, but are only false glosses put upon it usually by those whose philosophy has led them into absurd interpretations. Everywhere in the Bible men are condemned only for their voluntary sins, and are required to repent of these sins, and of these only. Indeed, there can possibly be no other sins than these.

Again, it is said, the Bible represents God as being cruel, inasmuch as He commanded the Jews to wage a war of extermination against the ancient Canaanites.

But why should this be called cruel? The Bible expressly informs us that God commanded this because of their awful wickedness. They were too

awfully wicked to live. God could not suffer them to defile the earth and corrupt society. Hence He arose in His zeal for human welfare, and commanded to wash the land clean of such unutterable abominations. The good of the race demanded it. Was this cruel? Nay, verily, this was simply benevolent. It was one of the highest acts of benevolence to smite down such a race and sweep them from the face of the earth. And to employ the Jews as His executioners, giving them to understand distinctly why He commanded them to do it, was putting them in a way to derive the highest moral benefit from the transaction. In no other way could they have been so solemnly impressed with the holy justice of Jehovah. And now will any man find fault with God for this? None can do so, reasonably.

But the Bible allows slavery.

What? The Bible allow slavery? In what sense allow it? and under what circumstances? and what kind of slavery?

These are all very important inquiries if we wish to know the certainty and the meaning of the things we say.

The Bible did indeed allow the Jews, in the case of captives taken in war, to commute death for servitude. When the customs of existing nations put captives taken in war to death, God authorized the Jews in certain cases to spare their captives and employ them as servants. By this means they were taken out from among idolatrous nations and brought into contact with the worship and ordinances of the true God.

Moreover, God enacted statutes for the protection of the Hebrew servant, which made his case infinitely better than being cut off in his sins. And who shall call this cruel? Jewish servitude was not American slavery, nor scarcely an approximation toward it. It would require too much time to go into the detail of this subject here. All that I have stated might be abundantly substantiated.

Again, it is objected God is unmerciful, vindictive, and implacable. The gentleman to whom I have alluded said I don't believe the Bible is from God when it represents Him as so vindictive and implacable that He would not forgive sin until He had first taken measures to kill His own Son.



Now it was by no means unnatural that, under such instructions he had received, he should think so. I had felt so myself. This very objection had stumbled me. But I afterwards saw the answer so plainly that it left nothing more to be desired. The answer indeed is exceedingly plain. It was not an implacable disposition in God which led Him to require the death of Christ as the ground of forgiveness. It was simply his benevolent regard for the safety and blessedness of His kingdom. He knew very well that it was unsafe to forgive sin without such a satisfaction. Indeed, this was the strongest possible exhibition of a forgiving disposition, to consent to the sacrifice of His Son for this purpose. He loved His Son, and certainly would not inflict one needless pang upon Him. He also loved a sinning race, and saw the depth of that ruin toward which they were rushing. Therefore He longed to forgive them, and to prepare a way in which He could do so with safety. He only desired to avoid all misapprehension. To forgive without such atonement as would adequately express His abhorrence of sin, would leave the intelligent universe to think that He did not care how much any beings should sin. This would not do.

Let it be considered also that the giving up of Jesus Christ was only a voluntary offering on God's part to sustain law, so that He could forgive without peril to His government. Jesus was not in any sense punished; He only volunteered to suffer for sinners that they might be freed from the governmental necessity of suffering. And was not mercy manifested in this? Certainly. How could it be manifested more signally?

But, says the objector, God is unjust, inasmuch as He requires impossibilities on pain of endless death.

Does He, indeed? Then where? In the law, is it, or in the Gospel? In these taken together we have the aggregate of all God's requirements. In what part, then, of either law or Gospel do you find the precept contained which requires impossibilities? Is it in the law? But the law says only "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" not with another man's heart, but simply with thine own; only with all thine own heart, not with more than all. Read on still further: "and with all thy strength." Not with the strength of an angel not with the strength of any other being than thyself, and only with such an amount of strength as you actually have for

the time being. The demands of the law, you see, exactly meet your ability; nothing more and nothing else.

Indeed, said he, this is a new view of the subject. Well but is not this just as it should be? Does not the law carry with it, its own vindication in its very terms?

How can any one say that the law requires of us impossible service things we have no power to do? The fact is, it requires us to do just what we can and nothing more. Where, then, is this objection to the Bible? Where is the impossibility of which you speak?

But, resumed he, is it not true that “no mere man since the fall has been able wholly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed?”

Ah, my friend, that’s catechism, not Bible; we must be careful not to impute to the Bible all that human catechisms have said. The Bible only requires you to consecrate to God what strength and powers you actually have, and is by no means responsible for the affirmation that God requires of man more than he can do. No, verily, the Bible nowhere imputes to God a requisition so unreasonable and cruel. No wonder the human mind should rebel against such a view of God’s law. If any human law were to require impossibilities, there could be no end to the denunciations that must fall upon it. No human mind could possibly approve of such a law. Nor can it be supposed that God can reasonably act on principles which would disgrace and ruin any human government.

But, resumed he, here is another objection. The Bible represents men as unable to believe the Gospel unless they are drawn by God, for it reads, “No man can come to me except the Father who hath sent me draw him.” Yet sinners are required to believe on pain of damnation. How is this?

To this the reply is, first, the connection shows that Christ referred to drawing by means of teaching or instruction; for to confirm what He had said, He appeals to the ancient scriptures, “It is written, They shall all be taught of God.” Without this teaching, then, none can come. They must know Christ before they can come to Him in faith. They cannot believe till they know what to believe. In this sense of coming, untaught heathen are not required to come. God never requires any to come, who have not been

taught. Once taught, they are bound to come, may be and are required to come, and are without excuse if they refuse.

But, replied he, the Bible does really teach that men cannot serve the Lord, and still it holds them responsible for doing it. Joshua said to all the people, "Ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an holy God."

Let us see. Joshua had called all the people together and had laid before them their obligation to serve the Lord their God. When they all said so readily and with so little serious consideration that they would, Joshua replied, "Ye cannot serve the Lord for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." What did he mean? Plainly this Ye cannot serve God, because you have not heartily abandoned your sins. You cannot get along with a God so holy and so jealous, unless you give up sinning. You cannot serve God with a selfish heart. You cannot please Him till you really renounce your sins altogether. You must begin by making to yourselves a new heart. Joshua doubtless saw that they had not given up their sins and had not really begun to serve God at all, and did not even understand the first principles of true religion. This is the reason why he seemed to repulse them so suddenly. It is as if he would say Stop; you must go back and begin with utterly putting away all your sins. You cannot serve a holy and jealous God in any other way, for He will not go along with you as His people if you persist in sinning against Him.

It is a gross perversion of the Bible to make it mean that men have no power to do what God requires. It is true indeed, that in this connection it sometimes uses the words can and can not, but these and similar words should be construed according to the nature of the subject. All reasonable men construe thus intuitively in all common use of language.

The Bible always employs the language of common life and in the way of common usage. Hence it should be thus interpreted.

When it is said that Joseph's brethren hated him and could not speak peaceably to him, the meaning is not that their organs of speech could not articulate kind words; but it points us to a difficulty in the heart. They hated him so badly they could not speak pleasantly. Nor does the sacred historian assume that they could not at once subdue this hatred and treat

Joseph as brother should treat brother. The sacred writers are the last men in the world to apologize for sin on this wise.

There is the case of the angels sent to hasten Lot out of guilty Sodom. One said, "Haste thee escape thither, for I can not do anything until thou be come thither." Does this mean that the Almighty God had no power to overwhelm Sodom so long as Lot was in it? Certainly not. It meant only that it was His purpose not to destroy the city till Lot was out. Indeed, all men use language thus in common life. You go into one of our village stores and say to the merchant, Can you lift a ton of your goods at once? No. Can you sell me that piece of cloth for a shilling a yard? No. Does this it can mean the same as the other? By no means. But how is it that you detect the difference? How is it that you come to know so readily which is the physical cannot and which the moral? The nature of the subject tells you.

But, you say, the same word ought always to mean the same thing. Well, if it ought to, it does not, in any language ever yet spoken by man. And yet there is no difficulty in understanding even the most imperfect of human languages if men are honest in speaking and honest in hearing, and will use their common sense. They intuitively construe language according to the nature of the subject spoken of

The Bible always assumes that sinners can not do right and please God with a wicked heart. It always takes the ground that God abhors hypocrisy that He can not be satisfied with mere forms and professions of service when the heart is not in it, and hence that all acceptable service must begin with making a new and sincere heart.

But here is another difficulty. Can I make to myself a new heart?

Yes, and you could not doubt but that you could, if you only understood what the language means. and what the thing is.

See Adam and Eve in the garden. What was their heart? Did God create it? No; it is not possible that He should, for a heart in this sense is not the subject of physical creation. When God made Adam, giving him all the capacities for acting morally, he had no heart good or bad until he came to act morally. When did he first have a moral heart? When he first waked to moral consciousness and gave his heart to God. When first he saw God

manifested, and put confidence in Him as his Father, and yielded up his heart to Him in love and obedience. Observe, he first had this holy heart because he yielded up his will to God in entire consecration. This was his first holy heart.

But at length the hour of temptation came, alluring him to withdraw his heart from God and turn to pleasing himself. To Eve the tempter said “Hath God indeed said Ye shall not surely die? “Ah, is that so? Then he raised the question either as to the fact that God had really threatened death for sin, or as to the justice of doing so. In either case it raised a question about obedience and opened the heart to temptation. Then that fruit came before her mind. It was fair and seemed good for food. Her appetite enkindles and clamors for indulgence. Then, it was said to be fitted to “make one wise,” and by eating it she might “be as the gods, knowing good and evil.” This appealed to her curiosity.

Yielding to this temptation and making up her mind to please herself, she made herself a new heart of sin; she changed her heart from holiness to sin, and fell from her first moral position. When Adam yielded to temptation, he made the same change in his heart; he gave himself up to selfishness and sin. This accounts for all future acts of selfishness in after life.

Adam and Eve are again brought before God. God says to Adam Give me thy heart. Change your heart. What! says Adam, I cannot change my own heart! But God replies, How long is it since you have done it? It is but yesterday that you changed your own heart from holiness to sin; why can't you change it back?

So in all cases. Changing the ruling preference, the governing purpose of the mind, is the thing, and who can say, I cannot do that. Cannot you do that? Cannot you give yourself to God?

The reason you cannot please God in your executive acts, is that your governing purpose is not right. While your leading motive is wrong, all you do is selfish, because it is all done for the single object of pleasing yourself. You do nothing for the sake of pleasing God, and with the governing design and purpose of doing all His holy will; hence all you do, even your religious duties, only displease God. If the Bible had anywhere represented

God as being pleased with your hypocritical services it would be proven false, for this is perfectly impossible.

But you say, the Bible requires me to begin with the inner man the heart and you say you cannot get at this; that you cannot reach your own heart or will to change it.

Indeed, you are entirely mistaken. This is the very thing that is most entirely within your power. Of all things conceivable, this is the very thing that you can do most certainly that is most absolutely within your power. If God had made your salvation turn upon your walking across the room, you might not be able to do it; or if upon lifting your eyelids or rising from your seat, or any the least movement of your muscles, you might be utterly unable to do it. You could will the motion required, and you could try; but the muscles might have no power to act. You often think that if God had only conditioned your salvation upon some motions of your muscles, it would have been so easy; if He had only asked you to control the outside; but, oh, you say, how can I control the inside? The inside is the very thing you can move and control. If it had been the outside, you might strive and groan till you die, and not be able to move a muscle, even on pain of an eternal hell. But now inasmuch as God only says, "Change your will," all is brought within your control. This is just the thing you always can do; you can always move your will. You can always give your heart, at your own option. Where, then, is your difficulty and objection? God requires you to act with your freedom; to exercise the powers of free voluntary action that He has given you. He asks you to put your hand on the fountainhead of all your own power, to act just where your central power lies where YOU ALWAYS HAVE POWER so long as you have a rational mind and a moral nature. Your liberty does not consist in a power to move your muscles at pleasure, for the connection between your muscles and your will may be broken, and at all events is always necessary when your body is in its normal state; therefore God does not require you to perform any particular movement of the muscles, but only to change your will. This, compared with all other things, is that which you can always do, and can do more surely than anything else.

Again, considering volitions as distinct from ultimate purposes, and as standing next before executive acts, it is not volitions that God requires,

but He lays His requisition directly upon the ultimate purposes. The ultimate purposes being given, these subordinate volitions follow naturally and necessarily. Your liberty, therefore, does not, strictly speaking, lie in these subordinate volitions such as the volition to sit, to walk, to speak.

But the ultimate purpose controlling all volition, and relating to the main object you shall pursue, as, for example, whether you shall in all things strive to please God, or, on the other hand, strive to please yourself; this being the precise point wherein your liberty of free action lies, is the very point upon which God lays his moral requisitions. The whole question is, will you please God, or please yourself? Will you give your heart to Him, or give it to your own selfish enjoyment?

go long as you give your heart to selfish pleasure and withhold it from God, it will be perfectly natural for you to sin. This is precisely the reason why it is so natural for sinners to sin. It is because the will, the heart, is set upon it, and all they have to do is to carry out this ruling propensity and purpose. But, just change this governing purpose, and you will find obedience equally natural and equally easy in all its executive acts. It will then become natural to please God in everything. Now pleasing yourself is natural enough. Why? Because you are consecrated to pleasing yourself. But change this purpose; make a new and totally opposite consecration; reverse the committed heart, and let it be for God and not for self; then all duty will be easy for the same reason that all sin is so easy now.

So far is it from being true that you are unable to make your heart new, the fact is you would long ago have done it if you had not resisted God in His efforts to move you to repentance. Do you not know that you have often resisted God's Spirit? You know it well. So clear were your convictions that you ought to live for God, you had to resist every appeal of your own conscience, and march right in the face of known duty, and press your way along directly against God. If you had only listened to the voice of your reason, and to the demands of your conscience, you would have had a new heart long ago. But you resisted God when He tried to persuade you to have a new heart. O, sinner, how strong you have been to resist God! How strong to resist every consideration addressed to your intelligence and to your reason! How strangely have you listened to the considerations for sinning! O, the miserable petty things tell me, what were they? Suppose

Christ should question you, and ask What is there in earth that you should love it so well? What in sin that you should prize it above my favor and my love? What are those little indulgences those very small things that always perish with the using? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. Most utterly contemptible! You have been holding on to sin with no reasonable motive for so doing. But O, consider what motives you have fought against and resisted motives of almost infinite force! Think of the motives resulting from God's law so excellent in itself, but so dreadful in its penalties against transgressors; and then think also of God's infinite love in the Gospel; how he opened the life-tides of His great heart, and let blessings flow with fullness like a God! Yet consider how, despite of this love, you have abused your God exceedingly. You have gone on as if the motives to sin were all-persuasive, and as if sin's promises of good were more reliable than God's. When God spread out before you the glories of heaven, made all attractive and delightful in the beauties of holiness, you coolly replied-Earth is far better! Give me earth while I can have it, and heaven only when I can have earth no longer! O, sinner, you would have been converted a long time ago if you had not opposed God and trodden under foot His invitations and His appeals.

O, what a thing is this moral agency! How awful its power, and how momentous, therefore, must be its responsibilities. When God is pouring forth influences in waves of light and power, with a kind of moral omnipotence, you resist and withstand all! As if you could do anything you pleased despite of God! As if His influence were almost utterly powerless to move your heart from its fixed purpose to sin!

Does it require great strength to lay down your weapons? Indeed, this is quite a new thing; for one would suppose it must rather require great strength to resist and to fight. And so you put forth your great strength in fighting against God, and would fain believe that you have not got strength enough to lay your weapons down! O, the absurdity of sin and of the sinner's apology for sinning!

But you say I must have the Holy Ghost. I answer, Yes; but only to overcome your voluntary opposition. That is all.

After I had gone over this ground with my friend, as I have already explained, he became very much agitated. The sweat started from every



pore; his feelings overcame him; he dropped his head down upon his knees, buried in intensest thought and full of emotion. I rose and went to the meeting. After it had progressed awhile he came in; but O, how changed! Said he, "Dear wife, I don't know what has become of my infidelity. I ought to be sent to hell! What charges I have been making against God! And yet with what amazing mercy did my God bear with me and let me live!" In fact, he found he had been all wrong and he broke all down and became as a little child before God.

And you, too, sinner, know you ought to live for God, yet you have not; you know that Jesus made Himself an offering to the injured dignity of that law which you violated, yet you have rejected Him. He gave Himself a voluntary offering, not to suffer the penalty of the law, but as your legal substitute; and shall He have done all this in vain? Do you say, "O, I'm so prejudiced against God and the Bible!" What, so prejudiced that you will not repent? How horrible! O let it suffice that you have played the fool so long and erred so exceedingly. It has been all wrong! At once return and devote yourself to God. Why should you live to yourself at all? You can get no good so!

Come to God He is so easily pleased! It is so much easier to please Him than to please and satisfy yourself. The veriest little child can please Him. Children often have the most delightful piety, because it is so simple-hearted. They know what to do to please God, and, meaning honestly to please Him, they can not fail. No matter how simple-hearted they are, if they mean to please God, they surely will.

And can not you at least do so much as honestly to choose and aim to please God?

# MORAL INSANITY

*“The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live.” Ecclesiastes 9:3.*

THE Bible often ascribes to unconverted men one common heart or disposition. It always makes two classes, and only two, of our race saints and sinners; the one class converted from their sin and become God’s real friends; the other remaining His unconverted enemies. According to the Bible, therefore, the heart, in all unrenewed men, is the same in its general character. In the days of Noah, God testified “that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thought of his heart was only evil continually.” Observe, He speaks of the thought of their heart, as if they had one common heart all alike in moral character. So by Paul, God testifies that “the carnal mind is enmity against God,” testifying thus, not of one man, or of a few men, but of all men of carnal mind. So in our text, the phraseology is expressive: “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil” as if the sons of men had but one heart all in common and this one heart were “full of evil.” You will notice this affirmation is not made of one or two men, nor of some men, merely; but “of the sons of men:” as if of them all.

**1.** But what is intended by affirming that “madness is in their heart while they live?”

This is not the madness of anger, but of insanity. True, sometimes people are mad with anger; but this is not the sense of our text. The Bible, as well as customary speech, employs this term, “madness” to express insanity. This we understand to be its sense here.

Insanity is of two kinds. One of the head; the other of the heart. In the former, the intellect is disordered, latter, the will and voluntary powers. Intellectual insanity destroys moral agency. The man, intellectually insane, is not, for the time, a moral agent; moral responsibility is suspended because he can not know his duty, and can not choose responsibly as to doing or not doing it. True, when a man makes himself temporarily insane, as by drunkenness, the courts are obliged to hold him responsible for his acts committed in that state; but the guilt really attaches to the voluntary

act which creates the insanity. A man who gets intoxicated by intelligently drinking what he knows is intoxicating, must be held responsible for his acts during the ensuing intoxication. The reason of this is, that he can foresee the danger, and can easily avoid it.

The general law is that, while the intellect retains its usual power, so long moral obligation remains unimpaired.

Moral insanity, on the other hand, is will-madness. The man retains his intellectual powers unimpaired. but he sets his heart fully to He refuses to yield to the demands of his conscience. He practically discards the obligations of moral responsibility. He has the powers of free moral agency, but persistently abuses them. He has a reason which affirms obligation, but he refuses obedience to its affirmations.

In this form of insanity, the reason remains unimpaired; but the heart deliberately disobeys.

The insanity spoken of in the text is moral. that of the heart. By the heart here, is meant the will the voluntary power. While the man is intellectually sane, he yet acts as if he were intellectually insane.

It is important to point out some of the manifestations of this state of mind. Since the Bible affirms it to be a fact that sinners are mad in heart, we may naturally expect to see some manifestations of it. It is often striking to see how perfectly the Bible daguerreotypes human character; has it done so in reference to this point? Let us see.

Who are the morally insane?

Those who, not being intellectually insane, yet ACT as if they were.

For example, those who are intellectually insane, treat fiction as if it were reality, and reality as if it were fiction. They act as if truth were not truth, and as if falsehood were truth. Every man knows that insane people actually follow the wild dreams of their own fancy, as if they were the most stem reality, and can scarcely be made to feel the force of anything truly real.

So men, in their sins, treat the realities of the spiritual world as if they were not real, but follow the most empty phantoms of this world, as if they were stern realities.

They also act as if self were of supreme importance, and everything else of relatively no importance. Suppose you were to see a man acting this out in common life. He goes round, day after day, assuming that he is the Supreme God, and practically insisting that everybody ought to have a supreme regard to his rights, and comparatively little or no regard for other people's rights. Now, if you were to see a man saying this and acting it out, would you not account him either a blasphemer or insane?

Observe, now, the wonderful fact, that while wicked men talk so sensibly as to show that they know better, yet they act as if all this were true as if they supposed their own self-interest to be more important than everything else in the universe, and that God's interests, and rights even, are nothing in comparison. Practically, every sinner does this.

It is an essential element in all sin. Selfish men never regard the rights of anybody else, unless they are in some way linked with their own.

If wicked men really believed their own rights and interests to be supreme in the universe, it would prove them intellectually insane, and we should hasten to shut them up in the nearest mad-house; but when they show that they know better, yet act on this groundless assumption, in the face of their better knowledge, we say, with the Bible, that "madness is in their hearts while they live."

Again, see this madness manifested in his relative estimate of time and of eternity. His whole life declares that, in his view, it is by far more important to secure the good of time than the good of eternity. Yet, if a man should reason thus should, argue to prove it, and should soberly assert it you would know him to be insane, and would help him to the mad-house. But, suppose he does not say this dares not say it knows it is not true; yet constantly acts it out, and lives on the assumption of its truth, what then? Simply this he is morally mad. Madness is in his heart.

Now precisely this is the practice of every one of you who is living in sin. You give the preference to time over eternity, You practically say O give

me the joys of time: why should I trouble myself yet about the trivial matters of eternity?

In the same spirit you assume that the body is more than the soul. But if a man were to affirm this and go round trying to prove it, you would know him to be insane. O, if he were a friend of yours, how your heart would break for his sad misfortune reason lost! But if he knows better, yet practically lives as if it were even so, you only say, he is morally insane that is all!

Suppose you see a man destroying his own property, not by accident or mistake, but deliberately; injuring his own health, also, as if he had no care for his own interests; you might bring his case before a judge and sue out a commission of lunacy against him; under which the man's goods should be taken out of his own control, and he be no longer suffered to squander them.

Yet, in spiritual things, wicked men will deliberately act against their own dearest interests; having a price put into their hands to get wisdom, they will not use it; having the treasures of heaven placed within their reach, they do not try to secure them; with an infinite wealth of blessedness proffered for the mere acceptance, they will not take it as a gift. Indeed! How plain it is that, if men were to act in temporal things as they do in spiritual, they would be pronounced by everybody insane. Any man would take his oath of it. They would say Only see; the man acts against his own interests in everything! Who can deny that he is insane? Certainly sane men never do this!

But, in moral questions, wicked men seem to take the utmost pains to subvert their own interests, and make themselves insolvent forever! O, how they beggar their souls, when they might have the riches of heaven.

Again, they endeavor to realize manifest impossibilities. For example, they try to make themselves happy in their sins and their selfishness, Yet they know they can not do it. Ask them, and they will admit the thing is utterly impossible; and yet, despite of this conviction, they keep up the effort perpetually to try as if they expected by and by to realize a manifest impossibility. Now, in moral things, it may not strike you as specially strange, for it is exceedingly common; but suppose, in matters of the

world, you were to see a man doing the same sort of thing, what would you think of him? For example, you see him working hard to build a very long ladder, and you ask him what for. He says, "I am going to scale the moon." You see him expending his labor and his money, with the toil of a life, to get up a mammoth ladder with which to scale the moon I Would you not say He is certainly insane? For unless he were really insane, he would know it to be an utter impossibility. But, in spiritual things, men are all the time trying to realize a result at least equally impossible that of being happy in sin happy with a mutiny among their own constitutional powers, the heart at war against reason and conscience. The pursuit of happiness in sin is as if a man were seeking to bless himself by mangling his own flesh, digging out his own eyes, knocking in his teeth. Yet men as really know that they can not obtain happiness in sin and selfishness, as they know they can not ensure health and comfort by mutilating their own flesh and tearing their own nerves in sunder. Doing thus madly what they know will always defeat and never ensure real happiness, they show themselves to be morally insane.

Another manifestation of intellectual insanity is loss of confidence in one's best friends. Often this is one of the first and most painful evidences of insanity the poor man will have it that his dearest friends are set to ruin him. By no amount of evidence can he be persuaded to think they are his real friends.

Just so sinners in their madness treat God. While they inwardly know He is their real friend, yet they practically treat Him as their worst enemy. By no motives can they be persuaded to confide in Him as their friend. In fact, they treat Him as if He were the greatest liar in the universe. Wonderful to tell, they practically reverse the regard due respectively to God and to Satan treating Satan as if he were God, and God as if He were Satan. Satan they believe and obey; God they disown, dishonor, and disobey. How strangely would they reverse the order of things! They would fain enthrone Satan over the universe, giving him the highest seat in heaven; the Almighty and holy God they would send to hell. They do not hesitate to surrender to Satan the place of power over their own hearts which is due to God only.

I have already noticed the fact that insane people treat their best friends as if they were their worst enemies, and that this is often the first proof of insanity, If a husband, he will have it that his dear wife is trying to poison him. I have a case in my recollection the first case of real insanity I ever saw, and, for that reason perhaps, it made a strong impression on my mind. I was riding on horseback, and, coming near a house, I noticed a chamber window up and heard a most unearthly cry.

As soon as I came near enough to catch the words, I heard a most wild, imploring voice, "Stranger, stranger, come here here is the great whore of Babylon; they are trying to kill me, they will kill me." I dismounted; came up to the house, and there I found a man shut up in a cage, and complaining most bitterly of his wife. As I turned towards her I saw she looked sad, as if a load of grief lay heavy on her heart. A tear trembled in her eye. Alas, her dear husband was a maniac! Then I first learned how the insane are wont to regard their best friends.

Now, sinners know better of God and of their other real friends; and yet they very commonly treat them in precisely this way. Just as if they were to go into the places of public resort, and lift up their voices to all bystanders Hallo, there, all ye be it known to you, "the Great God is an almighty tyrant! He is not fit to be trusted or loved!"

Now, everybody knows they treat God thus practically. They regard the service of God religion as if it were inconsistent with their real and highest happiness. I have often met with sinners who seemed to think that every attempt to make them Christians is a scheme to take them in and sell them into slavery. They by no means estimate religion as if it came forth from a God of love. Practically, they treat religion as if embraced it would be their ruin. Yet, in all this, they act utterly against their own convictions. They know better. If they did not, their guilt would be exceedingly small compared with what it is.

Another remarkable manifestation of insanity is, to be greatly excited about trifles, and apathetic about the most important matters in the universe. Suppose you see a man excited about straws and pebbles taking unwearied pains to gather them into heaps, and store them away as treasures; yet, when a fire breaks out around his dwelling and the village is in flames, he takes no notice of it, and feels no interest; or people may die

on every side with the plague, but he heeds it not; would you not say, he must be insane? But this is precisely true of sinners. They are almost infinitely excited about worldly good straws and pebbles, compared with God's proffered treasures; but O, how apathetic about the most momentous events in the universe! The vast concerns of their souls scarcely stir up one earnest thought. If they did not know better, you would say Certainly, their reason is dethroned; but since they do know better, you can not say less than that they are morally insane, "madness is in their heart while they live."

The conduct of impenitent men is the perfection of irrationality. When you see it as it is, you will get a more just and vivid idea of irrationality than you can get from any other source. You see this in the ends to which they devote themselves, and in the means which they employ to secure them. All is utterly unreasonable. An end madly chosen sought by means madly devised; this is the life-history of the masses who reject God. If this were the result of wrong intellectual judgments, we should say at once that the race have gone mad.

Bedlam itself affords no higher evidence of intellectual insanity than every sinner does of moral. You may go to Columbus, and visit every room occupied by the inmates of the Lunatic Asylum; you can not find one insane person who gives higher evidence of intellectual insanity than every sinner does of moral. If bedlam itself furnishes evidence that its bedlamites are crazy, intellectually; so does every sinner that he is mad, morally.

Sinners act as if they were afraid they should be saved. Often they seem to be trying to make their salvation as difficult as possible. For example, they all know what Christ has said about the danger of riches and the difficulty of saving rich men. They have read from His lips, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This they know, and yet how many of them are in mad haste to be rich!

For this end, some are ready to sacrifice their conscience some their health all seem ready, deliberately, to sacrifice their souls! How could they more certainly ensure their own damnation!



Thus they regard damnation as if it were salvation, and salvation as if it were damnation. They rush upon damnation as if it were heaven, and flee salvation as if it were hell.

Is this exaggeration? No; this is only the simple truth. Sinners press down the way to hell as if it were the chief good of their existence, and shun the way to heaven as if it were the consummation of evil. Sinner, this is your own moral state. The picture gives only the naked facts of the case, without exaggeration.

**3.** This moral insanity is a state of unmingled wickedness. The special feature of it which makes it a guilty state, is that it is altogether voluntary. It results not from the less of reason, but from the abuse of reason. The will persists in acting against reason and conscience. Despite of the affirmations of reason, and reckless of the admonitions of conscience, the sinner presses on in his career of rebellion against God and goodness. In such voluntary wickedness, must there not be intrinsic guilt?

Besides, this action is oftentimes deliberate, The man sins in his cool, deliberate moments, as well as in his excited moments. If he sins most overtly and boldly in his excited moments he does not repent and change his position towards God in his deliberate moments, but virtually endorses then the hasty purposes of his more excited hours. This heightens his guilt.

Again, his purposes of sin are obstinate and unyielding. In ten thousand ways, God is bringing influences to bear on his mind to change his purposes; but usually in vain. This career of sin is in violation of all his obligations. Who does not know this? The sinner never acts from right motives never yields to the sway of a sense of obligation never Practically recognizes his obligation to love his neighbor as himself, or to honor the Lord his God.

It is a total rejection of both God's law and Gospel. The law he will not obey; the Gospel of pardon he will not accept. He seems determined to brave the Omnipotence of Jehovah, and dare His vengeance. Is he not mad upon his idols? Is it saying too much when the Bible affirms, "Madness is in their heart while they live?"

## REMARKS

**1.** Sinners strangely accuse saints of being mad and crazy. Just as soon as Christian people begin to act as if the truth they believe is a reality, then wicked men cry out, "See, they are getting crazy." Yet those very sinners admit the Bible to be true, and admit those things which Christians believe as true to be really so; and, further still, they admit that those Christians are doing only what they ought to do, and only as themselves ought to act; still, they charge them with insanity. It is curious that even those sinners themselves know these Christians to be the only rational men on the earth. I can well recollect that I saw this plainly before my conversion. I knew then that Christians were the only people in all the world who had any valid claim to be deemed sane.

**2.** If intellectual insanity be a shocking fact, how much more so is moral? I have referred to my first impressions at the sight of one who was intellectually insane, but a case of moral insanity ought to be deemed far more afflictive and astounding. Suppose the case of a Webster. His brain becomes softened; he is An idiot! There is not a man in all the land but would feel solemn. What! Daniel Webster that great man, an idiot! How have the mighty fallen! What a horrible sight!

But how much more horrible to see him become a moral idiot to see a selfish heart run riot with the clear decisions of his gigantic intellect to see his moral principles fading away before the demands of selfish ambition to see such a man become a drunkard, a debauchee, a loafer; if this were to occur in a Daniel Webster, how inexpressively shocking! Intellectual idiocy is not to be named in the comparison!

**3.** Although some sinners may be externally fair, and may seem to be amiable in temper and character, yet every real sinner is actually insane. In view of all these solemnities of eternity, he insists on being controlled only by the things of time. With the powers of an angel, he aims not above the low pursuits of a selfish heart. How must angels look on such a case! Eternity so vast, and its issues so dreadful, yet this sinner drives furiously to hell as if he were on the high-road to heaven! And all this only because he is infatuated with the pleasures of sin for a season. At first view, Le seems to have really made the mistake of hell for heaven; but, on a closer

examination, you see it is no real mistake of the intellect; he knows very well the difference between hell and heaven; but he is practically deluding himself under the impulses of his mad heart! The mournful fact is, he loves sin, and after that he will go! Alas, alas! so insane, he rushes greedily on his own damnation, just as if he were in pursuit of heaven!

We shudder at the thought that any of our friends are becoming idiotic or lunatic; but this is not half so bad as to have one of them become wicked. Better have a whole family become idiotic than one of them become a hardened sinner. Indeed, the former, compared with the latter, is as nothing. For the idiot shall not always be so. When this mortal is laid away in the grave, the soul may look out again in the free air of liberty, as if it had never been immured in a dark prison; and the body, raised again, may bloom in eternal vigor and beauty; but, alas, moral insanity only waxes worse and worse forever! The root of this being not in a diseased brain, but in a diseased heart and soul, death can not cure it; the resurrection will only raise him to shame and everlasting contempt; and the eternal world will only give scope to his madness to rage on with augmented vigor and wider sweep forever.

Some persons are more afraid of being called insane than of being called wicked. Surely they show the fatal delusion that is on their hearts.

Intellectual insanity is only pitiable, not disgraceful; but moral insanity is unspeakably disgraceful. None need wonder that God should say, "Some shall arise to shame and everlasting contempt."

Conversion to God is becoming morally sane. It consists in restoring the will and the affections to the just control of the intelligence, the reason, and the conscience, so as to put the man once more in harmony with himself all his faculties adjusted to their true positions and proper functions.

Sometimes persons who have become converted, but not well established, backslide into moral insanity. Just as persons sometimes relapse into intellectual insanity, after being apparently quite restored. This is a sad case, and brings sorrow upon the hearts of friends. Yet, in no case can it be so sad as a case of backsliding into moral insanity.

An intellectual bedlam is a mournful place. How can the heart of any human sensibility contemplate such a scene without intense grief? Mark,

as you pass through those halls, the traces of intellectual ruin; there is a noble-looking woman, perfectly insane; there is a man of splendid mien and bearing all in ruins! How awful! Then, if this be so, what a place is hell! These, intellectual bedlams are awful; how much more the moral bedlam!

Suppose we go to Columbus and visit its Lunatic Ayslum; go round to all its wards and study the case of each inmate; then we will go to Indiana; then to New York, and so through all the Asylums of each several State. Then we will visit London and its Asylum, where we may find as many insane as in all our Union. Would not this be a mournful scene? Would not you cry out long before we had finished Enough! Enough! How can I bear these sights of mad men! How can I endure to behold such desolation!

Suppose, then, we go next to the great moral bedlam of the universe the hell of lost souls; for if men will make themselves mad, God must shut them up in one vast bedlam cell. Why should not He? The weal of His empire demands that all the moral insanity of His kingdom should be withdrawn from the society of the holy, and shut up alone and apart. There are those whose intellects are right, but whose hearts are all wrong. Ah, what a place must that be in which to spend one's eternity! The great mad-house of the universe!

Sometimes sinners here, aware of their own insanity, set glimpses of this fearful state. I recollect that, at one time, I got this idea that Christians are the only persons who can claim to be rational, and then I asked myself Why should I not so? Would it hurt me to obey God? Would it ruin my peace, or damage my prospects for either this life or the next? Why do I go on so?

I said to myself I can give no account of it, only that I am mad. All that I can say is that my heart is set on iniquity, and will not turn.

Alas, poor maniac! Not unfortunate, but wicked! How many of you know that this is your real case? O, young man, did your father think you were sane when he sent you here? Ah, you were so intellectually, perhaps, but not morally. As to your moral nature and functions, all was utterly deranged. My dear young friend, does your own moral course commend itself to your conscience and your reason? If not, what are you but a moral

maniac? Young man, young woman, must you in truth write yourselves down moral maniacs?

Finally, the subject shows the importance of not quenching the Spirit. This is God's agency for the cure of moral maniacs. O, if you put out His light from your souls, there remains to you only the blackness of darkness forever! Said a young man in Lane Seminary, just dying in his sins Why did you not tell me there is such a thing as eternal damnation? Weld, why did not you tell me? I did. Oh, I am going there how can I die so? It's growing dark; bring in a light! And so he passed away from this world of light and hope!

O sinner, take care that you put not out the light which God has cast into your dark heart, lest, when you pass away it shall grow dark to your soul at midday the opening into the blackness of darkness forever.

# CONDITIONS OF BEING SAVED

*“What must I do to be saved?” — Acts 16:30.*

I BRING forward this subject today not because it is new to many in this congregation, but because it is greatly needed. I am happy to know that the great inquiry of our text is beginning to be deeply and extensively agitated in this community, and under these circumstances it is the first duty of a Christian pastor to answer it, fully and plainly.

The circumstances which gave occasion to the words of the text were briefly these. Paul and Silas had gone to Philippi to preach the Gospel. Their preaching excited great opposition and tumult; they were arrested and thrown into prison, and the jailer was charged to keep them safely. At midnight they were praying and singing praises God came down- the earth quaked and the prison rocked its doors burst open, and their chains fell off; the jailer sprang up affrighted, and, supposing his prisoners had fled, was about to take his own life, when Paul cried out, “Do thyself no harm; we are all here. “He then called for a light, and sprang in and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

This is briefly the history of our text; and I improve it now, by showing;

**I. WHAT SINNERS MUST NOT DO TO BE SAVED; AND**

**II. WHAT THEY MUST DO.**

## **I. WHAT SINNERS MUST NOT DO TO BE SAVED;**

It has now come to be necessary and very important to tell men what they must not do in order to be saved. When the Gospel was first preached, Satan had not introduced as many delusions to mislead men as he has now. It was then enough to give, as Paul did, the simple and direct answer, telling men only what they must at once do. But this seems to be not enough now. So many delusions and perversions have bewildered and darkened the minds of men that they need often a great deal of instruction

to lead them back to those simple views of the subject which prevailed at first. Hence the importance of showing what sinners must not do, if they intend to be saved.

**1.** They must not imagine that they have nothing to do. In Paul's time nobody seems to have thought of this. Then the doctrine of Universalism was not much developed. Men had not begun to dream that they should be saved without doing anything. They had not learned that sinners have nothing to do to be saved. If this idea, so current of late, had been rife at Philippi, the question of our text would not have been asked. No trembling sinner would have cried out, What must I do to be saved?

If men imagine they have nothing to do, they are never likely to be saved. It is not in the nature of falsehood and lies to save men's souls, and surely nothing is more false than this notion. Men know they have something to do to be saved. Why, then, do they pretend that all men will be saved whether they do their duty, or constantly refuse to do it? The very idea is preposterous, and is entertained only by the most palpable outrage upon common sense and an enlightened conscience.

**2.** You should not mistake what you have to do. The duty required of sinners is very simple, and would be easily understood were it not for the false ideas that prevail as to what religion is, and as to the exact things which God requires as conditions of salvation. On these points erroneous opinions prevail to a most alarming extent. Hence the danger of mistake. Beware lest you be deceived in a matter of so vital moment.

**3.** Do not say or imagine that you cannot do what God requires. On the contrary, always assume that you can. If you assume that you cannot, this very assumption will be fatal to your salvation.

**4.** Do not procrastinate. As you ever intend or hope to be saved, you must set your face like a flint against this most pernicious delusion. Probably no other mode of evading present duty has ever prevailed so extensively as this, or has destroyed so many souls. Almost all men in Gospel lands intend to prepare for death intend to repent and become religious before they die. Even Universalists expect to become religious at some time perhaps after death perhaps after being purified from their sins by purgatorial fires; but somehow they expect to become holy, for they know

they must before they can see God and enjoy His presence. But you will observe, they put this matter of becoming holy off to the most distant time possible. Feeling a strong dislike to it now, they flatter themselves that God will take care that it shall be done up duly in the next world, how much soever they may frustrate His efforts to do it in this. So long as it remains in their power to choose whether to become holy or not, they improve the time to enjoy sin; and leave it with God to make them holy in the next world if they can't prevent it there! Consistency is a jewel!

And all those who put off being religious now in the cherished delusion of becoming so in some future time, whether in this world or the next, are acting out this same inconsistency. You fondly hope that will occur which you are now doing your utmost to prevent.

So sinners by myriads press their way down to hell under this delusion. They often, when premed with the claims of God, will even name the time when they will repent. It may be very near perhaps as soon as they get home from the meeting, or as soon as the sermon is over; or it may be more remote, as, for example, when they have finished their education, or become settled in life, or have made a little more property, or get ready to abandon some business of questionable morality; but no matter whether the time set be near or remote, the delusion is fatal the thought of procrastination is murder to the soul. Ah, such sinners are little aware that Satan himself has poured out his spirit upon them and is leading them whithersoever he will. He little cares whether they put off for a longer time or a shorter. If he can persuade them to a long delay, he likes it well; if only to a short one, he feels quite sure he can renew the delay and get another extension so it answers his purpose fully in the end.

Now mark, sinner, if you ever mean to be saved you must resist and grieve away this spirit of Satan. You must cease to procrastinate. You can never be converted so long as you operate only in the way of delaying and promising yourself that you will become religious at some future time. Did you ever bring anything to pass in your temporal business by procrastination? Did procrastination ever begin, prosecute, and accomplish any important business?

Suppose you have some business of vast consequence, involving your character, or your whole estate, or your life, to be transacted in Cleveland,



but you do not know precisely how soon it must be done. It may be done with safety now, and with greater facility now than ever hereafter; but it might possibly be done although you should delay a little time, but every moment's delay involves an absolute uncertainty of your being able to do it at all. You do not know but a single hour's delay will make you too late. Now in these circumstances what would a man of sense and discretion do? Would he not be awake and up in an instant?

Would he sleep on a matter of such moment, involving such risks and uncertainties? No. You know that the risk of a hundred dollars, pending on such conditions, would stir the warm blood of any man of business, and you could not tempt him to delay an hour. O, he would say, this is the great business to which I must attend, and everything else must give way.

But suppose he should act as a sinner does about repentance, and promise himself that tomorrow will be as this day and much more abundant and do nothing today, nor tomorrow, nor the next month, nor the next year would you not think him beside himself? Would you expect his business to be done, his money to be secured, his interests to be promoted?

So the sinner accomplishes nothing but his own ruin so long as he procrastinates. Until he says, "Now is my time today I will do all my duty" he is only playing the fool and laying up his wages accordingly. O, it is infinite madness to defer a matter of such vast interest and of such perilous uncertainty!

**5.** If you would be saved you must not wait for God to do what He commands you to do. God will surely do all that He can for your salvation. All that the nature of the case allows of His doing, He either has done or stands ready to do as soon as your position and course will allow Him to do it. Long before you were born He anticipated your wants as a sinner, and began on the most liberal scale to make provision for them. He gave His Son to die for you, thus doing all that need be done by way of an atonement. Of a long time past He has been shaping His providence so as to give you the requisite knowledge of duty has sent you His Word and Spirit. Indeed, He has given you the highest possible evidence that He will be energetic and prompt on His part as one in earnest for your salvation. You know this. What sinner in this house fears lest God should be negligent on His part in the matter of his salvation? Not one. No, many of

you are not a little annoyed that God should press you so earnestly and be so energetic in the work of securing your salvation. And now can you quiet your conscience with the excuse of waiting for God to do your duty?

The fact is, there are things for you to do which God can not do for you. Those things which He has enjoined and revealed as the conditions of your salvation, He cannot and will not do Himself. If He could have done them Himself, He would not have asked you to do them. Every sinner ought to consider this. God requires of you repentance and faith because it is naturally impossible that any one else but you should do them. They are your own personal matters the voluntary exercises of your own mind; and no other being in heaven, earth, or hell, can do these things for you in your stead. As far as substitution was naturally possible, God has introduced it, as in the case of the atonement. He has never hesitated to march up to meet and to bear all the self-denials which the work of salvation has involved.

**6.** If you mean to be saved, you must not wait for God to do anything whatever. There is nothing to be waited for. God has either done all on His part already, or if anything more remains, He is ready and waiting this moment for you to do your duty that He may impart all needful grace.

**7.** Do not flee to any refuge of lies. Lies cannot save you. It is truth, not lies, that alone can save. I have often wondered how men could suppose that Universalism could save any man.

Men must be sanctified by the truth. There is no plainer teaching in the Bible than this, and no Bible doctrine is better sustained by reason and the nature of the case.

Now does Universalism sanctify anybody? Universalists say you must be punished for your sins, and that thus they will be put away as if the fires of purgatory would thoroughly consume all sin, and bring out the sinner pure. Is this being sanctified by the truth? You might as well hope to be saved by eating liquid fire! You might as well expect fire to purify your soul from sin in this world, as in the next! Why not?

It is amazing that men should hope to be sanctified and saved by this great error, or, indeed, by any error whatever. God says you must be sanctified

by the truth. Suppose you could believe this delusion, would it make you holy?

Do you believe that it would make you humble, heavenly-minded, sin-hating, benevolent? Can you believe any such thing? Be assured that Satan is, only the father of lies, and he cannot save you in fact, he would not if he could; he intends his lies not to save you, but to destroy your very soul, and nothing could be more adapted to its purpose. Lies are only the natural poison of the soul. You take them at your peril!

**8.** Don't seek for any self-indulgent method of salvation. The great effort among sinners has always been to be saved in some way of self-indulgence. They are slow to admit that self-denial is indispensable that total, unqualified self-denial is the condition of being saved. I warn you against supposing that you can be saved in some easy, self-pleasing way. Men ought to know, and always assume, that it is naturally indispensable for selfishness to be utterly put away and its demands resisted and put down.

I often ask Does the system of salvation which I preach so perfectly chime with the intuitions of my reason that I know from within myself that this Gospel is the thing I need? Does it in all its parts and relations meet the demands of my intelligence? Are its requisitions obviously just and right? Does its prescribed conditions of salvation obviously befit man's moral position before God, and his moral relations to the government of God?

To these and similar questions I am constrained to answer in the affirmative. The longer I live the more fully I see that the Gospel system is the only one that can alike meet the demands of the human intelligence, and supply the wants of man's sinning, depraved heart. The duties enjoined upon the sinner are just those things which I know must in the nature of the case be the conditions of salvation. Why, then, should any sinner think of being saved on any other conditions? Why desire it even if it were ever so practicable?

**9.** Don't imagine you will ever have a more favorable time. Impenitent sinners are prone to imagine that just now is by no means so convenient a season as may be expected hereafter. So they put off in hope of a better time. They think perhaps that they shall have more conviction, and fewer

obstacles, and less hindrances. So thought Felix. He did not intend to forego salvation, any more than you do; but he was very busy just then had certain ends to be secured which seemed peculiarly pressing, and so he begged to be excused on the promise of very faithful attention to the subject at the expected convenient season. But did the convenient season ever come? Never. Nor does it ever come to those who in like manner resist God's solemn call, and grieve away His Spirit. Thousands are now waiting in the pains of hell who said just as he did, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Oh, sinner, when will your convenient season come I Are you aware that no season will ever be "convenient" for you, unless God calls up your attention earnestly and solemnly to the subject? And can you expect Him to do this at the time of your choice, when you scorn His call at the time of His choice? Have you not heard Him say, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." O, sinner, that will be a fearful and a final doom! And the myriad voices of God's universe will say, amen.

**10.** Do not suppose that you will find another time as good, and one in which you can just as well repent as now. Many are ready to suppose that though there may be no better time for themselves, there will at least be one as good. Vain delusion! Sinner, you already owe ten thousand talents, and will you find it just as easy to be forgiven this debt while you are showing that you don't care how much and how long you augment it?

In a case like this, where everything turns upon your securing the goodwill of your creditor, do you hope to gain it by positively insulting him to his face?

Or take another view of the case. Your heart you know must one day relent for sin, or you are forever damned. You know also that each successive sin increases the hardness of your heart, and makes it a more difficult matter to repent. How, then, can you reasonably hope that a

future time will be equally favorable for your repentance? When you have hardened your neck like an iron sinew, and made your heart like an adamant stone, can you hope that repentance will yet be as easy to you as ever?

You know, sinner, that God requires you to break off from your sins now. But you look up into His face and say to Him, "Lord, it is just as well to stop abusing Thee at some future convenient time. Lord, if I can only be saved at last, I shall think it all my gain to go on insulting and abusing Thee as long as it will possibly answer. And since Thou art so very compassionate and long-suffering, I think I may venture on in sin and rebellion against Thee yet these many months and years longer. Lord, don't hurry me do let me have my way; let me abase Thee if Thou pleasest, and spit in Thy face all will be just as well if I only repent in season so as finally to be saved. I know, indeed, that Thou art entreating me to repent now, but I much prefer to wait a, season, and it will be just as well to repent at some future time."

And now do you suppose that God will set His seal to this that He will say, "You are right, sinner, I set my seal of approbation upon your course it is well that you take so just views of your duty to your Maker and your Father; go on; your course will ensure your salvation." Do you expect such a response from God as this?

**11.** If you ever expect to be saved, don't wait to see what others will do or say. I was lately astonished to find that a young lady here under conviction was in great trouble about what a beloved brother would think of her if she should give her heart to God. She knew her duty; but he was impenitent, and how could she know what he would think if she should repent now! It amounts to this. She would come before God and say, "O Thou great God, I know I ought to repent, but I can't; for I don't know as my brother will like it. I know that he too is a sinner, and must repent or lose his soul, but I am much more afraid of his frown than I am of Thine, and I care more for his approbation than I do for Thine, and consequently, I dare not repent till he does! "How shocking is this! Strange that on such a subject men will ever ask "What will others say of me?" Are you amenable to God? What, then, have others to say about your duty to Him?

God requires you and them also to repent, and why don't you do it at once?

Not long since, as I was preaching abroad, one of the principal men of the city came to the meeting for inquiry, apparently much convicted and in great distress for his soul. But being a man of high political standing, and supposing himself to be very dependent upon his friends, he insisted that he must consult them, and have a regard for their feelings in this matter. I could not possibly beat him off from this ground, although I spent three hours in the effort. He seemed almost ready to repent I thought he certainly would; but he slipped away, relapsed by a perpetual backsliding, and I expect will be found at last among the lost in perdition. Would you not expect such a result if he tore himself away under such an excuse as that?

O, sinner, you must not care what others say of you let them say what they please. Remember, the question is between your own soul and God, and "He that is wise shall be wise for himself, and he that scorneth, he alone shall bear it." You must die for yourself, and for yourself must appear before God in judgment! Go, young woman, ask your brother, "Can you answer for me when I come to the judgment? Can you pledge yourself that you can stand in my stead and answer for me there?"

Now until you have reason to believe that he can, it is wise for you to disregard his opinions if they stand at all in your way. Whoever interposes any objection to your immediate repentance, fail not to ask him Can you shield my soul in the judgment? If I can be assured that you can and will, I will make you my Savior; but if not, then I must attend to my own salvation, and leave you to attend to Yours.

I never shall forget the scene which occurred while my own mind was turning upon this great point. Seeking a retired place for prayer, I went into a deep grove, found a perfectly secluded spot behind some large logs, and knelt down. All suddenly, a leaf rustled and I sprang, for somebody must be coming and I shall be seen here at prayer. I had not been aware that I cared what others said of me, but looking back upon my exercises of mind here, I could see that I did care infinitely too much what others thought of me.

Closing my eyes again for prayer, I heard a rustling leaf again, and then the thought came over me like a wave of the sea, "I am ashamed of confessing my sin!" What! thought I, ashamed of being found speaking with God! O, how ashamed I felt of this shame! I can never describe the strong and overpowering impression which this thought made on my mind. I cried aloud at the very top of my voice, for I felt that though all the men on earth and all the devils in hell were present to hear and see me I would not shrink and would not cease to cry unto God; for what is it to me if others see me seeking the face of my God and Savior? I am hastening to the judgment: there I shall not be ashamed to have the Judge my friend. There I shall not be ashamed to have sought His face and His pardon here. There will be no shrinking away from the gaze of the universe. O, if sinners at the judgment could shrink away, how gladly would they; but they cannot! Nor can they stand there in each other's places to answer for each other's sins. That young woman, can she say then O, my brother, you must answer for me; for to please you, I rejected Christ and lost my soul? That brother is himself a guilty rebel, confounded, and agonized, and quailing before the awful Judge, and how can he befriend you in such an awful hour! Fear not his displeasure now, but rather warn him while you can, to escape for his life ere the wrath of the Lord wax hot against him, and there be no remedy.

**12.** If you would be saved, you must not indulge prejudices against either God, or His ministers, or against Christians, or against anything religious.

There are some persons of peculiar temperament who are greatly in danger of losing their souls because they are tempted to strong prejudices. Once committed either in favor of or against any persons or things they are exceedingly apt to become so fixed as never more to be really honest. And when these persons or things in regard to which they become committed, are so connected with religion, that their prejudices stand arrayed against their fulfilling the great conditions of salvation, the effect can be nothing else than ruinous. For it is naturally indispensable to salvation that you should be entirely honest. Your soul must act before God in the open sincerity of truth, or you cannot be converted.

I have known persons in revivals to remain a long time under great conviction, without submitting themselves to God, and by careful inquiry I have found them wholly hedged in by their prejudices, and yet so blind to

this fact that they would not admit that they had any prejudice at all. In my observation of convicted sinners, I have found this among the most common obstacles in the way of the salvation of souls. Men become committed against religion, and remaining in this state it is naturally impossible that they should repent. God will not humor your prejudices, or lower His prescribed conditions of salvation to accommodate your feelings.

Again, you must. give up all hostile feelings in cases where you have been really injured.

Sometimes I have seen persons evidently shut out from the kingdom of heaven, because having been really injured, they would not forgive and forget, but maintained such a spirit of resistance and revenge, that they could not, in the nature of the case, repent of the sin toward God, nor could God forgive them. Of course they lost heaven. I have heard men say, "I cannot forgive I will not forgive I have been injured, and I never will forgive that wrong." Now mark: you must not hold on to such feelings; if you do, you cannot be saved.

Again, you must not suffer yourself to be stumbled by the prejudices of others. I have often been struck with the state of things in families, where the parents or older persons had prejudices against the minister, and have wondered why those parents were not more wise than to lay stumbling-blocks before their children to ruin their souls. This is often the true reason why children are not converted. Their minds are turned against the Gospel, by being turned against those from whom they hear it preached. I would rather have persons come into my family, and curse and swear before my children, than to have them speak against those who preach to them the Gospel. Therefore I say to all parents take care what you say, if you would not shut the gate of heaven against your children!

Again, do not allow yourself to take some fixed position, and then suffer the stand you have taken to debar you from doing any obvious duty. Persons sometimes allow themselves to be committed against taking what is called "the anxious seat;" and consequently they refuse to go forward under circumstances when it is obviously proper that they should, and where their refusal to do so, places them in an attitude unfavorable, and perhaps fatal to their conversion. Let every sinner beware of this!



Again, do not hold on to anything about which you have any doubt of its lawfulness or propriety. Cases often occur in which persons are not fully satisfied that a thing is wrong, and yet are not satisfied that it is right. Now in cases of this sort it should not be enough to say, “such and such Christians do so;” you ought to have better reasons than this for your course of conduct. If you ever expect to be saved, you must abandon all practices which you even suspect to be wrong. This principle seems to be involved in the passage, “He that doubteth is damned if he eat; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” To do that which is of doubtful propriety is to allow yourself to tamper with the divine authority, and cannot fail to break down in your mind that solemn dread of sinning which, if you would ever be saved, you must carefully cherish.

Again, if you would be saved, do not look at professors and wait for them to become engaged as they should be in the great work of God. If they are not what they ought to be, let them alone. Let them bear their own awful responsibility. It often happens that convicted sinners compare themselves with professed Christians, and excuse themselves for delaying their duty, because professed Christians are delaying theirs. Sinners must not do this if they would ever be saved. It is very probable that you will always find guilty professors enough to stumble over into hell if you will allow yourself to do so.

But on the other hand, many professors may not be nearly so bad as you suppose, and you must not be censorious, putting the worst constructions upon their conduct. You have other work to do than this. Let them stand or fall to their own master. Unless you abandon the practice of picking flaws in the conduct of professed Christians, it is utterly impossible that you should be saved.

Again, do not depend upon professors on their prayers or influence in any way. I have known children hang a long time upon the prayers of their parents, putting those prayers in the place of Jesus Christ, or at least in the place of their own present efforts to do their duty. Now this course pleases Satan entirely. He would ask nothing more to make sure of you. Therefore, depend on no prayers not even those of the holiest Christians on earth.

The matter of your conversion lies between yourself and God alone, as really as if you were the only sinner in all the world, or as if there were no other beings in the universe but yourself and your God.

Do not seek for any apology or excuse whatever. I dwell upon this and urge it the more because I so often find persons resting on some excuse without being themselves aware of it. In conversation with them upon their spiritual state, I see this and say, "There you are resting on that excuse." "Am I?" say they, "I did not know it."

Do not seek for stumbling-blocks. Sinners, a little disturbed in their stupidity, begin to cast about for stumbling-blocks for self-vindication. All at once they become wide awake to the faults of professors, as if they had to bear the care of all the churches. The real fact is, they are all engaged to find something to which they can take exception, so that they can thereby blunt the keen edge of truth upon their own consciences. This never helps along their own salvation.

Do not tempt the forbearance of God. If you do, you are in the utmost danger of being given over forever. Do not presume that you may go on yet longer in your sins, and still find the gate of mercy. This presumption has paved the way for the ruin of many souls.

Do not despair of salvation and settle down in unbelief, saying, "There is no mercy for me." You must not despair in any such sense as to shut yourself out from the kingdom. You may well despair of being saved without Christ and without repentance; but you are bound to believe the Gospel; and to do this is to believe the glad tidings that Jesus Christ has come to save sinners, even the chief, and that "Him that cometh to Him He will in no wise cast out." You have no right to disbelieve this, and act as if there were no truth in it.

You must not wait for more conviction. Why do you need any more? You know your guilt and know your present duty. Nothing can be more preposterous, therefore, than to wait for more conviction. If you did not know that you are a sinner, or that you are guilty for sin, there might be some fitness in seeking for conviction of the truth on these points.

Do not wait for more or for different feelings. Sinners are often saying, "I must feel differently before I can come to Christ," or, "I must have more

feeling.” As if this were the great thing which God requires of them. In this they are altogether mistaken.

Do not wait to be better prepared. While you wait you are growing worse and worse, and are fast rendering your salvation impossible.

Don't wait for God to change your heart. Why should you wait for Him to do what He has commanded you to do, and waits for you to do in obedience to His command?

Don't try to recommend yourself to God by prayers or tears or by anything else whatsoever. Do you suppose your prayers lay God under any obligation to forgive you? Suppose you owed a man five hundred talents, and should go a hundred times a week and beg him to remit to you this debt; and then should enter your prayers in account against your creditor, as so much claim against him. Suppose you should pursue this course till you had canceled the debt, as you suppose could you hope to prove anything by this course except that you were mad? And yet sinners seem to suppose that their many prayers and tears lay the Lord under real obligation to them to forgive them.

Never rely on anything else whatever than Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. It is preposterous for you to hope, as many do, to make some propitiation by your own sufferings. In my early experience I thought I could not expect to be converted at once, but must be bowed down a long time. I said to myself, “God will not pity me till I feel worse than I do now. I can't expect Him to forgive me till I feel a greater agony of soul than this.” Not even if I could have gone on augmenting my sufferings till they equaled the miseries of hell, it could not have changed God. The fact is, God does not ask of you that you should suffer. Your sufferings cannot in the nature of the case avail for atonement. Why, therefore, should you attempt to thrust aside the system of God's providing, and thrust in one of your own?

There is another view of the case. The thing God demands of you is that you should bow your stubborn will to Him. Just as a child in the attitude of disobedience, and required to submit, might fall to weeping and groaning, and to every expression of agony, and might even torture himself, in hope of moving the pity of his father, but all the time refuses to submit

to parental authority. He would be very glad to put his own sufferings in the place of the submission demanded. This is what the sinner is doing. He would fain put his own sufferings in the place of submission to God, and move the pity of the Lord so much that He would recede from the hard condition of repentance and submission.

If you would be saved you must not listen at all to those who pity you, and who impliedly take your part against God, and try to make you think you are not so bad as you are. I once knew a woman who, after a long season of distressing conviction, fell into great despair; her health sank, and she seemed about to die. All this time she found no relief, but seemed only to wax worse and worse, sinking down in stem and awful despair. Her friends, instead of dealing plainly and faithfully with her, and probing her guilty heart to the bottom, had taken the course of pitying her, and almost complained of the Lord that He would not have compassion on the poor agonized, dying woman. At length, as she seemed in the last stages of life so weak as to be scarcely able to speak in a low voice, there happened in a minister who better understood how to deal with convicted sinners. The woman's friends cautioned him to deal very carefully with her, as she was in a dreadful state and greatly to be pitied; but he judged it best to deal with her very faithfully. As he approached her bed-side, she raised her faint voice and begged for a little water. "Unless you repent, you will soon be," said he, "where there is not a drop of water to cool your tongue." "O," she cried, "must I go down to hell?" "Yes, you must, and you will, soon, unless you repent and submit to God. Why don't you repent and submit immediately?" "O," she replied, "it is an awful thing to go to hell!" "Yes, and for that very reason Christ has provided an atonement through Jesus Christ, but you won't accept it. He brings the cup of salvation to your lips, and you thrust it away. Why will you do this? Why will you persist in being an enemy of God and scorn His offered salvation, when you might become His friend and have salvation if you would?"

This was the strain of their conversation, and its result was, that the woman saw her guilt and her duty, and turning to the Lord, found pardon and peace.

Therefore I say, if your conscience convicts you of sin, don't let anybody take your part against God. Your wound needs not a plaster, but a probe.

Don't fear the probe; it is the only thing that can save you. Don't seek to hide your guilt, or veil your eyes from seeing it, nor be afraid to know the worst, for you must know the very worst, and the sooner you know it the better. I warn you, don't look after some physician to give you an opiate, for you don't need it. Shun, as you would, death itself, all those who would speak to you smooth things and prophesy deceits. They would surely ruin your soul.

Again, do not suppose that if you become a Christian, it will interfere with any of the necessary or appropriate duties of life, or with anything whatever to which you ought to attend. No; religion never interferes with any real duty. So far is this from being the case, that in fact a proper attention to your various duties is indispensable to your being religious. You cannot serve God without.

Moreover, if you would be saved you must not give heed to anything that would hinder you. It is infinitely important that your soul should be saved. No consideration thrown in your way should be allowed to have the weight of a straw or a feather. Jesus Christ has illustrated and enforced this by several parables, especially in the one which compares the kingdom of heaven to "a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it." In another parable, the kingdom of heaven is said to be "like treasure hid in a field, which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." Thus forcibly are men taught that they must be ready to make any sacrifice whatever which may be requisite in order to gain the kingdom of heaven.

Again, you must not seek religion selfishly. You must not make your own salvation or happiness the supreme end. Beware, for if you make this your supreme end you will get a false hope, and will probably glide along down the pathway of the hypocrite into the deepest hell.

## II. WHAT SINNERS MUST DO TO BE SAVED

**1.** You must understand what you have to do. It is of the utmost importance that you should see this clearly. You need to know that you must return to God, and to understand what this means. The difficulty

between yourself and God is that you have stolen yourself and run away from His service. You belong of right to God. He created you for Himself, and hence had a perfectly righteous claim to the homage of your heart, and the service of your life. But you, instead of living to meet His claims, have run away have deserted from God's service, and have lived to please yourself. Now your duty is to return and restore yourself to God.

**2.** You must return and confess your sins to God. You must confess that you have been all wrong, and that God has been all right. Go before the Lord and lay open the depth of your guilt. Tell Him you deserve just as much damnation as He has threatened.

These confessions are naturally indispensable to your being forgiven. In accordance with this the Lord says, "If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant." Then God can forgive. But so long as you controvert this point, and will not concede that God is right, or admit that you are wrong, He can never forgive you.

You must moreover confess to man if you have injured any one. And is it not a fact that you have injured some, and perhaps many of your fellow-men? Have you not slandered your neighbor and said things which you have no right to say? Have you not in some instances, which you could call to mind if you would, lied to them, or about them, or covered up or perverted the truth; and have you not been willing that others should have false impressions of you or of your conduct? If so, you must renounce all such iniquity, for "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; while he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." And, furthermore, you must not only confess your sins to God and to the men you have injured, but you must also make restitution. You have not taken the position of a penitent before, God and man until you have done this also.

God cannot treat you as a penitent until you have done it.

I do not mean by this that God cannot forgive you until you have carried into effect your purpose of restitution by finishing the outward act, for sometimes it may demand time, and may in some cases be itself impossible to you. But the purpose must be sincere and thorough before you can be forgiven of God.

**3.** You must renounce yourself. In this is implied,

**(1.)** That you renounce your own righteousness, forever discarding the very idea of having any righteousness in yourself.

**(2.)** That you forever relinquish the idea of having done any good which ought to commend you to God, or be ever thought of as a ground of your justification.

**(3.)** That you renounce your own will, and be ever ready to say not in word only, but in heart, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” You must consent most heartily that God’s will shall be your supreme law.

**(4.)** That you renounce your own way and let God have His own way in everything. Never suffer yourself to fret and be rasped by anything whatever; for since God’s agency extends to all events, you ought to recognize His hand in all things; and of course to fret at anything whatever is to fret against God who has at least permitted that thing to occur as it does. So long, therefore, as you suffer yourself to fret, you are not right with God. You must become before God as a little child, subdued and trustful at His feet. Let the weather be fair or foul, consent that God should have His way. Let all things go well with you, or as men call it, ill; yet let God do His pleasure, and let it be your part to submit in perfect resignation. Until you take this ground you cannot be saved.

**4.** You must come to Christ. You must accept of Christ really and fully as your Savior. Renouncing all thought of depending on anything you have done or can do, you must accept of Christ as your atoning sacrifice, and as your ever-living Mediator before God. Without the least qualification or reserve you must place yourself under His wing as your Savior.

**5.** You must seek supremely to please Christ, and not yourself. It is naturally impossible that you should be saved until you come into this attitude of mind until you are so well pleased with Christ in all respects as to find your pleasure in doing His. It is in the nature of things impossible that you should be happy in any other state of mind, or unhappy in this. For, His pleasure is infinitely good and right. When, therefore, His good pleasure becomes your good pleasure, and your will harmonizes entirely with His, then you will be happy for the same reason that He is happy,

and you cannot fail of being happy any more than Jesus Christ can. And this becoming supremely happy in God's will is essentially the idea of salvation. In this state of mind you are saved. Out of it you cannot be.

It has often struck my mind with great force, that many professors of religion are deplorably and utterly mistaken on this point. Their real feeling is that Christ's service is an iron collar an insufferably hard yoke. Hence, they labor exceedingly to throw off some of this burden. They try to make it out that Christ does not require much, if any, self-denial much, if any, deviation from the course of worldliness and sin. O, if they could only get the standard of Christian duty quite down to a level with the fashions and customs of this world! How much easier then to live a Christian life and wear Christ's yoke!

But taking Christ's yoke as it really is, it becomes in their view an iron collar. Doing the will of Christ, instead of their own, is a hard business.

Now if doing Christ's will is religion, (and who can doubt it?) then they only need enough of it; and in their state of mind they will be supremely wretched. Let me ask those who groan under the idea that they must be religious who deem it awful hard but they must how much religion of this kind would it take to make hell? Surely not much! When it gives you no joy to do God's pleasure, and yet you are shut up to the doing of His pleasure is the only way to be saved, and are thereby perpetually dragooned into the doing of what you hate, as the only means of escaping hell, would not this be itself a hell? Can you not see that in this state of mind you are not saved and cannot be?

To be saved you must come into a state of mind in which you will ask no higher joy than to do God's pleasure. This alone will be forever enough to fill your cup to overflowing.

You must have all confidence in Christ, or you cannot so saved. You must absolutely believe in Him believe all His words of promise. They were given you to be believed, and unless you believe them they can do you no good at all. So far from helping you without you exercise faith in them, they will only aggravate your guilt for unbelief. God would be believed when He speaks in love to lost sinners. He gave them these "exceeding great and precious promises, that they, by faith in them, might escape the



corruption that is in the world through lust.” But thousands of professors of religion know not how to use these promises, and as to them or any profitable use they make, the promises might as well have been written on the sands of the sea.

Sinners, too, will go down to hell in unbroken masses, unless they believe and take hold of God by faith in His promise. O, His awful wrath is out against them! And He says, “I would go through them, I would burn them up together; or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me.” Yes, let him stir up himself and take hold of My arm, strong to save, and then he may make peace with Me. Do you ask how take hold? By faith. Yes, by faith; believe His words and take hold; take hold of His strong arm and swing right out over hell, and don’t be afraid any more than if there were no hell.

But you say I do believe, and yet I am not saved. No, you don’t believe. A woman said to me, “I believe, I know I do, and yet here I am in my sins.” No, said I, you don’t. Have you as much confidence in God as you would have in me if I had promised you a dollar? Do you ever pray to God? And, if so, do you come with any such confidence as you would have if you came to me to ask for a promised dollar? Oh, until you have as much faith in God as this, aye and more until you have more confidence in God than you would have in ten thousand men, your faith does not honor God, and you cannot hope to please Him. You must say Let God be true though every man be a liar.”

But you say, “O, I am a sinner, and how can I believe? I know you are a sinner, and so are all men to whom God has given these promises. “O, but I am a great sinner!” Well, “It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom,” Paul says, “I am the chief” So you need not despair.

**7.** You must forsake all that you have, or you cannot be Christ’s disciple. There must be absolute and total self-denial.

By this I do not mean that you are never to eat again, or never again to clothe yourself, or never more enjoy the society of your friends no, not this; but that you should cease entirely from using any of these enjoyments selfishly. You must no longer think to own yourself: your

time, your possessions, or anything you have ever called your own. All these things you must hold as God's, not yours. In this sense you are to forsake all that you have, namely, in the sense of laying all upon God's altar to be devoted supremely and only to His service. When you come back to God for pardon and salvation, come with all you have to lay all at his feet. Come with your body, to offer it as a living sacrifice upon His altar. Come with your soul and all its powers, and yield them in willing consecration to your God and Savior. Come, bring them all along everything, body, soul, intellect, imagination, acquirements all, without reserve. Do you say Must I bring them all? Yes, all absolutely ALL; do not keep back anything don't sin against your own soul, like Ananias and Sapphira, by keeping back a part, but renounce your own claim to everything, and recognize God's right to all. Say Lord, these things are not mine. I had stolen them, but they were never mine. They were always Thine; I'll have them no longer. Lord, these things are all Thine, henceforth and forever. Now, what wilt Thou have me to do? I have no business of my own to do I am wholly at Thy disposal. Lord, what work hast Thou for me to do?

In this spirit you must renounce the world, the flesh, and Satan. Your fellowship is henceforth to be with Christ, and not with those objects. You are to live for Christ, and not for the world, the flesh, or the devil.

**8.** You must believe the record God hath given of His Son. He that believes not does not receive the record does not set to his seal that God is true. "This is the record that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The condition of your having it is that you believe the record, and of course that you act accordingly. Suppose here is a poor man living at your next door, and the mail brings him a letter stating that a rich man has died in England, leaving him 100,000 pounds sterling, and the cashier of a neighboring bank writes him that he has received the amount on deposit for him, and holds it subject to his order. Well, the poor man says, I can't believe the record. I can't believe there ever was any such rich man; I can't believe there is 100,000 pounds for me. So he must live and die as poor as Lazarus, because he won't believe the record.

Now, mark; this is just the case with the unbelieving sinner. God has given you eternal life, and it waits your order; but you don't get it because you

will not believe, and therefore will not make out the order, and present in due form the application.

Ah, but you say, I must have some feeling before I can believe how can I believe till I have the feeling? So the poor man might say How can I believe that the 100,000 pounds is mine; I have not got a farthing of it now; I am as poor as ever. Yes, you are poor because you will not believe. If you would believe, you might go and buy out every store in this country. Still you cry, I am as poor as ever. I can't believe it; see my poor worn clothes I was never more ragged in my life; I have not a particle of the feeling and the comforts of a rich man. So the sinner can't believe till he gets the inward experience! He must wait to have some of the feeling of a saved sinner before he can believe the record and take hold of the salvation! Preposterous enough! So the poor man must wait to get his new clothes and fine house before he can believe his documents and draw for his money. Of course he dooms himself to everlasting poverty, although mountains of gold were all his own.

Now, sinner, you must understand this. Why should you be lost when eternal life is bought and offered you by the last will and testament of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you not believe the record and draw for the amount at once! Do for mercy's sake understand this and not lose heaven by your own folly!

I must conclude by saying, that if you would be saved you must accept a prepared salvation, one already prepared and full, and present. You must be willing to give up all your sins, and be saved from them, all, now and henceforth! Until you consent to this, you cannot be saved at all. Many would be willing to be saved in heaven, if they might hold on to some sins while on earth or rather they think they would Eke heaven on such terms.

But the fact is, they would as much dislike a pure heart and a holy life in heaven as they do on earth, and they deceive themselves utterly in supposing that they are ready or even willing to go to such a heaven as God has prepared for His people. No, there can be no heaven except for those who accept a salvation from all sin in this world. They must take the Gospel as a system which holds no compromise with sin which contemplates full deliverance from sin even now, and makes provision accordingly. Any other gospel is not the true one, and to accept of Christ's

Gospel in any other sense is not to accept it all. Its first and its last condition is sworn and eternal renunciation of all sin.

## REMARKS

**1.** Paul did not give the same answer to this question which a consistent Universalist would give. The latter would say, You are to be saved by being first punished according to your sin. All men must expect to be punished all that their sins deserve. But Paul did not answer thus. Miserable comforter had he been if he had answered after this sort: “You must all be punished according to the letter of the law you have broken.” This could scarcely have been called gospel.

Nor again did Paul give the Universalist’s answer and say, “Do not concern yourself about this matter of being saved, all men are sure enough of being saved without any particular anxiety about it.” Not so Paul; no he understood and did not forbear to express the necessity of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ as the condition of being saved.

**2.** Take care that you do not sin willfully after saying understood the truth concerning the way of salvation. Your danger of this is great precisely in proportion as you see your duty clearly. The most terrible damnation must fall on the head of those who “knew their duty, but who did it not.” When, therefore, you are told plainly and truly what your duty is, be on your guard lest you let salvation slip out of your hands. It may never come so near your reach again.

**3.** Do not wait, even to go home, before you obey God. Make up your mind now, at once, to close in with the offers of salvation. Why not? Are they not most reasonable?

**4.** Let your mind act upon this great proposal and embrace it just as you would any other important proposition. God lays the proposition before you; you hear it explained, and you understand it; now the next and only remaining step is to embrace it with all your heart. just as any other great question (we may suppose it a question of life or death) might come before a community the case be fully stated, the conditions explained, and then the issue is made. Will you subscribe? Will you engage to meet these

conditions? Do you heartily embrace the proposition? Now all this would be intelligible.

Just so, now, in the case of the sinner. You understand the proposition. You know the conditions of salvation. You understand the contract into which you are to enter with your God and Savior. You covenant to give your all to God to lay yourself upon His altar to be used up there just as He pleases to use you. And now the only remaining question is, Will you consent to this at once? Will you go for full and everlasting consecration with all your heart?

**5.** The jailer made no excuse. When he knew his duty, in a moment he yielded. Paul told him what to do, and he did it. Possibly he might have heard something about Paul's preaching before this night; but probably not much. But now he fears for his life. How often have I been struck with this case! There was a dark-minded heathen. He had heard, we must suppose, a great deal of slang about these apostles; but notwithstanding all, he came to them for truth; hearing, he is convinced, and being convinced, he yields at once. Paul uttered a single sentence he received it, embraced it, and it is done.

Now you, sinner, know and admit all this truth, and yet infinitely strange as it is, you will not, in a moment, believe and embrace it with all your heart. O, will not Sodom and Gomorrah rise up against you in the judgment and condemn you! That heathen jailer how could you bear to see him on that dread day, and stand rebuked by his example there!

**6.** It is remarkable that Paul said nothing about the jailer's needing any help in order to believe and repent. He did not even mention the work of the Spirit, or allude to the jailer's need of it. But it should be noticed that Paul gave the jailer just those directions which would most effectually secure the Spirit's aid and promote his action.

**7.** The jailer seems to have made no delay at all, waiting for no future or better time; but as soon as the conditions are before him he yields and embraces; no sooner is the proposition made than he seizes upon it in a moment.

I was once preaching in a village in New York, and there sat before me a lawyer who had been greatly offended with the Gospel. But that day I

noticed he sat with fixed eye and open mouth, leaned forward as if he would seize each word as it came. I was explaining and simplifying the Gospel, and when I came to state just how the Gospel is offered to men, he said to me afterwards: I snatched at it I put out my hand, (suited the action to the thought), and seized it and it became mine.

So in my own case while in the woods praying, after I had burst away from the fear of man, and began to give scope to my feelings, this passage fell upon me, "Ye shall seek for Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." For the first time in the world I found that I believed a passage in the Bible. I had supposed that I believed before, but surely never before as I now did. Now, said I to myself, "This is the word of the everlasting God. My God, I take Thee at Thy word. Thou sayest I shall find Thee when I search for Thee with all my heart, and now, Lord, I do search for Thee, I know, with all my heart." And true enough, I did find the Lord. Never in all my life was I more certain of anything than I was then that I had found the Lord.

This is the very idea of His promises they were made to be believed to be laid hold of as God's own words, and acted upon as if they actually meant just what they say. When God says, "Look unto Me and be ye saved," He would have us look unto Him as if He really had salvation in His hands to give, and withal a heart to give it. The true spirit of faith is well expressed by the Psalmist, "When Thou saidst, 'Seek ye my face,' my heart replied 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek.'" This is the way let your heart at once respond to the blessed words of invitation and of promise.

Ah, but you say, I am not a Christian. And you never will be till you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. If you never become a Christian, the reason will be because you do not and will not believe the Gospel and embrace it with all your heart.

The promises were made to be believed, and belong to an one who will believe them. They reach forth their precious words to all, and whoever will, may take them as his own. Now will you believe that the Father has given you eternal life? This is the fact declared; will you believe it?

You have now been told what you must not do and what you must do to be saved; are you prepared to act? Do you say, I am ready to renounce

my own pleasure, and henceforth seek no other pleasure than to please God? Can you forego everything else for the sake of this?

Sinner, do you want to please God, or would you choose to please yourself? Are you willing now to please God and to begin by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation? Will you be as simple-hearted as the jailer was? And act as promptly?

I demand your decision now. I dare not have you go home first, lest you get to talking about something else, and let slip these words of life and this precious opportunity to grasp an offered salvation. And whom do you suppose I am now addressing? Every impenitent sinner in this house every one. I call heaven and earth to record that I have set the Gospel before you today. Will you take it? Is it not reasonable for you to decide at once? Are you ready, now, to say before high heaven and before this congregation, "I will renounce myself and yield to God! I am the Lord's, and let all men and angels bear me witness I am forevermore the Lord's." Sinner, the infinite God waits for your consent!

# THE SINNER'S NATURAL POWER AND MORAL WEAKNESS

*“Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”  
—2 Peter 2:19.*

I PROPOSE in my present discourse to discuss the moral state of the sinner.

## I. ALL MEN ARE NATURALLY FREE

The first important fact to be noted is, that all men are naturally free, and none the less so for being sinners. They naturally have freedom of will.

By natural freedom I do not mean that they have a right to do as they please; for this can by no means be true. Nor do I mean that they are free agents merely in the sense of being able to do as they will to do. In fact, men sometimes can and sometimes can not execute their purposes of will; but be this as it may, moral liberty does not consist in the power to accomplish one's purposes. You are aware that some old philosophers defined liberty of will to be the power to do what you will to do. This, for many reasons, can not be the true idea of freedom of the will. For look at the department of doing which is embraced in muscular action. The simple fact is, that some of our muscles are not under the control of the will at all, while others are under its control by a law of the sternest necessity. In regard to this latter class, all the freedom there is pertains to the will none of it to the action of the muscles controlled by the will. It is then a sheer mistake to deny the location of freedom where it is, and to locate it where it is not. If there be any such thing as necessity in the universe, it is found in the absolute control held by the will over those physical muscles which are placed under its control. The obedience of the muscles is absolute not free or voluntary in any sense whatever. Hence the absurdity of locating human freedom there.



This freedom is in the will itself, and consists in its power of free choice. To do, or not to do this is its option. It has by its own nature the function of determining its own volitions. The soul wills to do or not to do, and thus is a moral sovereign over its own activities. In this fact lies the foundation for moral agency. A being so constituted that he can will to do or not to do, and has moreover knowledge and appreciation of his moral obligations, is a moral agent. None other can be.

It deserves special notice here that every man knows that he has a conscience which tells him how he ought to act, as well as a moral power in the exercise of which he can either heed or repel its monitions.

That a man is free in the sense of determining his own activities is proved by each man's own consciousness. This proof requires no chain of reasoning. It is strong as need be, without any reasoning at all. A man is just as much aware and as well aware of originating his own acts as he is of acting at all. Does he really act himself? Yes. And does he know that he acts himself? Yes. How does he know these things?, By consciousness. But he has the same evidence of being free for this is equally proved by his own consciousness.

Still further: man can distinguish between those acts in which he is free, and those in which he is acted upon by influences independent of his own choice. He knows that in some things he is a recipient of influences and of actions exerted upon himself, while in other things he is not a recipient in the same sense, but a voluntary actor. The fact of this discrimination proves the possession of free agency.

The difference to which I now refer is one of everyday consciousness. Sometimes a man can not tell whence his thoughts come. Impressions are made upon his mind the origin of which he can not trace. They may be from above they may be from beneath: he knows but little of their source, and little about them, save that they are not his own free volitions. Of his own acts of will there can be no such uncertainty. He knows their origin. He knows that they are the product of an original power in himself, for the exercise of which he is compelled to hold himself primarily responsible.

Not only has he this direct consciousness, but he has, as already suggested, the testimony of his own conscience. This faculty, by its very nature,

takes cognizance of his moral acts, requiring certain acts of will and forbidding others. This faculty is an essential condition of free moral agency. Possessing it, and also man's other mental powers, he must be free and under moral obligation.

It is inconceivable that man should be under moral law and government, without the power of free moral action. The logical condition of the existence of a conscience in man is that he should be free.

That man is free is evident from the fact that he is conscious of praise or blameworthiness. He could not reasonably blame himself unless it were a first truth that he is free. By a first truth, I mean one that is known to all by a necessity of their own nature. There are such truths those which none can help knowing, however much they may desire to ignore them. Now unless it were a first truth, necessarily known to all, that man is free, he could not praise or blame himself.

As conscience implies moral agency, so, where there is a conscience, it is impossible for men really to deny moral responsibility. Men can not but blame themselves for wrong doing. Conscious of the forewarning of conscience against the wrong act, how can they evade the conviction that the act was wrong?

Again, the Bible always treats men as free agents, commanding them to do or not to do as if of course they had all the power requisite to obey such commands. A young minister once said to me, "I preach that men ought to repent, but never that they can." "Why not preach also that they can?" said I. He replied, "The Bible does not affirm that they can." To this I replied that it would be most consummate trifling for a human legislature, having required certain acts, to proceed to affirm that its subjects have the power to obey. The very requirement is the strongest possible affirmation, that in the belief of the enacting power, the subjects are able to do the things required. If the law-makers did not believe this, how in reason could they require it? The very first assumption to be made concerning good rulers is, that they have common sense and common honesty. To deny, virtually, that God has these qualities, is blasphemous.

Freedom of will lies among the earliest and most resistless convictions. Probably no one living can remember his first idea of oughtness his first

convictions of right and wrong. It is also among our most irresistible convictions. We assume the freedom of our own will from the very first. The little child affirms it in its first infantile efforts to accomplish its purposes. See him reach forth to get his food or his playthings. The little machinery of a freely acting agent begins to play long ere he can understand it. He begins to act on his own responsibility, long before he can estimate what or how great this responsibility is. The fact of personal responsibility is fastened on us so that we might as well escape from ourselves as from this conviction.

## II. MEN ARE IN MORAL BONDAGE

While it is true, past a rational denial, that men have this attribute of moral liberty, it is equally true that they are morally enslaved in moral bondage. The liberty they have by created constitution; the bondage comes by voluntary perversion and abuse of their powers.

The Bible represents men as being in bondage. As having the power to resist temptation to sin, but yet as voluntarily yielding to those temptations. Just as our dough-faced politicians might, but do not and will not, resist the demands of the slave power. Just such is the bondage of sinners under temptation. The Bible represents Satan as ruling the hearts of men at his will, just as the men who wield the slave power of the South rule the dough faces of the North at their will, dictating the choice of our Presidents and the entire legislation of the Federal Government. So Satan ruled Eve in the garden; so he now “works in the children of disobedience.”

What the Bible thus represents, experience proves to be true. Wicked men know that they are in bondage to Satan. What do you think puts it into the heart of young men to plot iniquity and drink it in like water? Is it not the devil? How many young men do we meet with who, when tempted, seem to have no moral stamina to resist, but are swept away by the first gust of temptation.

Men are in bondage to their appetites. Appetite excited leads them away as it led Eve and Adam. What can be the reason that some young men find it so hard to give up the use of tobacco? They know the habit is filthy and disgusting; they know it must injure their health; but appetite craves, and

the devil helps on its demands; the poor victim makes a feeble effort to deliver himself, but the devil turns the screw again and holds him the tighter, and then drags him back to a harder bondage.

So when a man is in bondage to alcohol, and so with every form of sensual indulgence. Satan helps on the influence of sensuality, and does not care much what the particular form of it may be, provided its power be strong enough to ruin, the soul. It all plays into his hand and promotes his main purpose.

So men are in bondage to the love of money; to the fashions of the world: to the opinions of mankind. By these they are enslaved and led on in the face of the demands of duty. Every man is really enslaved who is in fact led counter to his convictions of duty. He is free only when he acts in accordance with those convictions. This is the true idea of liberty. Only when reason and conscience control the will is a man free for God made men intelligent and moral beings to act normally, under the influence of their own enlightened conscience and reason. This is such freedom as God exercises and enjoys; none can be higher or nobler. But when a moral agent is in bondage to his low appetites and passions, and is led by them to disregard the dictates of his conscience and of his reason, he is simply a galley slave, and to a very hard and cruel master.

God made men to be free, giving them just such mental powers as they need in order to control their own activities as a rational being should wish to. Their bondage, then, is altogether voluntary. They choose to resist the control of reason, and submit to the control of appetite and passion.

Every impenitent man is conscious of being really in bondage to temptation. What man, not saved from sin through grace, does not know that he is an enigma to himself? I should have little respect for any man who should say he was never ashamed of himself, and never found himself doing things he could not well account for. Especially I should be ashamed and afraid, too, if I were to hear a student say he had never been impressed with a sense of his moral weakness. Such ignorance would only show his utter lack of reflection, and his consequent failure to notice the most obvious moral phenomena of his inner life. What! does he not know that his weakest desires carry his will, the strongest convictions of his reason and conscience to the contrary notwithstanding?

This is a most guilty state, because so altogether voluntary so needless, and so opposed to the convictions of his reason and of his understanding, and withal so opposed to his convictions of God's righteous demands. To go counter to such convictions, he must be supremely guilty.

Of course such conduct must be most suicidal. The sinner acts in most decided opposition to his own best interests, so that if he has the power to ruin himself this course must certainly do it. The course he pursues is of all others best adapted to destroy both body and soul; how, then, can it be anything but suicidal? He practically denies all moral obligation. And yet he knows the fact of his moral obligation, and denies it in the face of his clearest convictions. How can this be otherwise than suicidal? I have many times asked sinners how they could account for their own conduct. The honest ones answer, "I cannot at all; I am an enigma to myself." The real explanation is, that while by created constitution they are free moral agents, yet, by the infatuation of sin, they have sold themselves into moral bondage, and are really slaves to Satan and their own lusts.

This is a state of deep moral degradation. Intrinsicly it is most disgraceful. Everybody feels this in regard to certain forms of sin and classes of sinners. We all feel that drunkenness is beastly. A drunkard we regard as a long way toward beasthood. See him reeling about, mentally besotted and reeking in his own filth! Is not he almost a beast? Nay, rather must we not ask pardon of all beasts for this comparison, for not one is so mean and so vile not one excites in our bosom such a sense of voluntary degradation. Compared with the self-besotted drunkard, any one of them is a noble creature.

So we all say, looking only from our human standpoint. But there is another and a better standpoint. How do angels look upon this self-made drunkard? They see in him one made only a little lower than themselves, and one who might have aspired to companionship with them; yet he chose rather to sink himself down to a level with swine! O how their souls must recoil from the sight of such self-made degradation! To see the noble quality of intellect discarded; and yet nobler moral qualities disowned, and trodden under foot as if they were only an incumbrance this is too much for angels to bear. How they must feel!

Nor is the drunkard alone in the contempt which his sensual degradation entails. See the tobacco-smoker. The correct taste of community demands that by conventional laws he be excluded from parlors, steamboat-cabins, first-class rail-cars, churches, and indeed all really decent places. Yet, for the sake of this low indulgence, the smoker is willing to descend into places not decent. See him steal out of his place among respectable people in the rail-car, and herd with rowdies in the smoking-car, for the sake of his filthy indulgence. If he were only obliged to ride all day in the society to which he sinks himself by this indulgence, it might admonish him of the cost of his sensuality! It might help to open his eyes!

I have taken these forms of sensual indulgence as illustrations of the real degradation of sin. In these cases the good sense of mankind has been evinced by the grade of debasement to which they consign these votaries of low self-indulgence. If we only saw things in their right light we should take the same view of the moralist. I recollect that in talking with a great moralist he said, "How can I act from regard to God or to the right? How can I go to meeting from the high motive of pleasing God? I can go from a desire to promote my own selfish ends, but how can I go for the sake of pleasing God?"

Yes, that is precisely his difficulty and his guilt. He does not care how little he pleases God! That is the least of his concern. The very lowest class of motives sways his will and his life. He stands entirely afar from the reach of the highest and noblest. In this consists his self-made degradation and his exceeding great guilt.

So of the miser when he gets beyond all motives but the love of hoarding; when his practical question is not, How shall I honor my race, or bless my generation, or glorify my Maker; but, How can I make a few coppers? Even when urged to pray, he would ask, "What profit shall I have if I do pray unto Him?" When you find a man thus incapable of being moved by noble motives, what a wretch he is! How ineffably mean!

So I might bring before you the ambitious scholar, who is too low in his aims to be influenced by the exalted motive of doing good, and who feels only that which touches his reputation. Is not this exceedingly low and mean? What would you think of the preacher who should lose all regard for the welfare of souls, and think only of fishing for his reputation? What

would you say of him? You would declare that he was too mean and too wicked to live, and fit only for hell! What would you think of one who might shine like Lucifer among the morning stars of intellect and genius, but who should debase himself to the low and miserable vocation of snuffing round after applause, and fishing for compliments to his talents? Would you not say that such self-seeking is unutterably contemptible? With all heaven from above beckoning them on to lofty purposes and efforts, there they are, working their “muck-rake,” and nosing after some little advantage to their small selves!

See that ambitious man who so longs to please everybody that he conforms his own to everybody’s opinions, and never has one that is really his own! Must not he be low enough to satisfy any of those whose ambition seems strangely reversed, so that they only aspire to dive and sink never to soar; whose impulses all tend downwards and never up?

One would suppose they would have degradation enough to satisfy any ordinary ambition.

All this comes of bondage to base selfishness. Alas, that there should be so much of this in our world that public sentiment rarely estimates it any wise according to its real nature!

## REMARKS

Our subject reveals the case of those who are convicted of the right, but cannot be persuaded to do it.

For example, on the subject of temperance, he is convicted as to duty knows he ought to reform absolutely, but yet he will not change. Every temperance lecture carries conviction, but the next temptation sweeps it by the board, and he returns like the dog to his vomit. But mark this every successive process of temperance conviction and temptation’s triumph, leaves him weaker than before, and very soon you will find him utterly prostrate. Miserable man! How certainly he will die in his sins!

No matter what the form of the temptation may be, he who, when convinced of his duty, yet takes no corresponding action, is on the high-

road to perdition. Inevitably this bondage grows stronger and stronger with every fresh trial of its strength. Every time you are convinced of duty and yet resist that conviction, and refuse to act in accordance with it, you become more and more helpless; you commit yourself more and more to the control of your iron-hearted master. Every fresh case renders you only the more fully a helpless slave.

There may be some young men here who have already made themselves a moral wreck. There may be lads not yet sixteen who have already put their conscience effectually beneath their feet. Already you have learned, perhaps, to go against all your convictions of duty. How horrible! Every day your hands are growing stronger. With each day's resistance, your soul is more deeply and hopelessly lost. Poor miserable, dying sinner! "He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy!" Suddenly, you dash upon the breakers and are gone! Your friends move solemnly along the shore, and took out upon those rocks of damnation on which your soul is wrecked, and weeping as they go, they mournfully say. "There is the wreck of one who knew his duty, but did it not,

Thousands of times the appeals of conviction came home to his heart, but he learned to resist them he made it his business to resist, and, alas! he was only too successful!"

How insane the delusion, that the sinner's case while yet in his sins, is growing better, As well might the drunkard fancy he is growing better because every temperance lecture convicts him of his sin and shame, while yet every next day's temptation leaves him drunk as ever! Growing better! There can be no delusion so false and so fatal as this!

You see the force of this delusion in clearer light when you notice how slight are the considerations that sway the soul against all the vast motives of God's character and kingdom. Must not that be a strong and fearful delusion which can make considerations so slight outweigh motives so vast and momentous?

The guilt of this state is to be estimated by the insignificance of the motives which control the mind. What would you think of the youth who could murder his father for a sixpence? What! you would exclaim, for so



mean a pittance be bribed to murder his father! You would account his guilt the greater by how much less the temptation.

Our subject shows the need of the Holy Spirit to impress the truth on the hearts of sinners.

You may also see how certainly sinners will be lost if they grieve the Spirit of God away. Your earthly friends might be discouraged, and yet you might be saved; but if the Spirit of God becomes discouraged and leaves you, your doom is sealed forever. "Woe unto them when I depart from them!" This departure of God from the sinner gives the signal for tolling the knell of his lost soul. Then the mighty, angel begins to toll, TOLL, TOLL! the great bell of eternity: one more soul going to its eternal doom!

# ON THE ATONEMENT

*“How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”  
— 1 Corinthians 15:3.*

*“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.*

*“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8.*

*“The Lord is well pleased for his Righteousness’ sake: he will magnify the law and make it honorable.” Isaiah 42:21.*

*“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 3:25, 26.*

IN this last passage, the apostle states, with unusual fullness, the theological, and, I might even say, the philosophical design of Christ’s mission to our world that is, o set forth before created beings, God’s righteousness in forgiving sins. It is here said that Christ is set forth as a propitiation that God may be just in forgiving sin, assuming that God could not have been just to the universe, unless Christ had been first set forth as a sacrifice.

When we seriously consider the irresistible convictions of our own minds in regard to our relations to God and His government, we cannot but see that we are sinners, and are lost beyond hope on the score of law and justice. The fact that we are grievous sinners against God is an ultimate fact of human consciousness, testified to by our irresistible convictions, and no more to be denied than the fact that there is such a thing as wrong.

Now, if God be holy and good, it must be that He disapproves wrongdoing, and will punish it. The penalty of His law is pronounced against it. Under this penalty, we stand condemned, and have no relief save through some adequate atonement, satisfactory to God, because safe to the interests of His kingdom.

Thus far we may advance safely and on solid ground, by the simple light of nature. If there were no Bible, we might know so much with absolute certainty. So far, even infidels are compelled to go.

Here, then, we are, under absolute and most righteous condemnation. Is there any way of escape? If so, it must be revealed to us in the Bible; for from any other source it can not come. The Bible does profess to reveal a method of escape. This is the great burden of its message.

It opens with a very brief allusion to the circumstances under which sin came into the world. Without being very minute as to the manner in which sin entered, it is exceedingly full, clear, and definite in its showing as to the fact of sin in the race. That God regards the race as in sin and rebellion is made as plain as language can make it. It is worthy of notice that this fact and the connected fact of possible pardon, are affirmed on the same authority with the same sort of explicitness and clearness. These facts stand or fall together. Manifestly God intended to impress on all minds these two great truths first, that man is ruined by his own sin; secondly, that he may be saved through Jesus Christ.

To deny the former is to gainsay both our own irresistible convictions and God's most explicit revealed testimony to deny the latter, is to shut the door, of our own free act and accord, against all hope of our own salvation.

The philosophical explanations of the reasons and governmental bearings of the atonement must not be confounded with the fact of an atonement. Men may be saved by the fact if they simply believe it, while they may know nothing about the philosophical explanation. The apostles did not make much account of the explanation, but they asserted the fact most earnestly, gave miracles as testimony to prove their authority from God, and so besought men to believe the fact and be saved. The fact, then, may be savingly believed, and yet the explanation be unknown. This has been the case, no doubt, with scores of thousands.

Yet it is very useful to understand the reasons and governmental grounds of the atonement. It often serves to remove skepticism. It is very common for lawyers to reject the fact, until they come to see the reasons and governmental bearings of the atonement this seen, they usually admit the fact. There is a large class of minds who need to see the governmental

bearings, or they will reject the fact. The reason why the fact is so often doubted is, that the explanations given have been unsatisfactory. They have misrepresented God. No wonder men should reject them, and with them, the fact of any atonement at all.

The atonement is a governmental expedient to sustain law without the execution of its penalty on the sinner. Of course, it must always be a difficult thing in any government to sustain the authority of law, and the respect due to it, without the execution of penalty. Yet God has accomplished it most perfectly.

A distinction must here be made between public and retributive justice.

The latter visits on the head of the individual sinner a punishment corresponding to the nature of his offence. The former, public justice, looks only toward the general good, and must do that which will secure the authority and influence of law, as well as the infliction of the penalty would do it. It may accept a substitute, provided it be equally effective to the support of law and the ensuring of obedience.

Public justice, then, may be satisfied in one of two ways, to wit either by the full execution of the penalty, or by some substitute, which shall answer the ends of government at least equally well. When, therefore, we ask What is necessary for the ends of public justice? The answer is,

**1.** Not the literal execution of the penalty; for if so, it must necessarily fall on the sinner, and on no one else.

Besides, it could be no gain to the universe for Christ to suffer the full and exact penalty due to every lost sinner who should be saved by Him. The amount of suffering being the same in the one case as in the other, where is the gain? And yet, further, if the administration of justice is to be retributive, then it cannot fall on Christ, and must fall on the sinner himself. If not retributive, it certainly may be, as compared with that due the sinner, far different in kind and less in degree.

It has sometimes been said that Christ suffered all in degree and the same in kind as all the saved must else have suffered; but human reason revolts at this assumption, and certainly the Scriptures do not affirm it.

2. Some represent that God needs to be appeased, and to have His feelings conciliated. This is an egregious mistake. It utterly misrepresents God and misconceives the atonement.

3. It is no part of public justice that an innocent being should suffer penalty or punishment, in the proper sense of these terms. Punishment implies crime of which Christ had none. Christ, then, was not punished.

Let it be distinctly understood that the divine law originates in God's benevolence, and has no other than benevolent ends in view. It was revealed only and solely to promote the greatest possible good, by means of obedience. Now, such a law can allow of pardon, provided an expression can be given which will equally secure obedience making an equal revelation of the law-giver's firmness, integrity, and love. The law being perfect, and being most essential to the good of His creatures, God must not set aside its penalty without some equivalent influence to induce obedience.

The penalty was designed as a testimony to God's regard for the precept of His law, and to His purpose to sustain it. An atonement, therefore, which should answer as a substitute for the infliction of this penalty, must be of such sort as to show God's regard for both the precept and penalty of His law. It must be adapted to enforce obedience. Its moral power must be in this respect equal to that of the infliction of the penalty on the sinner.

Consequently, we find that, in this atonement, God has expressed His high regard for His law and for obedience to it.

The design of executing the penalty of the law was to make a strong impression of the majesty, excellence, and utility of the law. Anything may answer as a substitute, which will as thoroughly demonstrate the mischief and odiousness of sin, God's hatred to it, and His determination to carry out His law in all its demands. Especially may the proposed substitute avail if it shall also make a signal manifestation of God's love to sinners. This, the atonement, by the death of Christ, has most emphatically done.

Every act of rebellion denounces the law. Hence, before God can pardon rebellion, He must make such a demonstration of His attitude toward sin

as shall thrill the heart of the created universe, and make every ear tingle. Especially for the ends of the highest obedience, it was needful to make such demonstration as shall effectually secure the confidence and love of subjects toward their Lawgiver such as shall show that He is no tyrant, and that He seeks only the highest obedience and consequent happiness of His creatures. This done, God will be satisfied.

Now, what can be done to teach these lessons, and to impress them with great and everlasting emphasis on the universe?

God's testimony must be so given as to be well understood. Obviously, the testimony to be given must come from God, for it is His view of law, penalty, and substitute that needs to be revealed. Every one must see that if He were to execute law on the sinner, this would show at once His view of the value of the law. But, plainly, His view of the same thing must be shown with equal force by any proposed substitute, before He could accept it as such.

Again, in this transaction, the precept of the law must be accepted and honored both by God and by Jesus as Mediator. The latter, as the representative of the race, must honor the law by obeying it, and by publicly endorsing it otherwise, the requisite homage can not be shown to the divine law in the proposed atonement. This has been done.

Again, to make adequate provision for the exercise of mercy to the race, it is plainly essential that, in the person of their mediator, both the divine and the human should be united.

God and man are both to be represented in the atonement; the divine Word represented the Godhead; the man Jesus represented the race to be redeemed. What the Bible thus asserts, is verified in the history of Jesus, for He said and did things which could not have been said and done unless He had been man, and equally could not have been unless He were also God. On the one hand, too weak to carry His cross, through exhaustion of the human; and on the other, mighty to hush the tempest and to raise the dead, through the plenitude of divine power. Thus God and man are both represented in Jesus Christ.

The thing to be done, then, required that Jesus Christ should honor the law and fully obey it; this He did. Standing for the sinner, he must, in an

important sense, bear the curse of the law not the literal penalty, but a vast amount of suffering, sufficient, in view of His relations to God and the universe, to make the needed demonstration of God's displeasure against sin, and yet of His love for both the sinner and all His moral subjects. On the one hand, Jesus represented the race; on the other, He represented God. This is a most divine philosophy.

The sacrifice made on Calvary is to be understood as God's offering to public justice God Himself giving up His Son to death, and this Son pouring forth His life's blood in expiation for sin thus throwing open the folding gates of mercy to a sinning, lost race. This must be regarded as manifesting His love to sinners. This is God's ransom provided for them. Look at the state of the case. The supreme Law-giver, and indeed the government of the universe, had been scouted by rebellion; of course there can be no pardon till this dishonor done to God and His law is thoroughly washed away. This is done by God's free-will offering of His own Son for these great sins.

This being all done for you, sinners, what do you think of it? What do you think of that appeal which Paul writes and God makes through him, "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Think of those mercies. Think how Christ poured out His life for you. Suppose He were to appear in the midst of you today, and holding up His hands, dripping with blood, should say, "I beseech you by the mercies shown you by God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God!" Would you not feel the force of His appeal that this is a "reasonable service?" Would not this love of Christ constrain you? What do you think of it? Did He die for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that loved them and gave Himself for them? What do you say? just as the uplifted ax would otherwise have fallen on your neck, He caught the blow on His own. You could have had no life if He had not died to save it; then what will you do? Will you have this offered mercy or reject it? Yield to Him the life He has in such mercy spared, or refuse to yield it?

## REMARKS

**1.** The governmental bearings of this scheme are perfectly apparent. The whole transaction tends powerfully to sustain God's law, and to reveal His love and even mercy to sinners. It shows that He is personally ready to forgive, and needs only to have such an arrangement made that He can do it safely as to His government. What could show His readiness to forgive so strikingly as this? See how carefully He guards against the abuse of pardon! Always ready to pardon, yet ever watchful over the great interests of obedience and happiness, lest they be imperilled by its freeness and fullness!

**2.** Why should it ever be thought incredible that God should devise such a scheme of atonement? Is there anything in it that is unlike God or inconsistent with His revealed character? I doubt whether any moral agent can understand this system and yet think it incredible. Those who reject it as incredible, must have failed to understand it.

**3.** The question might be asked Why did Christ die at all, if not for us! He had never sinned; did not die on His own account as a sinner; nor did He die as the infants of our race do, with a moral nature yet undeveloped, and who yet belong to a sinning race. The only account to be given of His death is, that He died not for Himself, but for us.

It might also be asked Why did He die so I See Him expiring between two thieves, and crushed down beneath a mountain weight of sorrow. Why was this? Other martyrs have died shouting; He died in anguish and grief, cast down and agonized beneath the hidings of His Father's face.

All nature seemed to sympathize with His griefs. Mark the sun is clothed in darkness; the rocks are rent; the earth quakes beneath your feet; all nature is convulsed. Even a heathen philosopher exclaimed Surely the universe is coming to an end, or the Maker of the universe is dying! Hark, that piercing cry, "My God, my God; why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

On the supposition of His dying as a Savior for sinners, all is plain. He dies for the government of God, and must needs suffer these things to make a just expression of God's abhorrence of sin. While He stands in the



place of guilty sinners, God must frown on Him and hide His face. This reveals both the spirit of God's government and His own infinite wisdom.

**4.** Some have impeached the atonement as likely to encourage sin. But such persons neglect the very important distinction between the proper use of a thing and its abuse. No doubt the best things in the universe may be abused, and by abuse be perverted to evil, and all the more by how much the better they are in their legitimate use.

Of the natural tendency of the atonement to good, it would seem that no man can rationally doubt. The tendency of manifesting such love, meekness, and self-sacrifice for us, is to make the sinner trust and love, and to make him bow before the cross with a broken and contrite heart. But many do abuse it; and the best things, abused, become the worst. The abuse of the atonement is the very reason why God sends sinners to hell. He says, "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

Hence, if any sinner will abuse atoning blood, and trample down the holy law, and the very idea of returning to God in penitence and love, God will say of him, "Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy" than he who despised Moses' law and fell beneath its vengeance?

**5.** It is a matter of fact, that this manifestation of God in Christ does break the heart of sinners. It has subdued many hearts, and will thousands more. If they believe it and hold it as a reality, must it not subdue their heart to love and grief? Do not you think so? Certainly, if you saw it as it is, and felt the force of it in your heart, you would sob out on your very seat, break down and cry out Did Jesus love me so? And shall I love sin any more? Ah, your heart would melt as thousands have been broken and melted in every age, when they have seen the love of Jesus as revealed on the cross. That beautiful hymn puts the case truthfully-

"I saw One hanging on a tree, In agony and blood; Who fixed His languid eyes on me, As near the cross I stood." But it was not the first look that fully broke his heart. It was only when-

“A second look He gave which said, I freely all forgive; This blood is for thy ransom paid- I die that thou mayest live,” that his whole heart broke, tears fell like rain, and he withheld no power of his being in the full consecration of his soul to this Savior.

This is the genuine effect of the sinner’s understanding the Gospel and giving Jesus Christ credit for His loving-kindness in dying for the lost. Faith thus breaks the stony heart. If this demonstration of God’s love in Christ does not break your heart, nothing else will. If this death and love of Christ do not constrain you, nothing else can.

But if you do not look at it, and will not set your mind upon it, it will only work your ruin. To know this Gospel only enough to reject and disown it, can serve no other purpose save to make your guilt the greater, and your doom the more fearful.

**6.** Jesus was made a sin-offering for us. How beautifully this was illustrated under the Mosaic system! The victim was brought out to be slain; the blood was carried in and sprinkled on the mercy-seat. This mercy-seat was no other than the sacred cover or lid of the ark which contained the tables of the law and other sacred memorials of God’s ancient mercies. There they were, in that deep recess within which none might enter on pain of death, save the High Priest, and he only once a year, on the great day, of atonement. On this eventful day, the sacred rites culminated to their highest solemnity. Two goats were brought forward, upon which the High Priest laid his hands and confessed publicly his own sins and the sins of all the people. Then one was driven far away into the wilderness, to signify how God removes our sins far as the east is from the west; the other was slain, and its blood borne by the High Priest into the most holy place, and sprinkled there upon the mercy-seat beneath the cherubim. Meanwhile, the vast congregation stood without, confessing their sins, and expecting remission only through the shedding of blood. It was as if the whole world had been standing around the base of Calvary, confessing their sins, While Jesus bore His cross to the summit, to hang thereon, and bleed and die for the sins of men. How fitting that, while Christ is dying, we should be confessing!

Some of you may think it a great thing to go on a foreign mission. But Jesus has led the way. He left heaven on a foreign mission; came down to

this more than heathen world, and no one ever faced such self-denial. Yet He fearlessly marched up without the least hesitation to meet the consequences. Never did He shrink from disgrace, from humiliation, or torture. And can you shrink from following the footsteps of such a leader? Is anything too much for you to suffer, while you follow in the lead of such a Captain of your salvation?

# WHERE SIN OCCURS GOD CANNOT WISELY PREVENT IT

*“It is impossible but that offences come;  
but woe unto him through whom they come!” Luke 17:1.*

AN “offence” as used in this passage, is an occasion of falling into sin. It is anything which causes another to sin and fall.

It is plain that the author of the offence is in this passage conceived of as voluntary and as sinful in his act; else the woe of God would not be denounced upon him.

Consequently the passage assumes that this sin is in some sense necessary and unavoidable. What is true of this sin in this respect is true of all other sin. Indeed any sin may become an offence in the sense of a temptation to others to sin, and therefore its necessity and unavoidableness would then be affirmed by this text.

The doctrine of this text, therefore, is that sin, under the government of God, can not be prevented. I purpose to examine this doctrine; to show that, nevertheless, sin is utterly inexcusable as to the sinner; then answer some objections, and conclude with remarks.

**1.** When we say it is impossible to prevent sin under the government of God, the statement still calls for another inquiry, viz.: Where does this impossibility lie? Is it on the part of the sinner, or on the part of God? Which is true; that the sinner can not possibly forbear to sin, or that God can not prevent his sinning?

The first supposition answers itself, for it could not be sin if it were utterly unavoidable. It might be his misfortune; but nothing could be more unjust than to impute it to him as his crime.

But we shall better understand where this impossibility does and must lie, if we first recall to mind some of the elementary principles of God’s government.

Let us, then, consider that God's government over men is moral, and known to be such by every intelligent being. By the term moral, I mean that it governs by motives, and does not move by physical force. It adapts itself to mind, not to matter. It contemplates mind as having intellect to understand truth, sensibility to appreciate its bearing upon happiness, conscience to judge of the right, and a will to determine a course of voluntary action in view of God's claims, So God governs mind. Not so does He govern matter. The planetary worlds are controlled by quite a different sort of agency. God does not move them in their orbits by motives, but by a physical agency.

I said, all men know this government to be moral by their own consciousness. When its precepts and its penalties come before their minds, they are conscious that an appeal is made to their voluntary powers. They are never conscious of any physical agency coercing obedience.

God's government implies in man the power to will, or not to will; to will right, or to will wrong: to choose or to refuse the great good which Jehovah promises. It also implies intelligence. The beings to whom law is addressed are capable of understanding it. They have also, as I have said, a conscience, by which they can appreciate and must affirm its obligations.

You need to distinguish broadly between the influence of motive on mind and of mechanical force upon matter. The former implies voluntariness; the latter does not.

The former is adapted to mind and has no adaptation to matter the latter equally is adapted to matter, but has no possible application to mind. In God's government over the human mind, all is voluntary; nothing is coerced as by physical force. Indeed, it is impossible that physical force should directly influence mind. Compulsion is precluded by the very nature of moral agency. Where compulsion begins, moral agency ends. If it were possible for God to force the will as He forces the moon along in her orbit, to do so would subvert the very idea of a moral government. Neither praise nor blame could attach to any actions of beings, so moved.

Persuasion, brought to bear upon mind, is always such in its nature that it can be resisted. By the very nature of the case, God's creatures must have power to resist any amount of even His persuasion. There can be no

power in heaven or earth to coerce the will, as matter is coerced. The nature of mind forbids its possibility. And if it were possible, it would still be true that in just so far as God should coerce the human will, He would cease to govern morally.

God is infinitely wise. Men can no more doubt this than they can doubt their own existence. He has infinite knowledge. He knows everything i.e., all objects of knowledge; and knows them all perfectly. He is also infinitely good, His will being always conformed to His perfect knowledge and always controlled by infinite benevolence.

His infinite goodness implies that He does the best He can, always, and everywhere. In no instance does He ever fail to do the very best He can do, so that He can appeal to every creature and say What more can I do to prevent sin than I am doing! Indeed, He does so appeal to every intelligent mind. He made this appeal through Isaiah to the ancient Jews, “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?”

Every moral agent in the universe knows that God has done the best He could do in regard to sin. Do not you know this, each one of you? Certainly you do. He Himself, in all His infinite wisdom, could not suggest a better course than that which He has taken. Men know this truth so well, they never can know it better. You may at some future day realize it more fully when you shall come to see its millions of illustrations drawn out before your eyes; but no demonstration can make its proof more perfect than it is to your own minds today.

Now sin does, in fact, exist under God’s government. For this sin, God either is or is not to blame. Every man knows that God is not to blame for this sin, for man’s own nature affirms that He would prevent it if He wisely could. Certainly if He was able wisely to prevent sin in any case where it actually occurs, then not to do so nullifies all our conceptions of His goodness and wisdom. He would be the greatest sinner in the universe if, with power and wisdom adequate to the prevention of sin, He had failed to prevent it.

Let me here note, also, that what God can not do wisely, He can not (speaking morally) do at all. For He can not act unwisely. He can not do things which wisdom forbids. To do so would be to undefine Himself. The supposition would make Him cease to be perfect, and this were equivalent to ceasing to be God.

Or thus: If He were to interpose unwisely to prevent a sinner from sinning, He would sin Himself. I speak now of each instance in which God does not, in fact, interpose to prevent sin. In any of these cases, if He were to interpose unwisely to prevent sin, He would prevent a man from sinning at the expense of sinning Himself. Here, then, is the case. A sinner is about to fall before temptation, or in more correct language, is about to rush into some new sin. God cannot wisely prevent his doing so. Now what shall be done? Shall He let that sinner rush on to his chosen sin and self-wrought ruin; or shall He step forward, unwisely, sin Himself, and incur all the frightful consequences of such a step? He lets the sinner bear his own responsibility. Why should not He? Who would wish to have God sin?

This is a full explanation of every case in which man does in fact sin and God does not prevent it.

And this is not conjecture, but is logical certainly. No truth can be more irresistibly and necessarily certain than this. I once heard a minister say in a sermon, "It is not irrational to suppose that in each case of sin, it occurs as it does because God can not prevent it." After he retired from the pulpit, I said to him Why did you leave the matter so? You left your hearers to infer that perhaps it might be in some other way; that this was only a possible theory, yet that some other theory was perhaps even more probable. Why did you not say, This theory is certain and must necessarily be true?

Thus the impossibility of preventing sin lies not in the sinner, but wholly with God. Sin, it should be remembered, is nothing else than an act of free will, always committed against one's conviction of right. Indeed, if a man did not know that selfishness is sin, it would not be sin in his case.

Once more, sin is always committed against and in despite of motives of infinitely greater weight than those which induce to sin. The very fact that

his conscience condemns the sin is his own judgment on the question, proving that in his own view the motives to sin are infinitely contemptible when put in the scale to measure those against the sin in question. Every sinner knows that sin is a willful abuse of his own powers as a moral agent-of those noblest powers of his being in view of which he is especially said to be made in the image of God. Made like God with these exalted attributes, capable of determining his own voluntary activities intelligently if he will; in accordance with his reason and his conscience if he will; he yet in every act of sin abuses and degrades these powers, tramples down in the very dust the image of God enstamped on his being, and with the capacities of becoming an angel, makes himself a fool. Clothed with a dignity of nature akin to that of his Maker, he chooses to debase himself to the level of brutes and of devils. With a face naturally looking upwards; with an intelligence that grasps the great truths of God; with a reason that postulates and affirms the great necessary principles involved in his moral duties and relations; with capacities which fit him to sit on a nation's throne; he yet says Let me take this glorious image of God and debase it in the dust! Let me cast myself down, till there shall be no lower depth of degradation to which I can sink!

Sin is in every instance a dishonoring of God. This every sinner must know. It casts off His authority, spurns His advice, maltreats His love. Truly does God Himself say, "A son honoreth his father and a servant his master; if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear?"

What sinner ever supposed that God neglects to do anything He wisely can do to prevent sin? If this be not true, what is conscience but a lie and a delusion? Conscience always affirms that God is clear of all guilt in reference to sin, In every instance in which conscience condemns the sinner, it necessarily must, and actually does, fully acquit God.

These remarks will suffice to show that sin in every instance of its commission is utterly inexcusable.

We are next to notice some objections.



**1.** “If God is infinitely wise and good, why need we pray at all? If He will surely do the best possible thing always and all the good He can do, why need we pray?”

I answer. Because His infinite goodness and wisdom enjoin it upon us. Who could ask a better reason than this? If you believe in His infinite wisdom and goodness, and make this belief the basis of your objection, you will certainly, if honest, be satisfied with this answer.

But again I answer. It might be wise and good for Him to do many things if sought unto in prayer, which He could not wisely do, unasked. You can not, therefore, infer that prayer never changes the course which God voluntarily pursues.

**2.** Objecting again, you ask why we should pray to God to prevent sin, if He can not prevent it? If under the circumstances in which sin exists, God can not, as you hold, prevent sin, why go to Him and pray Him to prevent it?

I answer. We pray for the very purpose of changing the circumstances. This is our object. And prayer does change the circumstances. If we step forward and offer fervent, effectual prayer, this quite changes the state of the case. Look at Moses pleading with God to spare the nation after their great sin in the matter of the golden calf. God said to him, “Let me alone that I may destroy them, and I will make of thee a great nation.” Nay, said Moses, for what will the Egyptians say? And what will all the nations say? They have long time said, The God of that people will not be able to get them through that vast wilderness; now therefore, what will thou do for Thy great name? “Yet now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.”

This prayer, coming up before God, greatly changed the circumstances of the case. For this prayer, God could honorably spare the nation it was so honorable for Him to answer this prayer.

**3.** Yet further objecting, you ask, “Why did God create moral agents at all if He foresaw that He could not prevent their sinning?”

I answer. Because He saw that on the whole it was better to do so. He could prevent some sin in this race of moral agents; could overrule what He

could not wisely prevent, to as to bring out from it a great deal of good, and so that in the long run, He saw it better, with all the results before Him, to create than to forbear; therefore, wisdom and love made it necessary that He should create. Having the power to create a race of moral beings having also power to convert and save a vast multitude of them, and power also to overrule the sin He should not prevent so that it should evolve immense good, how could He forbear to create as He did?

**4.** But if God can not prevent sin, will He not be unhappy?

No; He is entirely satisfied to do the best He can, and accept the results.

**5.** But some will say Is not this “limiting the Holy One of Israel?” No. It is no proper limitation of God’s power to say that He can not do anything that is unwise. Nor do we limit His power when we say He can not move mind just as He moves a planet. That is no proper subject of power which is in its own nature absurd and impossible.

Yet these are the only directions in which we have spoken of any limitations to His power.

But you say, Could not God prevent sin by annihilating each moral agent the instant before he would sin? Doubtless He could; but we say if this were wise He would have done it. He has not done it, certainly not in all cases, and therefore it is not always wise.

But you say, Let Him give more of His Holy Spirit. I answer, He does give all He can wisely, under existing circumstances. To suppose He might give more than He does, circumstances being the same, is to impeach His wisdom or His goodness.

Some people seem greatly horrified at the idea of setting limits to God’s power. Yet they make assumptions which inevitably impeach His wisdom and His goodness. Such persons need to consider that if we must choose between limiting His power on the one hand, or His wisdom and His love on the other, it is infinitely more honorable to Him to adopt the former alternative than the latter. To strike a blow at His moral attributes, is to annihilate His throne. And further, let it be also considered, as we have already suggested, that you do not in any offensive sense limit His power

when you assume that He can not do things naturally impossible, and can not act unwisely.

Let these remarks suffice in the line of answer to objections I know that you who are students will say that this must be true. You are accustomed to notice the action of your own moral powers. You have a moral sense, and it has been in some good degree developed. You know it is utterly impossible that God should act unwisely. You know He must act benevolently, always doing the best thing He can do. He has given you a nature which affirms, postulates, intuits these truths. Else there could be no conscience. The presence and action of a conscience implies that these great truths respecting the moral nature of God are indisputably affirmed in your soul by your own moral nature.

I address you, therefore, as those who have a conscience. Suppose it were otherwise. Suppose all that we call conscience the entire moral side of your nature should suddenly drop out, and I should find myself speaking to a shoal of moral idiots beings utterly void of a conscience! How desolate the scene! But I am not speaking to such an audience. Therefore I am sure that you will understand and appreciate what I say.

## REMARKS

**1.** We may see the only sense in which God could have purposed the existence of sin. It is simply negative. He purposed not to prevent it in any case where it does actually occur. He does not purpose to make moral agents sin; not, for example, Adam and Eve in the garden, or Judas in the matter of betraying Christ. All He purposed to do Himself was to leave them with only a certain amount of restraint as much as He could wisely impose; and then if they would sin, let them bear the responsibility. He left them to act freely and did not positively prevent their sinning. He never uses means to make men sin. He only forbears to use unwise means to prevent their sinning. Thus His agency in the existence of sin is only negative.

**2.** The existence of sin does not prove that it is the necessary means of the greatest good. Some of you are aware that this point has been often mooted in theological discussions.

I do not purpose now to go into it at length, but will only say that in all cases wherein men sin, they might obey God instead of sinning. Now the question here is If they were to obey rather than sin, would not a greater good accrue? We have these two reasons for the affirmative: (1), that by natural tendency, obedience promotes good and disobedience evil: and (2), that in all those cases, God earnestly and positively enjoins obedience. It is fair to presume that He would enjoin that which would secure the greatest good.

**3.** The human conscience always justifies God. This is an undeniable fact a fact of universal consciousness. The proof of it can never be made stronger, for it stands recorded in each man's bosom.

Yet a very remarkable book has recently appeared, "The Conflict of Ages" which is obviously built upon the opposite assumption, viz., that the human conscience does not unqualifiedly condemn man; but except under the light of this peculiar theory, does in fact condemn God. This theory, adopted professedly to vindicate God as against the human conscience, holds that there was a pre-existent state in which we all lived and sinned, and there forfeited our title to a moral nature, unbiased toward sinning. There we had a fair probation. Here, if we suppose this to be the commencement of our moral agency, we do not have a fair probation, and conscience therefore does not, and in truth can not, justify God except on the supposition of a pre-existent state.

The entire book, therefore, is built on the assumption of a conflict between the human conscience and God. A shocking assumption! A brother remarked to me of this that it seemed to him to be the most outrageous and blasphemous indictment against God that could be drawn. Yet the author intended no such thing. He is undoubtedly a good man, but, in this particular, egregiously mistaken.

The fact is, conscience does always condemn the sinner and justify God. It could not affirm obligation without justifying God. The real controversy, therefore, is not between God and the conscience, but between God and the heart. In every instance in which sin exists, conscience condemns the sinner and justifies God. This of itself is a perfect and sufficient answer to the whole doctrine of that book. It knocks out the only and whole foundation on which it is built. If that book be true, men never should have

had a conscience until that book was published, read, understood, and believed. No man should ever have been convicted of sin until he came to see that he had existed in a previous state and began his sinning there.

Yet the facts are right over against this. Everywhere in all ages, with no deference to this book, and no disposition to wait for its tardy developments everywhere and through all time the human conscience has stood up to condemn each sinner and compel him to sign his own death-warrant; and acquit his Maker of all blame. These are the facts of human nature and life.

**4.** Conversion consists precisely in this: the heart's consent to these decisions of the conscience. It is for the heart to come over to the ground occupied by the conscience, and thoroughly acquiesce in it as right and true. Conscience has a long time been speaking; it has always held one doctrine, and has long been resisted by the heart. Now, in conversion, the heart comes over, and gives in its full assent to the decisions of conscience; that God is right, and that sin and himself a sinner are utterly wrong.

And now do any of you want to know how you may become a Christian? This is it. Let your heart justify God and condemn sin, even as your conscience does. Let your voluntary powers yield to the necessary affirmations of your reason and conscience. Then all will be peaceful within because all will be right.

But you say, I am trying to do this! Ah, I know it to be the case with some of you that you are trying to resist to your utmost. You settle down, as it were, with your whole weight while God would fain draw you by His truth and Spirit. Yet you fancy you are really trying to yield your heart to God. A most unaccountable delusion!

**5.** In the light of this subject we can see the reason for a general judgment. God intends to clear Himself from all imputation of wrong in the matter of sin before the entire moral universe. Strange facts have transpired in His universe, and strange insinuations have been made against His course. These matters must all be set right. For this He will take time enough. He will wait till all things are ready. Obviously He could not bring out His great trial-day till the deeds of earth have all been wrought till all the events of this wondrous drama have had their full development.

Until then He will not be ready to make a full exposé of all His doings. Then He can and will do it most triumphantly and gloriously.

The revelations of that day will doubtless show why God did not interpose to prevent every sin in the universe. Then He will satisfy us as to the reasons He had for suffering Adam and Eve to sin and for leaving Judas to betray his Master. We know now that He is wise and good, although we do not know all the particular reasons for His conduct in the permission of sin. Then He will reveal those particular reasons, as far as it may be best and possible. No doubt He will then show that His reasons were so wise and good that He could not have done better.

**6.** Sin will then appear infinitely inexcusable and odious. It will then be seen in its true relations toward God and His intelligent creatures, inexpressibly blameworthy and guilty.

Take a case. Suppose a son has gone far away from the paths of obedience and virtue. He has had one of the best of fathers, but he would not hear his counsels. He had a wise and affectionate mother, but he sternly resisted all the appeals of her tenderness and tears. Despite of the most watchful care of parents and friends, he would go astray. As one madly bent on self-ruin, he pushed on, reckless of the sorrow and grief he brought upon those he should have honored and loved. At last the issues of such a course stand revealed. The guilty youth finds himself ruined in constitution, in fortune, and in good name. He has sunk far too low to retain even self-respect. Nothing remains for him but agonizing reflections on past folly and guilt. Hear him bewail his own infatuation. "Alas," he cries, "I have almost killed my venerable father, and long ago I had quite broken my mother's heart. All that folly and crime in a son could do, I have done to bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. No wonder that having done so much to ruin my best friends, I have plucked down a double ruin on my own head. No sinner ever more richly deserved to be doubly damned than myself"

Thus truth flashes upon his soul and thus his heart quails and his conscience thunders condemnation. So it must be with every sinner when all his sins against God shall stand revealed before his eyes, and there shall be nothing left for him but intense and unqualified self- condemnation.

**7.** God's omnipotence is no guaranty to any man that either himself or any other sinner will be saved. I know the Universalist affirms it to be. He will ask Does not the fact of God's omnipotence, taken in connection with His infinite love, prove that all men will be saved? I answer, No! It does not prove that God will save one soul. With ever so much proof of God's perfect wisdom, love, and power we could not infer that He would save even one sinner. We might just as reasonably infer that He would send the whole race to hell. How could we know what His wisdom would determine? How could we infer what the exigencies of His government might demand? In fact, the only ground we have for the belief that He will save any sinner is not at all our inference from His wisdom, love, and power; but is wholly and only His own declarations as to this matter. Our knowledge is wholly from revelation. God has said so; and this is all we know about it.

Yet further I reply to the Universalist, that God's omnipotence saves nobody. Salvation is not wrought by physical omnipotence. It is only by moral power that God saves, and this can save no man unless he consents to be saved.

**8.** How bitter the reflections which sinners must have on their death-bed, and how fearfully agonizing when they pass behind the veil and see things in their true light. Did you ever think when you have seen a sinner dying in his sins what an awful thing it is for a sinner to die? You mark the lines of anguish on his countenance; you see the look of despair; you observe he can not bear to hear the word of the awful future. There he lies, and death pushes on his stem assault. The poor victim struggles in vain against his dreaded foe. He sinks, and sinks, his pulse runs lower, and yet lower; look in his glassy eye; mark that haggard brow; there, he breathes not; but all suddenly he stares as one affrighted; throws up his hands wildly, screams frightfully; sinks down and is gone to return no more! And where is he now? Not beyond the scope of thought and reflection. He can see back into the world he has left. Still he can think. Alas, his misery is that he can do nothing but think! As said the prisoner in his solitary cell: I could bear torture or I could endure toil; but O, to have nothing to do but to think! To hear the voice of friend no more to say not a word to do nothing from day to day and from year to year but to think! that is awful. So of the lost sinner. Who can measure the misery of incessant self-agonizing thought?

Now, when at any time your reflections press uncomfortably and you feel that you shall almost go deranged, you can find some drop of comfort for your fevered lips; you can for a few moments, at least, fall asleep, and so forget your sorrows and find a transient rest; but oh! when you shall reach the world where the wicked find no rest where there can be no sleep where not one drop of water can reach you to cool your tongue. Alas, how can your heart endure or your hands be strong in that dread hour! God tried in vain to bless and save you. You fought Him back and plucked down on your guilty head a fearful damnation!

**9.** What infinite consolation will remain to God after He shall have closed up the entire scenes of earth! He has banished the wicked and taken home the righteous to His bosom of love and peace. I have done, says He, all I wisely could to save the race of man. I made sacrifices cheerfully; sent my well-beloved Son gladly; waited as long as it seemed wise to wait, and now it only remains to overrule all this pain and woe for the utmost good, and rejoice in the bliss of the redeemed forevermore.

There are the guilty lost. Their groans swell out and echo up the walls of their pit of woe; it is to so much evidence that God is good and wise and will surely sustain His throne in equity and righteousness forever. It teaches most impressive lessons upon the awful doom of sin, There let it stand and bear its testimony, to warn other beings against a course so guilty and a doom so dreadful!

There, in that world of woe, may be some of our pupils possibly some of our own children. But God is just and His throne stainless of their blood. It shall not mar the eternal joy of His kingdom, that they would pull down such damnation on their heads. They insisted they would take the responsibility, and now they have it.

Sinner, do you not care for this today? Will you come to the inquiry meeting this evening to trifle about your salvation? I can tell you where you will not trifle. When the great bell of time shall toll the death-knell of earth and call her millions of sons and daughters to the final judgment, you will not be in a mood to trifle! You will surely be there! It will be a time for serious thought an awful time of dread. Are you ready to face its revelations and decisions?



Or do you say, Enough, ENOUGH! I have long enough withstood His grace  
and spurned His love; I will now give, my heart to God, to be His only,  
forevermore?

# THE INNER AND THE OUTER REVELATION

THERE are many who believe that a loose indefinite infidelity has rarely, if ever, been more prevalent in our country than at this time, especially among young men. I am not prepared to say it is an honest infidelity, yet it may very probably be real. Young men may really doubt the inspiration of the Christian Scriptures, not because they have honestly studied those Scriptures and their numerous evidences, but because they have read them little and reasoned legitimately yet less. Especially have they almost universally failed to study the intuitive affirmations of their own minds. They have not examined the original revelation that God has made in each human soul, to see how far this would carry them. and how wonderfully it opens the way for understanding and indeed for embracing the revelation given in God's Word.

To bring these and kindred points before your minds, I have taken as my text, the words of Paul,

*“By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 2 Corinthians 4:2.*

Paul is speaking of the Gospel ministry which he received, and is stating how he fulfilled it. He shows plainly that he, sought to preach to the human conscience. He found in each man's bosom a conscience to which he could appeal, an to which the manifestation of the truth commended, itself.

Probably no thoughtful man has ever read the Bible without noticing that there has been a previous revelation given in some way to man. It assumes many things as known already. I may have said in the hearing of some of you that I was studying in my law-office when I bought my first Bible, and that I bought it as one of my law-books. No sooner had I opened it than I was struck to see how many things it assumed as known, and therefore states with no attempt at proof. For instance, the first verse in the Bible “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This assumes the existence of God. It does not aim to prove this truth; it goes

on the presumption that this revelation the existence of a God has been made already to all who are mature enough to understand it, The Apostle Paul also, in his epistle to the Romans, asserts that the real Godhead and eternal power of the one God, though in some sense “invisible things,” are yet “clearly seen,” in the creation of the world, “being understood by the things that are, made,” so that all wicked men are. without excuse. His doctrine is that the created universe reveals God. And if this be true of the universe without us, it is no less true of the universe within us. Our own minds their convictions, their necessary affirmations do truly reveal God and many of the great truths that respect our relations to Him and to His government.

When we read the Bible attentively, and notice how many things, of the utmost importance, it assumes, and bases its precepts on them, without attempting to prove them, we can not forbear to inquire Are these assumptions properly made?

The answer to this question is found when we turn our eye within and inquire for the intuitive affirmations of our own minds. Then we shall see that we possess an intellectual and moral nature which as truly reveals great truths concerning God and our relations to Him and to law, as the material, world reveals His eternal power and Godhead.

For instance, we shall see that man has a moral nature related to spiritual and moral truth, as really as he has la physical nature related to the physical world. As his senses sight, touch, hearing intuit certain truths respecting the external world, so does his spiritual nature intuit certain, truths respecting the spiritual world. No man can well consider the first class of truths without being forced to consider and believe the second.

Let us see if this be true.

It is not long since I had interviews with a young lady of considerable intelligence who was a skeptic. She professed to believe in a God and in those great truths pertaining to His attributes which are embraced in Deism; but she quite rejected the Bible and all that pertains to a revealed way of salvation.

I began with presenting to her mind some of the great truths taught by the mind’s own affirmations concerning God, His attributes, and government,;

and then from this I passed on to show her how the Bible came in to make out a system of truth needful to man as a lost sinner. She admitted the first, of course; and then she saw that the second. must be true if the first was, or there could be nothing for man but hopeless ruin. Starting back in horror from the gulf of despair, she saw that only her unbelief was ruining her soul; and then renouncing this, she yielded her heart to God and found Gospel peace and joy in believing.

I propose now to present much the same course of thought to you as I did to her.

And here the first great inquiry is What ideas does our own nature God's first revelation give us?

**(1.)** Undoubtedly, the idea of God. Our own minds affirm that there is and must be a God; that He must have all power and all knowledge. Our mind also gives us God's moral attributes. No man can doubt that God is good and Just. Men are never afraid that God will do anything wrong.

If at all afraid of God, it is because He is good is just and holy.

**(2.)** Man's nature gives him the idea of law-moral law. He can no more doubt the existence of a moral law, imposed, too, on himself, than he can doubt the existence of his own soul and body. He knows he ought not to be selfish ought to be benevolent. He knows he is bound to love his neighbor as himself bound to seek the higher at the sacrifice, if need be, of the lower good.

How is it that men get these ideas? I answer, They must, have them by nature; they must be in the mind before any direct instruction from human lips, else you could never teach a child these ideas, more than you could teach them to a horse. The child knows these things before he is taught, and can not remember when he first had them.

Suppose you were to close your Bible and ask, Now, apart from all this book teaches, how much do I know? How much must I admit? You would find that your moral nature gives you the idea of a God, and affirms His existence; it gives you His attributes, natural and moral, and also your own moral relations to Him and to your fellow-beings. In proof of this I can appeal to you not one of you can say,

I am under no obligation to love God; I am not bound to love my fellow-men. Your moral nature gives you these things it affirms to you these truths, even more directly and undeniably than your senses give you the facts of the external world. Moreover, your moral nature not only gives you the law of supreme love to God, and of love equal and impartial toward your fellow-men, but it affirms that you are sinners; that you have displeased God have utterly failed to please Him, and of course that you are under condemnation from His righteous law. You know that God's good law must condemn you, because you have not been good in the sense required by that law. Hence, you must know that you are in the position of an outlaw, condemned by law, and without hope from the administration of justice.

Another thing it gives you, viz., that you are still in penitence (I speak of those who know this to be their case); your own conscience affirms this to you past all contradiction. It affirms that you are still living in sin, and have not reformed in such a sense that God can accept your reformation. You know that you do violence to: your own conscience, and that while you are doing this you can neither respect yourself nor be respected by God. You know that! long as this is the case with you, God can not forgive you. Nay, more, if He should, it would do you no good; you could not be happy; you could not respect yourself even if you were told that you were forgiven. Indeed, if your nature, spake out unbiased, it would not let you believe yourself really forgiven, so long as you are doing violence to conscience. I can remember When these thoughts were in my mind like fire. I saw that no man could doubt them, any more than he can doubt his own existence. So you may see these truths and feel their force,

You know, then, that by your sins, you have forfeited the favor of God, and have no claim on Him at all on the score of justice. You have cast off His authority, have disowned subjection to His law and government; indeed, you have cast all His precepts beneath your feet. You can no longer, come before God and say, "Thou oughtest not to cast me off; I have not deserved it at Thy hand." You can no more say this honestly, than you can deny your own existence.

Did you ever think of this? Have you ever tried this, to see what you can honestly do and say before God? Have you ever tried to go into God's

presence and tell Him solemnly that He has no right to punish you? Not one of you can tell Him so without being conscious in yourself of blasphemy

It is a good method, because it may serve to show you how the case really stands. Suppose, then, you try it. See what you can honestly and with an approving conscience say before God, when your soul is deeply impressed with the sense of His presence. Consider I am not asking you whether you can harden your heart and violate your conscience enough to blaspheme God to His face; not this, but I am asking you to put the honest convictions of your own conscience to the test and see what they are and what they will allow you to do and to say before God. Can you kneel down before Him and say, "I deny that I have cast off God. I have never refused to treat Him as a friend. I have never treated Him as an enemy?"

You know you can make no issue of this sort with God without meeting the rebukes of your own mm

Again, you can see no reason to hope for forgiveness under the law. With all the light of your Deism you can discern no ground of pardon. Outside the Bible, all is dark as death. There is no hope. If you cherish any, it must be directly in the teeth of your own solemn convictions. Why do you think it is so difficult to induce a discreet governor to grant a pardon? When Jerome Bonaparte was monarch of Spain, why did Napoleon send him that earnest rebuke for pardoning certain criminals? What were the principles underlying that remarkably able state paper? Have you ever studied those principles, as they were grasped and presented so vigorously by the mighty mind of Napoleon?

You can never infer from the goodness of God that He can forgive; much less, that He must. One of the first Universalist preachers I ever heard announced in the outset that he should infer from the goodness of God that He would save all men. I can well remember how perfectly shallow his sophistry appeared to me and how absurd his assumptions. I was no Christian then, but I saw at a glance that he might far better infer from the goodness of God that He would forgive none than that He would forgive all. It seemed to me most clear that if God were good and had made a good law, He would sustain it. Why not? I must suppose that His law is a good one; how could a Being of infinite wisdom and love impose any other than

a good law? And if it were a good law, it had a good end to answer; and a good God could not suffer it to fail of answering those ends by letting it come to naught through inefficiency in its administration. I knew enough about law and government then to see that a firm hand in administration is essential to any good results from ever so good a law. Of course I knew that if law were left to be trampled under foot by hardened, blasphemous transgressors, and then to cap the climax, an indiscriminate pardon were given, and nothing done to sustain law, there would be an end of all authority and a positive annihilation of all the good hoped for under its administration. What shall rational men undertake to infer from God's goodness that He will pardon all sinners? Suppose the spirit of riot and misrule now so rampant at Erie, Pa., to go on from bad to worse; that the rioters perpetrate every form of mischief in their power; they tear up the rails, burn down the bridges, fire into the cars, run whole trains off the track and crush the quivering flesh of hundreds en masse into heaps of blood and bones; and by and by, when the guilty are arrested and convicted by due course of law, then the question comes up, Shall the governor pardon them? He might be very much inclined to do so, if he wisely could; but the question. is Can a good governor do it? Supposing him to be purely, good and truly wise, what would he do? Will you say, O he is too good to punish he is so good, he will certainly pardon? Will you say that pardon indiscriminately given, and given to all, and according to previous assurance, moreover, will secure the highest respect for law and the best obedience?, Everybody knows that this is superlative nonsense. No man who ever had anything to do under the responsibilities of government, or who has ever learned the A B C of human nature in this relation, can for one moment suppose that Pardon in such ways can supplant punishment with any other result than utter ruin. No: if the ruler is good, he will surely punish; and all the more surely, by how much the more predominant is the element of goodness in his character.

You, sinners, are under law. If you sin, you must see great reason why God should punish and not forgive.

Here is another fact. When you look upon yourself and your moral position, you find yourself twice dead. You are civilly dead in the sense of being condemned by law, an outcast from governmental favor. You are also morally dead, for you do not love God, do not serve Him, have no

tendencies that draw you back into sympathy with God; but, on the other hand, you are dead to all considerations that look in this direction. You are indeed alive to your own low, selfish interests, but dead to God's interests; you care nothing for God only to avoid Him and escape His judgment. All this you know, beyond all question.

In this condition, without a further revelation, where is your hope? You have none, and have no ground for any.

Furthermore, if a future revelation is to be made, revealing some ground of pardon, you can see with the light now before you on what basis it must rest. You can see what more you need from God. The first revelation shuts you up to God shows you that if help ever comes, it can not come out of yourself, but must come from God can not come of His, justice, but must come from His mercy can not come out of law, but must come from some extra provision whereby law may have its demands satisfied otherwise than through the execution of its penalty on the offender. Somebody, you can see, must interpose for you, who can take your part and stand in your stead before the offended law.

Did you never think of this? In the position where you stand, and where your own nature and your own convictions place you, you are compelled to say My case is hopeless! I need a double salvation from condemnation and from sinning; first from the curse, and secondly from the heart to sin from the tendency and disposition to commit sin. Inquiring for a revelation to meet these wants of my lost soul, where can I find it? Is it to be found in all the book of nature Nowhere.

Look into the irresistible convictions of your own moral being; they tell you of your wants, but they give you no supply. They show what you need, but they utterly fail to give it. Your own moral nature shows that you need an atoning Savior and a renewing Spirit. Nothing less can meet the case of a sinner condemned, outlawed, and doubly dead by the moral corruption of all his voluntary powers.

The worst mischief of infidelity is that it ignores all this; it takes no notice of one entire side of our nature, and that the most important side; talking largely about philosophy, it yet restricts itself to the philosophy of the outer world and has no eye for the inner and higher nature. It ignores the



fact that our moral nature affirms one entire class of great truths, with even more force and certainty than the senses affirm the facts of the external world. Verily, this is a grand and a fatal omission!

## REMARKS

**1.** Without the first revelation the second could not be satisfactorily proved. When the Bible reveals God, it assumes that our minds affirm His existence and that we need no higher proof. When it reveals His law, it presupposes that we are capable of understanding it, and of appreciating its moral claims. When it prescribes duty, it assumes that we ought to feel the force of obligation to obey it.

Now, the fact that the Bible does make many assumptions of this sort establishes an intimate and dependent connection between it on the one hand, and the laws of the human mind on the other. If these assumptions are well and truly made, then the divine authority of the Bible is abundantly sustained by its correspondence and harmony with the intellectual and moral nature of man. It fits the beings to whom it is given. But, on the other hand, if these assumptions had, on examination, proved false, it would be impossible to sustain the credit of the Scriptures as coming from a wise and honest Being.

**2.** Having the first revelation, to reject the second is most absurd. The second is, to a great extent, a re-affirmation of the first, with various important additions of a supplementary sort, e.g. the atonement, and hence the possibility of pardon, the gift and work of the Spirit, and hence the analogous possibility of being saved from sinning.

Now those things which the first revelation affirms and the second re-affirms are so fundamental in any revelation of moral duty to moral beings, that, having them taught so intuitively, so undeniably, we are left self-convicted of extreme absurdity if we then reject the second. Logically, there seems no ground left on which to base a denial of the written revelation. Its supplementary doctrines are not, to be sure intuitive truths, but they are so related to man's wants as a lost sinner, and so richly supply those wants; they, moreover, are so beautifully related to the exigencies of God's government, and so amply meet them, that no

intelligent mind, once apprehending all these things in their actual relations, can fail to recognize their truthfulness.

**3.** The study of the first secures an intellectual reception of the second. I do not believe it possible for a man to read and understand the first thoroughly and then come to the second and fairly apprehend its relation to his own moral nature and moral convictions, and also his moral wants without being compelled to say All is true; this book is all true! They coincide so wondrously, and the former sustains the latter so admirably and so triumphantly, a man can no more deny the Bible after knowing all his own moral relations than he can deny his own existence.

**4.** You see why so many reject the Bible. They have not well read themselves. They have not looked within, to read carefully the volume God has put on record there. They have contrived to hush and smother down the ever-rising convictions of their own moral nature. They have refused to listen to the cry of want which swells up from their troubled bosom of guilt. Hence, there is yet one whole volume of revelation of which they are strangely ignorant. This ignorance accounts for their rejection of the Bible.

A little attention to the subject will show you that the ground here indicated is beyond question that on which the masses in every Christian land really repose their faith in the Bible. Scarce one in ten thousand of them has studied the historical argument for divine revelation extensively and carefully, so as intelligently to make this a corner-stone for his faith in the Bible. It is not reasonable to demand that they should. There is an argument shorter and infinitely more convincing. It is a simple problem; given, a soul guilty, condemned and undone; required, some adequate relief. The Gospel solves the problem. Who will not accept the solution? It answers every condition perfectly; it must, therefore, come from God; it is at least our highest wisdom to accept it.

If it be replied to this, that such a problem meets the case of those only who give their hearts to God, it may be modified for yet another, class, on this wise:; given, a moral nature which affirms God, law, obligation, guilt, ruin; required, to know whether a written revelation is reliable, which is built upon the broad basis of man's intuitive affirmations; which gives them the sanction of man's Creator; which appends a system of duty and

of salvation of such sort that it interlocks itself inseparably with truth, intuitive to man, and manifestly fills out a complement of moral instructions and agencies in perfect adaptation to both man and his Maker. In the Bible, we have the very thing required. A key that threads the countless wards of such a lock must have been made to fit. Each came from the same Author. You can not grant to man an origin from God, but you must grant the same origin to the Bible.

When I came to examine these things in the light of my own convictions, I wondered I had not seen them truly before,

Suppose I should stand here and announce to you the two great precepts of the moral law; would not their obvious nature and bearings enforce on your mind the conviction that these precepts must be true and must be from God? As I should descend to particulars, you would still affirm these must be true; these must certainly have come down from heaven. If I were even to go back to the Mosaic law (a law which many object against, because they do not understand the circumstances that called for such a law) yet if I should explain their peculiar circumstances, and the reasons for such statutes, every man must affirm the rectitude of even those statutes, The Old Testament, I am aware, reveals truth under a veil, the world not being prepared then for its clearer revelation. The veil was taken away when, in the fullness of time, people were prepared for unclouded revealings of God in the flesh.

The reason, therefore, why the masses receive the Bible, is not that they are credulous, and hence swallow down absurdities with ease; but the reason is that it commends itself so irresistibly to each man's own nature and to his deep and resistless convictions, he is shut up to receive it he must do violence to his inner convictions if he reject it. Man's whole nature cries out This is just what I need! That young lady of whom I spake could not help but abandon her infidelity and yield up her heart to God, when she had reached this point. I said Do you admit a God? She answered Yes. Do you admit a law? Yes. Do you admit your personal guilt? Yes. And your need of salvation? O, yes. Can you help yourself? said I. Ah, no, indeed, she said, I do not believe I can ever be saved.

But God can save you. Surely nothing is too hard for Him.

Alas, she replied, my own nature has shut me up I am in despair; there is no way of escape for me;. the Bible, you know, I don't receive; and here I am in darkness and despair!

At this point I began to speak of the Gospel. Said I to her See there; God has done such and such things as revealed in the Gospel; He came down and dwelt in human flesh to meet the case of such sinners as you are; He made an ample atonement for sin; there, what do you think of that? "That is what I need exactly," said she," "if it were only true."

If it is not true, said I, you are lost beyond hope! Then why not believe?

I can not believe it, she said, because it is incredible. It is a great deal too good to be true!

And is not God good, said I infinitely good? Then why do you object that anything He does is too good to be true?

That is what I need," again she repeated, "but how can it be so?"

Then you can not give God credit for being so good! said I.

Alas, I see it is my unbelief; but I cannot believe. It is what I need, I can plainly see; but how can I believe it? At this point I rose up and said to her solemnly The crisis has come! There is now only one question for you Will you believe the Gospel? She raised her eyes, which had been depressed and covered for half an hour or more; every feature bespoke the most intense agitation; while I repeated Will you believe God? Will you give Him credit for sincerity? She threw herself upon her knees, and burst into loud weeping. What a scene to see a skeptic beginning to give her God credit for love and truth! To see the door of light and hope opened, and heaven's blessed light breaking in upon a desolate soul! Have you ever witnessed such a scene?

When she next opened her lips, it was to show forth a Savior's praise!

The Bible assumes that you have light enough to see, and to do your duty, and to find the way to heaven. A great many of you are perhaps bewildered as to your religious opinions, holding loose and skeptical notions. You have not seen that it is the most reasonable thing in the world to admit and embrace this glorious truth. Will you allow yourself to go on,

bewildered, without considering that you are yourself a living, walking revelation of truth? Will you refuse to come into such relations to God and Christ as will save your soul?

In my early life, when I was tempted to skepticism, I can well recollect that I said to myself It is much more probable that ministers and the multitudes of good men who believe the Bible are right, than that I am. They have examined the subject, but I have not. It is, therefore, entirely unreasonable for me to doubt.

Why should you not say I know the Gospel is suited to my warts. I know I am afloat on the vast ocean of life, and if there is no Gospel, there is nothing that can save me. It is, therefore, no way for me to stand here and cavil. I must examine must look into this matter. I can at least see that if God offers me mercy, I must not reject it. Does not this Gospel show you how you can be saved from hell and from sin? O, then believe it! Let the blessed truth find a heart open for its admission. When you shall dare to give God credit for all His love and truth, and when you shall bring your heart under the power of this truth, and yield yourself up to its blessed sway, that will be the dawn of morning to your soul! Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life, freely.

# QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

*“Quench not the Spirit.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:19.*

IN discussing the subject presented in this text, I shall aim,

- I. TO SHOW HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT INFLUENCES THE MIND;**
- II. TO DEDUCE SOME INFERENCES FROM THE KNOWN MODE OF THE SPIRIT’S OPERATIONS;**
- III. SHOW WHAT IT IS TO QUENCH THE SPIRIT;**
- IV. SHOW HOW THIS MAY BE DONE; AND,**
- V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.**

## I. HOW DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INFLUENCE THE HUMAN MIND?

I answer, not by physical agency not by the interposition of direct physical power. The action of the will is not influenced thus, and can not be. The very supposition is absurd. That physical agency should produce voluntary mental phenomena just as it does physical, is both absurd and at war with the very idea of free age. That the same physical agency which moves a planet should move the human will it absurd.

But further: the Bible informs us that the Spirit influences the human mind by means of truth, The Spirit persuades men to act in view of truth, as we ourselves influence our fellow-men by truth presented to their minds. I do not mean that God presents truth to the mind in the same manner as we do. Of course His mode of doing it must differ from ours. We use the pen, the lips, the gesture; we use the language of words and the language of nature. God does not employ these means now; yet still He reaches the mind with truth. Sometimes His providence suggests it; and then His Spirit gives it efficiency, setting it home upon the heart with great power.

Sometimes the Lord makes use of preaching; indeed, His ways are various. But, whatever the mode, the object is always the same namely, to produce voluntary action in conformity to His law.

Now, if the Bible were entirely silent on this subject, we should still know from the nature of mind, and from the nature of those influences which only can move the human mind, that the Spirit must exert not physical, but moral influences on the mind. Yet we are not now left to a merely metaphysical inference; we have the plain testimony of the Bible to the fact that the Spirit employs truth in converting and sanctifying men.

## II. WE NEXT INQUIRE WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THIS FACT AND WHAT MUST BE INFERRED FROM IT?

God is physically omnipotent, and yet His moral influences exerted by the Spirit may be resisted. You will readily see that if the Spirit moved men by physical omnipotence, no mortal could possibly resist His influence. The Spirit's power would, of course, be irresistible for who could withstand omnipotence?

But now we know it to be a fact that men can resist the Holy Ghost; for the nature of moral agency implies this and the Bible asserts it,

The nature of moral agency implies the voluntary action, of one who can yield to motive and follow, light or not as he pleases. Where this power does not exist, moral agency can not exist; and at whatever point this power ceases, there moral agency ceases also.

Hence, if our action is that of moral agents, our moral freedom to do or not do must remain. It can not be set aside or in any way overruled. If God should in any way set aside our voluntary agency, he would of necessity terminate at once, our moral and responsible action. Suppose God should seize hold of a man's arm with physical omnipotence and forcibly use it in deeds of murder or of arson; who does not see that the moral, responsible agency of that man would be entirely superseded? Yet not more so than if,

in an equally irresistible manner, God should seize the man's will and compel it to act as Himself listed.

The very idea that moral influence can ever be irresistible originates in an entire mistake as to the nature of the will and of moral action. The will of man never can act otherwise than freely in view of truth and of the motives it presents for action. Increasing the amount of such influence has no sort of tendency to impair the freedom of the will. Under any possible vividness of truth perceived, or amount of motive present to the mind, the will has still the same changeless power to yield or not yield to act or refuse to act in accordance with this perceived truth.

Force and moral agency are terms of opposite meaning, They can not both co-exist. The one effectually precludes the other. Hence, to say that if God is physically omnipotent, He can and will force a moral agent in his moral action, is to talk stark nonsense.

This fact shows that any work of God carried on by more and not by physical power not only can be resisted by man, but that man may be in very special danger of resisting it. If the Lord carries the work forward by means of revealed truth, there may be most imminent danger lest men will neglect to study and understand this truth, or lest, knowing, they shall refuse to obey it. Surely it is fearfully within the power of every man to shut out this truth from his consideration, and bar his heart against its influence.

### III. WE NEXT INQUIRE WHAT IT IS TO QUENCH THE SPIRIT

We all readily understand this when we come to see distinctly what the work of the Spirit is. We have already seen that it is to enlighten the mind into truth respecting God, ourselves, and our duty. For example, the Spirit enlightens the mind into the meaning and self-application of the Bible, It takes the things of Christ and shows them to us.

Now there is such a thing as refusing to receive this light You can shut your eyes against it. You have the power to turn your eye entirely away



and scarcely see it at all. You can utterly refuse to follow it when seen; and in this case God ceases to hold up the truth before your mind.

Almost every one knows by personal experience that the Spirit has the power of shedding a marvelous light upon revealed truth, so that this truth shall stand before the mind in a new and most impressive form, and shall operate upon it with astonishing energy. But this light of the Spirit may be quenched.

Again: there is, so to speak, a sort of heat, a warmth and vitality attending the truth when enforced by the Spirit. Thus we say if one has the Spirit of God his soul is warm if he has not the Spirit, his heart is cold.

This vital heat produced by the Divine Spirit may be quenched. Let a man resist the Spirit, and he will certainly quench this vital energy which it exerts upon the heart.

#### IV. WE ARE NEXT TO NOTICE SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THE SPIRIT MAY BE QUENCHED

**1.** Men often quench the Spirit by directly resisting the truth He presents to their minds. Sometimes men set themselves deliberately to resist the truth, determined they will not yield to its power, at least for the present. In such cases it is wonderful to see how great the influence of the will is in resisting the truth. Indeed, the will can always resist any moral considerations; for, as we have seen, there is no such thing as forcing the will to yield to truth.

In those cases wherein the truth presses strongly on the mind, there is presumptive evidence that the Spirit is present by His power. And it is in precisely these cases that men are especially prone to set themselves against the truth, and thus are in the utmost peril of quenching the Spirit. They hate the truth presented it crosses their chosen path, of indulgence they feel vexed and harassed by its claims; they resist and quench the Spirit of the Lord.

You have doubtless often seen such cases, and if so, you have doubtless noticed this other remarkable fact of usual occurrence that after a short struggle in resisting truth, the conflict is over, and that particular truth almost utterly ceases to affect the mind. The individual becomes hardened to its power he seems quite able to overlook it and thrust it from his thoughts; or if this fails and the truth is thrown before his mind, yet he finds it comparatively easy to resist its claims, He felt greatly annoyed by that truth until he had quenched the Spirit; now he is annoyed by it no longer.

If you have seen cases of this sort you have doubtless seen how as the truth pressed upon their minds they became restive, sensitive then perhaps angry but still stubborn in resisting until at length the conflict subsides; the truth makes no more impression, and is henceforth quite dead as to them; they apprehend it only with the greatest dimness, and care nothing about it.

And here let me ask Have not some of you had this very experience? Have you not resisted some truth until it has ceased to affect your minds? If so, then you may conclude that you in that case quenched the Spirit of God.

**2.** The Spirit is often quenched by endeavoring to support error.

Men are sometimes foolish enough to attempt by argument to support a position which they have good reason to know is a false one. They argue, it till they get committed; they indulge in a dishonest state of mind; thus they quench the Spirit, and are usually left to believe the very lie which they so unwisely attempted to advocate. Many such cases have I seen when men began to defend and maintain a position known to be false, and kept on till they quenched the Spirit of God believed their own lie, and, it is to be feared, will die under its delusions.

**3.** By uncharitable judgments. Perhaps nothing more certainly quenches the Spirit than to impeach the motives of others and judge them uncharitably. It is so unlike God, and so hostile to the law of love, no wonder the Spirit of God is utterly averse to it, and turns away from those who indulge in it.

**4.** The Spirit is grieved by harsh and vituperative language. How often do persons grieve the Spirit of God by using such language toward those who

differ from them. It is always safe to presume that persons who indulge such a temper have already grieved the Spirit of God utterly, away,

**5.** The Spirit of God is quenched by a bad temper. When a bad temper and spirit are stirred up in individuals or in a community, who has not seen how suddenly a revival of religion ceases the Spirit of God is put down and quenched; there is no more prevailing prayer and no more sinners are converted.

**6.** Often the Spirit is quenched by diverting the attention from the truth. Since the Spirit operates through the truth, it is most obvious that we must attend to this truth which the Spirit would keep before our minds. If we refuse to attend, as we always can if we choose to do so, we shall almost certainly quench the Holy Spirit.

**7.** We often quench the Spirit by indulging intemperate excitement on any subject. If the subject is foreign from practical, divine truth, strong excitement diverts attention from such truth and renders it almost impossible to feel its power. While the mind sees and feels keenly on the subject in which it is excited, it sees dimly and feels but coldly on the vital things of salvation. Hence the Spirit is quenched. But the intemperate excitement may be on some topic really religious. Sometimes I have seen a burst a real tornado of feeling in a revival; but in such cases, truth loses its hold on the minds of the people; they are too much excited to take sober views of the truth and of the moral duties it inculcates. Not all religious excitement, however, is to be condemned. By no means. There must be excitement enough to arouse the mind to serious thought enough to give the truth edge and power; but it is always well to avoid that measure of excitement which throws the mind from its balance and renders its perceptions of truth obscure or fitful.

**8.** The Spirit is quenched by indulging prejudice. Whenever the mind is made up on any subject before it is thoroughly canvassed, that mind is shut against the truth and the Spirit is quenched. When there is great prejudice it seems impossible for the Spirit to act, and of course His influence is quenched. The mind is so committed that it resists, the first efforts of the Spirit.

Thus have thousands done. Thus thousands ruin their souls for eternity.

Therefore let every man keep big mind open to conviction and be sure to examine carefully all important questions, and especially all such as involve great questions of duty to God and man.

I am saying nothing now against being firm in maintaining your position after you thoroughly understand it and are sure it is the truth. But while pursuing your investigations, be sure you are really candid and yield your mind to all the reasonable evidence you can find.

**9.** The Spirit is often quenched by violating conscience. There are circumstances under which to violate conscience seems to quench the light of God in the soul forever. Perhaps you have seen cases of this sort where persons have had a very tender conscience on some subject, but all at once they come to have no conscience at all on that subject, I am aware that change of conduct sometimes results from change of views without any violation of conscience; but the case I speak of is where the conscience seems to be killed. All that remains of it seems hard as a stone.

I have sometimes thought the Spirit of God had much more to do with conscience than we usually suppose. The fact is undeniable that men sometimes experience very great and sudden changes in the amount of sensibility of conscience which they feel on some subjects. How is this to be accounted for? Only by the supposition that the Spirit has power to arouse the conscience and make it pierce like an arrow; and then when men, notwithstanding, the reproaches of conscience, will sin, the Spirit is quenched; the conscience loses all its sensibility; an entire change takes place, and the man goes on to sin as if he never had any conscience to forbid it.

It sometimes happens that the mind is awakened just on the eve of committing some particular sin. Perhaps something seems to say to him If you do this you will be forsaken of God. A strange presentiment forewarns him to desist. Now if he goes on the whole mind receives a dreadful shock; the very eyes of the mind seem to be almost put out: the moral perceptions are strangely deranged and beclouded; a fatal violence is done to the conscience on that particular, subject at least, and indeed the injury to the conscience seems to affect all departments of moral action.

In such circumstances the Spirit of God seems to turn away and say

“I can do no more for you;  
I have warned you faithfully and can warn you no more.”

All these results sometimes accrue from neglect of plainly revealed duty. Men shrink from known duty through fear of the opinions of others, or through dislike of some self-denial. In this crisis of trial the Spirit does not leave them in a state of doubt or inattention as to duty, but keeps the truth and the claims of God vividly before the mind. Then if men go on and commit the sin despite of the Spirit’s warnings, the soul is left in awful darkness the light of the Spirit of God is quenched perhaps forever.

I know not in how many cases I have seen persons in great agony and even despair who had evidently quenched the Spirit in the manner just described. Many of you may know the case of a young man who has been here. He had a long trial on the question of preparing himself for the ministry. He balanced the question for a long time, the claims of God being clearly set before him; but at last resisting the convictions of duty, he went off and got married, and turned away from the work to which God seemed to call him. Then the Spirit left him. For some few years he remained entirely hardened as to what he had done and as to any claims of God upon him, but finally his wife sickened and died. Then his eyes were opened; he saw what he had done. He sought the Lord, but sought in vain. No light returned to his darkened, desolate soul. It no longer seemed his duty to prepare for the ministry; that call of God had ceased. His cup of wretchedness seemed to be filled to the brim. Often he spent whole nights in most intense agony, groaning, crying for mercy, or musing in anguish upon the dire despair that spread its universe of desolation all around him. I have often feared he would take his own life, so perfectly wretched was he under these reproaches of a guilty conscience and these thoughts of deep despair.

I might mention many other similar cases. Men refuse to do known duty, and this refusal does fatal violence to their own moral sense and to the Spirit of the Lord, and consequently there remains for them only a “certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.”

**10.** Persons often quench the Spirit by indulging their appetites and passions. You would be astonished if you were to know how often the Spirit is grieved by this means until a crisis is formed of such a nature that

they seem to quench the light of God at once from their souls. Some persons indulge their appetite for food to the injury of their health, and though they know they are injuring themselves, and the! Spirit of God remonstrates and presses them hard to desist from ruinous self-indulgence, yet they persist in their course are given up of God, and henceforth their appetites lord it over them to the ruin of their spirituality and of their souls. The same may be true of any form of sensual indulgence.

**11.** The Spirit is often quenched by indulging in dishonesty. Men engaged in business will take little advantages in buying and selling.” Sometimes they are powerfully convinced of the great selfishness of this, and see that this is by, no means loving their neighbor as themselves. It may happen that a man about to drive a good bargain will raise the question Is this right? Will balance it long in his mind will say, “Now this neighbor of mine needs this article, very much, and will suffer if he does not get it; this will give me a grand chance to put on a price; but then, would this be doing as I would be done by?” He looks and thinks he sees duty, but finally decides in favor of his selfishness. Eternity alone will disclose the consequences of such a decision. When the Spirit of God has followed such persons a long time has made them see their danger has kept the truth before them, and finally seizing the favorable moment, makes a last effort and this proves unavailing the die is cast; thereafter all restraints are gone, and the selfish man abandoned of God, goes on worse and worse, to State’s prison perhaps, and certainly to hell!

**12.** Often men quench the Spirit by casting off fear and restraining prayer. Indeed, restraining prayer must always quench the Spirit. It is wonderful to see how naturally and earnestly the Spirit leads us to pray. If we were really led by the Spirit, we should be drawn many times a day to secret prayer, and should be continually lifting up our hearts in silent ejaculations whenever the mind unbends itself from other pressing occupations. The Spirit in the hearts of saints is pre- eminently a spirit of prayer, and of course to restrain, prayer must always quench the Spirit.

Some of you, perhaps, have been in this very case. You have once had the spirit of prayer now you have none of it; you had access to God now you have it no longer; you have no more enjoyment in prayer have no groaning and agonizing over the state of the church and of sinners. And if this spirit

of prayer is gone, where are you now? Alas, you have quenched the Spirit of God you have put out His light and repelled His influences from your soul. 13. The Spirit is quenched by idle conversation. Few seem to be aware how wicked this is and how certainly it quenches the Holy Spirit. Christ said “that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

**14.** Men quench the Holy Ghost by a spirit of levity and trifling.

Again by indulging a peevish and fretful spirit.

Also by a spirit of indolence. Many indulge in this to such an extent as altogether to drive away the Holy Spirit. Again by a spirit of procrastination, and by indulging themselves in making excuses for neglect of duty. This is a sure way to quench the Spirit of God in the soul.

**15.** It is to be feared that many have quenched the Spirit by resisting the doctrine and duty of sanctification.

This subject has been for a few years past extensively discussed; and the doctrine has also been extensively opposed. Several ecclesiastical bodies have taken ground against it, and sometimes it is to be feared that members have said and done what they would not by any means have said or done in their own closets or pulpits. Is it not also probable that many ministers and some laymen have been influenced by this very ecclesiastical action to oppose the doctrine the fear of man thus becoming a snare to their souls? May it not also be the case that some have opposed the doctrine really because it raises a higher standard of personal holiness than they like too high, perhaps, to permit them to hope as Christians, too high for their experience, and too high to suit their tastes and habits for future life? Now who does not see that opposition to the doctrine and duty of sanctification on any such grounds must certainly and fatally quench the Holy Spirit? No work can lie more near the heart of Jesus than the sanctification of His people. Hence nothing can so greatly grieve Him as to see this work impeded much more to see it opposed and frustrated.

A solemn and awful emphasis is given to these considerations when you contemplate the facts respecting the prevalent state of piety in very many churches throughout the land. You need not ask A revivals enjoyed are Christians prayerful, self-denying, alive in faith and in love to God and to

man. You need not ask if the work of sanctifying the Church is moving on apace, and manifesting itself by abounding fruits of righteousness; the answer meets you before you can well frame the question.

Alas, that the Spirit should be quenched under the diffusion of the very truth which ought to sanctify the Church! What can save if Gospel promise in all its fullness is so perverted or resisted as to quench the Spirit and thus serve only to harden the heart?

## V. I AM LASTLY TO SPEAK OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF QUENCHING THE HOLY SPIRIT

**1.** Great darkness of mind. Abandoned of God, the mind sees truth so dimly that it makes no useful impression. Such persons read the Bible without interest or profit. It becomes to them a dead-letter, and they generally lay it aside unless some controversy leads them to search it. They take no such spiritual interest in it as makes its perusal delightful.

Have not some of you been in this very state of mind? this is that darkness of nature which is common to men, when the Spirit of God is withdrawn.

**2.** There usually results great coldness and stupidity in regard to religion generally. It leaves to the mind no such interest in spiritual things as men take in worldly things.

Persons often get into such a state that they are greatly interested in some worldly matters, but not in spiritual religion. Their souls are all awake while worldly things are the subject; but suggest some spiritual subject, and their interest is gone at once. You can scarcely get them to attend a prayer-meeting. They are in a worldly state of mind you may know, for if the Spirit of the Lord was with them, they would be more deeply interested in religious services than in anything else.

But now, mark them. Get up a political meeting or a theatrical exhibition and their souls are all on fire; but go and appoint a prayer-meeting or a meeting to promote a revival, and they are not there; or if there, they feel no interest in the object.



Such persons often seem not to know themselves. They perhaps think they attend to these worldly things, only for the glory of God; I will believe this when I see them interested in spiritual things as much.

When a man has quenched the Spirit of God his religion is all outside. His vital, heart-affecting interest in spiritual things is gone.

It is indeed true that a spiritual man will take some interest in worldly things because he regards them as a part of his duty to God, and to him they are spiritual things.

**3.** The mind falls very naturally into diverse errors in religion. The heart wanders from God, loses its hold on the truth, and perhaps the man insists that he now takes a much more liberal and enlightened view of the subject than before;

A short time since, I had a conversation with a man who had given up the idea that the Old Testament was inspired had given up the doctrine of the atonement, and indeed every distinctive doctrine of the Bible. He remarked to me, "I used to think as you do; but I have now come to take a more liberal and enlightened view of the subject." Indeed! this a more liberal and enlightened view! So blinded as not to see that Christ sanctioned the Old Testament as the oracles of God, and yet he flatters himself that he now takes a more liberal and enlightened view! There can be nothing stronger than Christ's affirmations respecting the inspiration of the Old Testament; and yet this man admits these affirmations to be true and yet denies the very thing they affirm! Most liberal and enlightened view, truly!

How can you possibly account for such views except on the ground that for some reason the man has fallen into a strange, unnatural state of mind a sort of mental fatuity in which moral truths are beclouded or distorted?

Everybody knows that there can not be a greater absurdity than to admit the divine authority of the teachings of Christ and yet reject the Old Testament. The language of Christ affirms and implies the authority of the Old Testament in all those ways in which, on the supposition that the Old Testament is inspired, He might be expected to affirm and imply this fact.

The Old Testament does not indeed exhaust divine revelation; it left more things to be revealed. Christ taught much, but nothing more clearly than the divine authority of the Old Testament.

**4.** Quenching the Spirit often results in infidelity. What can account for such a case as that I have just mentioned, unless this that God has left the mind to fall into very great darkness?

**5.** Another result is great hardness of heart. The mind becomes callous to all that class of truths which make it yielding and tender. The mobility of the heart under truth depends entirely upon its moral hardness. If very hard, truth makes no impression; if soft, then it is yielding as air, and moves quick to the touch of truth in any direction.

**6.** Another result is deep delusion in regard to their spiritual state. How remarkable that persons will claim to be Christians when they have rejected every distinctive doctrine of Christianity. Indeed, such persons do sometimes claim that by thus rejecting almost the whole of the Bible, and all its great scheme of salvation by an atonement, they have become real Christians. Now they have got the true light. Indeed!

How can such a delusion be accounted for except on the ground that the Spirit of God has abandoned the man to his own ways and left him to utter and perfect delusion? **7.** Persons in this state often justify themselves in most manifest wrong, because they put darkness for light and light for darkness. They intrench themselves in perfectly false principles, as if those principles were true and could amply justify their misdeeds.

## REMARKS

**1.** Persons often are not aware what is going on in their minds when they are quenching the Spirit of God. Duty is presented and pressed upon them, but they do not realize that this is really the work of the Spirit of God. They are not aware of the present voice of the Lord to their hearts, nor do they see that this solemn impression of the truth is nothing other than the effect of the Holy Ghost on their minds.

**2.** So when they come to take different views and to abandon their former opinions, they seem not conscious of the fact that God has departed from them. They flatter themselves that they have become very liberal and very much enlightened withal, and have only given up their former errors. Alas, they do not see that the light they now walk in is darkness all sheer darkness! “Woe to them who put light for darkness and darkness for light!”

You see how to account for the spiritual state of some persons. Without the clue which this subject affords, you might be much misled. In the case just described, suppose that I had taken it for granted that this man was in truth taking a more rational and liberal view; I should have been misguided entirely.

**3.** I have good reason to know how persons become Unitarians and Universalists, having seen at least some hundreds of instances. It is not by becoming more and more men of prayer and real spirituality not by getting nearer and nearer to God; they do not go on progressing in holiness, prayer, communion with God, until in their high attainments they reach a point where they deny the inspiration of the Bible, give up public prayer, the ordinances of the Gospel, and probably secret prayer along with the rest. Those who give up these things are not led away while wrestling in prayer and while walking humbly and closely with God; no man ever got away from orthodox views while in this state of mind.

But men first get away from God and quench His Spirit; then embrace one error after another; truth falls out of the mind and we might almost sly truthfulness itself, or those qualities or moral attributes which capacitate the mind to discern and apprehend the truth; and then darkness becomes so universal and so deceptive I that men suppose themselves to be wholly in the light,

**4.** Such a state of mind is most deplorable and often hopeless. What can be done when a man has grieved the Spirit of God away?

**5.** When an individual or a people have quenched the Spirit, they are in the utmost danger of being given up to some delusion that will bring them by a short route to destruction.

**6.** They take entirely false ground who maintain that if a religious movement is the work of God, it can not be resisted. For example, I have often seen cases where persons would stop a revival, and then say, "It was not a real revival, for if it had been it would not have stopped."

Let a man adopt the opinion that he can not stop the work of God in his own soul; nothing can be more perilous. Let a people adopt the notion that revivals come and go without our agency and by the agency of God only, and it will bring perfect ruin on them. There never was a revival that could exist three days under such a delusion. The solemn truth is that the Spirit is most easily quenched. There is no moral work of His that can not be resisted"

**7.** An immense responsibility pertains to revivals. There is always fearful danger lest the Spirit should be resisted.

So when the Spirit is with an individual, there is the greatest danger lest something be said, ruinous to the soul.

Many persons here are in the greatest danger. The Spirit often labors with sinners here, and many have grieved away,

**8.** Many seem not to realize the nature of the Spirit's operations, the possibility always of resisting, and the great danger of quenching that light of God in the soul.

How many young men could I name here, once thoughtful, now stupid. Where are those young men who were so serious, and who attended the inquiry meeting so long in our last revival? Alas, have they quenched the Holy Spirit?

Is not this the case with you, young man? with you, young woman? Have not you quenched the Spirit until now your mind is darkened and your heart woefully hardened? How long are the death-knell shall toll over you and your soul go down to hell? How long before you will lose your hold on all truth and the Spirit will have left you utterly?

But let me bring this appeal home to the hearts of those who have not yet utterly quenched the light of God in the soul. Do you find that truth still takes hold of your conscience that God's word flashes on your mind that heaven's light is not yet utterly extinguished, and there is still a quivering

of conscience? You hear of a sudden death, like that of the young man the other day, and trembling seizes your soul, for you know that another blow may single out you. Then by all the mercies of God I beseech you take care what you do. Quench not the Holy Ghost, lest your sun go down in everlasting darkness. just as you may have seen the sun set when it dipped into a dark, terrific, portentous thunder- cloud. So a benighted sinner dies! Have you ever seen such a death? Dying, he seemed to sink into an awful cloud of fire and storm and darkness.

The scene was fearful, like a sun-setting of storms, and gathering clouds, and rolling thunders, and forked lightnings. The clouds gather low in the west; the spirit of storm rides on the blast; belching thunders seem as if they would cleave the solid earth; behind such a fearful cloud the sun drops, and all is darkness! So have I seen a sinner give up the ghost and drop into a world of storms, and howling tempests, and flashing fire.

O, how unlike the setting sun of a mild summer evening. All nature seems to put on her sweetest smile as she bids the king of day adieu.

So dies the saint of God. There may be paleness on his lip and cold sweat on his brow, but there is beauty in that eye and glory in the soul. I think of a woman just converted, when she was taken sick brought down to the gates of death yet was her soul full of heaven. Her voice was the music of angels; her countenance shone, her eye sparkled as if the forms of heavenly glory were embodied in her dying features.

Nature at last sinks the moment of death has come; she stretches out her dying hands and hails the waiting spirit-throng. "Glory to God!" she cries; "I am coming! I am coming!" Not going observe she did not say, "I am going," but, "I am coming!"

But right over against this, look at the sinner dying. A frightful glare is on his countenance as if he saw ten thousand demons! As if the setting sun should go down into an ocean of storms to be lost in a world charged with tornadoes, storms, and death!

Young man, you will die just so if you quench the Spirit of God. Jesus Himself has said, "If ye will not believe, ye shall die in your sins." Beyond such a death, there is an awful hell.

# THE SPIRIT NOT STRIVING ALWAYS

*“And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” Genesis 6:3.*

IN speaking from this text I shall pursue the following outline of thought, and attempt to show:

- I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE ASSERTION, MY SPIRIT SHALL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE WITH MAN;**
- II. WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE SPIRIT’S STRIVING;**
- III. WHAT IS INTENDED BY IT;**
- IV. HOW IT MAYBE KNOWN WHEN THE SPIRIT STRIVES WITH AN INDIVIDUAL;**
- V. WHAT IS INTENDED BY HIS NOT STRIVING ALWAYS;**
- VI. WHY HE WILL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE; AND,**
- VII. SOME CONSEQUENCES OF HIS CEASING TO STRIVE WITH MEN.**

## I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE ASSERTION, “MY SPIRIT SHALL NOT ALWAYS STRIVE WITH MAN?”

**1.** It is implied in this assertion, that the Spirit does some times strive with men. It is nonsense to affirm that He will not strive always, if the fact of His striving sometimes be not implied. Beyond all question, the text assumes the doctrine that God by His Spirit does strive sometimes with sinning men.

**2.** It is also implied that men resist the Spirit. For there can be no strife unless there be resistance. If sinners always yielded at once to the teachings and guidance of the Spirit, there could be no “striving” on the

part of the Spirit, in the sense here implied, and it would be altogether improper to use the language here employed. In fact, the language of our text implies long-continued resistance so long continued that God declares that the struggle shall not be kept up on His part forever.

I am well aware that sinners are prone to think that they do not resist God. They often think that they really want the Spirit of God to be with them, and to strive with them. What, indeed! Think of this! If a sinner really wanted the Spirit of God to convert or to lead him, how could he resist the Spirit? But in fact he does resist the Spirit. What Stephen affirmed of the Jews of his time, is true in general of all sinners, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." For if there were no resistance on the sinner's part, there could be no striving on the part of the Spirit. So that it is a mere absurdity that a sinner in a state of mind to resist the Spirit should yet sincerely desire to be led into truth and duty by the Spirit. But sinners are sometimes so deceived about themselves as to suppose that they want God to strive with them, while really they are resisting all He is doing, and are ready to resist all He will do. So blinded to their own true characters are sinners.

## II. WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE SPIRIT'S STRIVING

Here the main thing to be observed is that it is not any form of physical struggling or effort whatever. It is not any force applied to our bodies. It does not attempt to urge us literally along toward God or heaven. This is not to be thought of at all.

## III. WHAT, THEN, IS THE STRIVING OF THE SPIRIT?

I answer, it is an energy of God, applied to the mind of man, setting truth before his mind, debating, reasoning, convincing, and persuading. The sinner resists God's claims, cavils and argues against them; and then God, by His Spirit, meets the sinner and debates with him, somewhat as two

men might debate and argue with each other. You are not, however, to understand that the Holy Ghost does this with an audible voice, to the human ear, but He speaks to the mind and to the heart.

The inner ear of the soul can hear its whispers.

Our Savior taught that when the Comforter should come He would “reprove the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.” (John xvi. 7-11.) The term here rendered “reprove” refers, in its proper sense, to judicial proceedings. When the judge has heard all the testimony and the arguments of counsel, he sums up the whole case and lays it before the jury, bringing out all the strong points and making them bear with all their condensed and accumulated power upon the condemnation of the criminal. This is reproofing him in the original and legitimate sense of the word used here by our Savior. Thus the Holy Ghost reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Thus does the Spirit convince or convict the sinner by testimony, by argument, by arraying all the strong points of the case against him under circumstances of affecting solemnity and power.

#### IV. HOW MAY IT BE KNOWN WHEN THE SPIRIT OF GOD STRIVES WITH AN INDIVIDUAL!

Not by direct perception of His agency, through any of your physical senses; for His presence is not manifested to these organs. Not directly by our consciousness; for the only proper subjects of consciousness are the acts and states of our own minds. But we know the presence and agency of the Spirit by His works. The results He produces are the legitimate proofs of His presence. Thus a person under the Spirit’s influence, finds his attention arrested to the great concerns of his soul. The solemn questions of duty and responsibility to God are continually intruding themselves upon his mind. If he is a student over his lesson, his mind is drawn away continually, ere he is aware, to think of God and of the judgment to come. He turns his attention back to his books, but soon it is off again. How can he neglect these matters of infinite moment to his future well-being?



So with men of every calling; the Spirit of God turns the mind, and draws it to God and the concerns of the soul. When such results take place, you may know that the Spirit of God is the cause. For who does not know that this drawing and inclining of the mind toward God is by no means natural to the human heart? When it does occur, therefore, we may know that the special agency of God is in it.

Again, when a man finds himself convinced of sin, he may know that this is the Spirit's work. Now it is one thing to know one's self to be a sinner, and quite another to feel a realizing sense of it, and to have the truth take hold mightily of the deepest sensibilities of the soul. The latter sometimes takes place. You may see the man's countenance fallen, his eye downcast, his whole aspect is as if he had disgraced himself by some foul crime, or as if he had suddenly lost all the friends he ever had. I have often met with impenitent sinners who looked condemned, as if conscious guilt had taken hold of their inmost soul. They would not be aware that they were revealing in their countenances the deep workings of their hearts, but the observing eye could not help seeing it. I have also seen the same among backslidden professors, resulting from the same cause the Spirit of God reproving them of sin.

Sometimes this conviction is of a general and sometimes of a more special nature. It may enforce only the general impression, "I am all wrong; I am utterly odious and hateful to God; my whole heart is a sink of abomination in His sight;" or in other cases it may seize upon some particular form of sin, and hold it up before the sinner's mind, and make him see his infinite odiousness before God for this sin. It may be a sin he has never thought of before, or he may have deemed it a very light matter; but now, through the Spirit, it shall rise up before his mind, in such features of ugliness and loathsomeness, that he will abhor himself. He sees sin in a perfectly new light. Many things are sins now which he never deemed sins before.

Again, the Spirit not only convinces of the fact that such and such things are sins, but convicts the mind of the great guilt and ill-desert of sin. The sinner is made to feel that his sin deserves the direst damnation.

The case of an infidel of my acquaintance may serve to illustrate this. He had lived in succession with two pious wives; had read almost every book then extant on the inspiration of the Scriptures had disputed, and caviled,

and often thought himself to have triumphed over believers in the Bible, and in fact he was the most subtle infidel I ever saw. It was remarkable that in connection with his infidelity he had no just views of sin. He had indeed heard much about some dreadful depravity which had come down in the current of human blood from Adam, and was itself a physical thing; but as usual he had no oppressive consciousness of guilt for having his share of this original taint. His mind consequently was quite easy in respect to the guilt of his own sin.

But at length a change came over him, and his eyes were opened to see the horrible enormity of his guilt. I saw him one day so borne down with sin and shame that he could not look up. He bowed his head upon his knees, covered his face, and groaned in agony. In this state I left him and went to the prayer-meeting. Ere long he came into the meeting as he never came before. As he left the meeting he said to his wife, "You have long known me as a strong-hearted infidel; but my infidelity is all gone. I can not tell you what has become of it it all seems to me as the merest nonsense, I can not conceive how I could ever have believed and defended it. I seem to myself like a man called to view some glorious and beautiful structure, in order to pass his judgment upon it; but who presumes to judge and condemn it after having caught only a dim glimpse of one obscure corner. Just so have I done in condemning the glorious Bible and the glorious government of God."

Now the secret of all this change in his mind towards the Bible lay in the change of his views as to his own sin. Before, he had not been convicted of sin at all; now he sees it in some of its true light, and really feels that he deserves the deepest hell. Of course he now sees the pertinence and beauty and glory of the Gospel system. He is now in a position in which he can see clearly one of the strongest proofs of the truth of the Bible namely, its perfect adaptation to meet the wants of a sinning race.

It is remarkable to see what power there is in conviction for sin to break up and annihilate the delusions of error. For instance, no man can once thoroughly see his own sin, and remain an Universalist, and deem it unjust for God to send him to hell. When I hear a man talking in defense of Universalism, I know he does not understand anything about sin. He has not begun to see his own guilt in its true light. It is the blindest of all

mental infatuations to think that the little inconveniences of this life are all that sin deserves. Let a man once see his own guilt, and he will be amazed to think that he ever held such a notion. The Spirit of God, pouring light upon the sinner's mind, will soon use up Universalism.

I once labored in a village in the State of New York where Universalism prevailed extensively. The leading man among them had a sick wife who sympathized with him in sentiment. She being near death, I called to see her, and endeavored to expose the utter fallacy of her delusion. After I had left, her husband returned, and his wife, her eyes being now opened, cried out to him as he entered, "O my dear husband, you are in the way to hell your Universalism will ruin your soul forever!" He was greatly enraged, and learning that I had been talking with her, his rage was kindled against me. "Where is he now?" said he. "Gone to the meeting," was the reply. "I'll go there and shoot him," he cried; and seizing his loaded pistol, as I was informed, he started off. When he came in I was preaching, I think, from the text "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" I knew at the time nothing about his purpose nothing about his pistol. He listened awhile, and then all at once, in the midst of the meeting, he fell back on his seat, and cried out, "O I am sinking to hell! O, God, have mercy on me." Away went his Universalism in a twinkling; he sees his sin, and now he is sinking to hell. This change in him was not my work, for I could produce no such effects as these. I was indeed trying to show from my text what sinners deserve; but the Spirit of God, and nothing less, could set home conviction of sin after this sort.

Again, another fruit of the Spirit is developed in the case of those persons who are conscious of great hardness and insensibility. It not infrequently happens that men suppose themselves to be Christians because they have so much sensibility on religious subjects, To undeceive them, the Spirit directs their attention to some truth that dries up all their sensibility, and leaves their hopes stranded on the sea-beach. Now they are in great agony. "The more I hear," say they, "the less I feel. I was never in the world so far from being convicted of sin. I shall certainly go to hell. I have not a particle of feeling. I can not feel if I die."

Now the explanation of this singular state is usually this: The Spirit of God sees their danger sees them deceiving themselves by relying on their

feelings, and therefore brings some truths before their minds which array the opposition of their hearts against God and dry up the fountains of their sensibility. Then they see how perfectly callous their hearts are toward God. This is the work of the Spirit.

Again, the Spirit convicts the soul of the guilt of unbelief. Sinners are very apt to suppose that they do believe the Gospel. They confound faith with a merely intellectual assent, and so blind themselves as to suppose that they believe God in the sense of Gospel faith.

But let the Spirit once reveal their own hearts to them and they will see that they do not believe in God as they believe in their fellow-men, and that instead of having confidence in God and resting on His words of promise as they do on men's promises, they do not rest on God at all, but are full of anxiety lest God should fail to fulfill His own words. They see that instead of being childlike and trustful, they are full of trouble, and solicitude, and in fact of unbelief. And they see, also, that this is a horribly guilty state of heart. They see the guilt of not resting in His promises the horrible guilt of not believing with the heart every word God ever uttered.

Now this change is the work of the Spirit. Our Savior mentions it as one of the effects wrought by the Spirit, that He shall "reprove the world of sin, because they believe not on me." And in fact we find that this is one of the characteristic works of the Spirit. In conversing recently with a man who has been for many years a professor of religion, but living in the seventh chapter to the Romans, he remarked "I have been thinking of this truth, that God cares for me and loves me, and has through Jesus Christ offered me eternal life; and now I deserve to be damned if I do not believe." Stretching out his pale hand, he said with great energy, "I ought to go to hell if I will not believe." Now all this is the work of the Spirit this making a man see the guilt and hello desert of unbelief this making a sinner see that everything else is only straw compared with the eternal rock of God's truth.

Again, the Spirit makes men see the danger of dying in their sins. Said a young man, "I am afraid to go to sleep at night, lest I should awake in hell." Sinners often know what this feeling is. I recollect having this thought once impressed upon my mind, and so much agonized was I, that I almost thought myself to be dying on the spot! O, I can never express the

terror and the agony of my soul in that hour! Sinner, if you have these feelings, it is a solemn time with you.

Moreover, the Spirit makes sinners feel the danger of being given up of God. Often does it happen that sinners, convicted by the Spirit, are made to feel that if they are not given up already, they are in the most imminent peril of it, and must rush for the gate of life now or never. They see that they have so sinned and have done so much to provoke God to give them over, that their last hope of being accepted is fast dying away. Sinners, have any of you ever felt thus? Have you ever trembled in your very soul lest you should be given over to a reprobate mind before another Sabbath, or perhaps before another morning? If so, you may ascribe this to the Spirit of God.

Yet further: the Spirit often convicts sinners of the great blindness of their minds. It seems to them that their minds are full of solid darkness, as it were a darkness that may be felt.

Now this is really the natural state of the sinner, but he is not sensible of it until enlightened by the Spirit of God. When thus enlightened, he begins to appreciate his own exceeding great blindness. He now becomes aware that the Bible is a sealed book to him for he finds that though he reads it, its meaning is involved in impenetrable darkness.

Have not some of you been conscious of such an experience as this? Have you not read the Bible with the distressing consciousness that your mind was by no means suitably affected by its truth indeed, with the conviction that you did not get hold of its truth to any good purpose at all? Thus are men enlightened by the Spirit to see the real state of their case.

Again, the Spirit shows sinners their total alienation from God. I have seen sinners so strongly convicted of this, that they would say right out: "I know that I have not the least disposition to return to God I am conscious that I don't care whether I have any religion or not."

Often have I seen professed Christians in this state, conscious that their hearts are utterly alienated from God and from all sympathy with His character or government. Their deep backslidings, or their utter want of all religion, has been so revealed to their minds by the Spirit, as to become a matter of most distinct and impressive consciousness.

Sinners thus made to see themselves by the Spirit, often find that when they pour out their words before God for prayer, their heart won't go. I once said to a sinner, "Come, now, give up your heart to God." "I will," said he; but in a moment he broke out, "My heart won't go." Have not some of you been compelled to say the same, "My heart won't go?" Then you know by experience one of the fruits of the Spirit's convicting power.

When the Spirit of God is not with men, they can dole out their long prayers before God and never think or seem to care how prayerless their hearts are all the time, and how utterly far from God. But when the Spirit sheds His light on the soul, the sinner sees how black a hypocrite he is. Oh, then he cannot pray so smoothly, so loosely, so self-complacently.

Again, the Spirit of God often convinces men that they are ashamed of Christ, and that in truth they do not wish for religion. It sometimes happens that sinners do not feel ashamed of being thought seriously disposed, until they come to be convicted. Such was the case with myself. I bought my first Bible as a law-book, and laid it by the side of my Blackstone. I studied it as I would any other law-book, my sole object being to find in it the great principles of law. Then I never once thought of being ashamed of reading it. I read it as freely and as openly as I read any other book. But as soon as I became awakened to the concerns of my soul, I put my Bible out of sight. If it were lying on my table when persons came into my office, I was careful to throw a newspaper over it. Ere long, however, the conviction that I was ashamed of God and of His word came over me with overwhelming force, and served to show me the horrible state of my mind toward God. And I suppose that the general course of my experience is by no means uncommon among impenitent sinners.

The Spirit also convicts men of worldly-mindedness. Sinners are always in this state of mind; but are often not fully aware of the fact until the Spirit of God makes them see it. I have often seen men pushing their worldly projects most intensely, but when addressed on the subject they would say, "I don't care much about the world; I am pursuing this business just now chiefly because I want to be doing something;" but when the Spirit shows them their own hearts, they are in agony lest they should never be able to break away from the dreadful power of the world upon their souls.

Now they see that they have been the veriest slaves on earth-slaves to the passion for worldly good.

Again, the Holy Spirit often makes such a personal application of the truth as to fasten the impression that the preacher is personal and intends to describe the case and character of him who is the subject of his influence. The individual thus convinced of sin may think that the preacher has, in some way, come to a knowledge of his character, and intends to describe it, that the preacher means him, and is preaching to him. He wonders who has told the preacher so much about him. All this often takes place when the preacher perhaps does not know that such an one is in the assembly, and is altogether ignorant of his history. Thus the Holy Spirit who knows his heart and his entire history becomes very personal in the application of truth.

Have any of you this experience? Has it at present or at any other time appeared to you as if the preacher meant you, and that he was describing your case? Then the Spirit of the living God is upon you. I have often seen individuals drop their heads under preaching almost as if they were shot through. They were, perhaps, unable to look up again during the whole service. Afterwards I have often heard that they thought I meant them, and that others thought so too, and perhaps imagined that many eyes were turned on them, and that therefore they did not look up, when in fact neither myself nor any one in the congregation, in all probability, so much as thought of them.

Thus a bow drawn at a venture often lodges an arrow between the joints of the sinner's coat of mail. Sinner, is it so with you?

Again, the Holy Spirit often convinces sinners of the of their hearts against God. Most impenitent sinners, and perhaps all deceived professors, unless convinced to the contrary by the Holy Spirit, imagine that they are on the whole friendly to God. They are far from believing that this carnal mind is enmity against God. They think they do not hate, but, on the contrary, that they love God. Now this delusion must be torn away or they must be lost. To do this, the Spirit so orders it that some truths are presented which develop their real enmity against God. The moralist who has been the almost Christian, or the deceived professor, begins to cavil, to find fault, finally to rail, to oppose the preaching and the meetings and the

measures and the men. The man perhaps who has a pious wife and who has thought himself and has been thought by her to be almost a Christian, begins by caviling at the truth, finds fault with the measures and with the manners; then refuses to go to meeting, and finally forbids his wife and family going, and not infrequently his enmity of heart will boil over in a horrible manner. He perhaps has no thought that this boiling up of hell within him is occasioned by the Holy Spirit revealing to him the true state of his heart. His Christian friends also may mistake his case and be ready to conclude that something is wrong in the matter or manners or measures of the preacher that is doing this man a great injury, But beware what you say or do, In many such cases which have come under my own observation, it has turned out that the Holy Spirit was at work in those hearts, revealing to them their real enmity against God. This He does by presenting truth in such a manner and under such circumstances as to produce these results. He pushes this process until He compels the soul to see that it is filled with enmity to God, and to what is right; that yet it is not man, but God to whom he is opposed; that it is not error, but truth; not the manner, but the matter; not the measures, but the God of truth which it hates.

The Spirit, moreover, often convicts sinners powerfully of the deceitfulness of their own hearts. Sometimes this conviction becomes really appalling.

They see they have been deluding themselves in matters too plain to justify any mistake, and too momentous to admit of any apology for willful blindness. They are confounded with what they see in themselves.

The Spirit also not infrequently strips the sinner of his excuses, and shows him clearly their great folly and absurdity. I recollect this was one of the first things in my experience in the process of conviction. I lost all confidence in any of my excuses, for I found them to be so foolish and futile that I could not endure them. This was my state of mind before I had ever heard of the work of the Spirit, or knew at all how to judge whether my own mind was under its influence or not. I found that whereas I had been very strong in my excuses and objections, I was now utterly weak, and it seemed to me that any child could overthrow me. In fact, I did not need to be overthrown by anybody, for my excuses and cavils had sunk to



nothing of themselves, and I was deeply ashamed of them. I had effectually worked myself out of all their mazes, so that they could bewilder me no longer. I have since seen multitudes in the same condition weak as to their excuses, their old defensive armor all torn off, and their hearts laid naked to the shafts of God's truth.

Now, sinners, have any of you known what this is to have all your excuses and apologies failing you to feel that you have no courage and no defensible reasons for pushing forward in a course of sin? If so, then you know what it is to be under the convicting power of the Spirit.

The Spirit convicts men of the folly of seeking salvation in any other way than through Christ alone. Often, without being aware of it, a sinner will be really seeking salvation in some other way than through Christ, and he will be looking to his good deeds to his own prayers, or the prayers of some Christian friends; but if the Spirit ever saves him, He will tear away these delusive schemes and show him the utter vanity of every other way than through Christ alone. The Spirit will show him that there is but this one way in which it is naturally possible for a sinner to be saved, and that all attempts toward any other way are forever vain and worse than worthless. All self-righteousness must be rejected entirely, and Christ be sought alone.

Have you ever been made to see this? You, who are professed Christians, is this your experience?

Again, the Spirit convinces men of the great folly and madness of clinging to an unsanctifying hope. The Bible teaches that every one who has the genuine Gospel hope purifies himself, even as Christ is pure. In this passage, the apostle John plainly means to affirm a universal proposition. He states a universal characteristic of the Christian hope. Whoever has a Christian hope should ask Do I purify myself even as Christ is pure? If not, then mine is not the true Gospel hope.

But let thousands of professed Christians have a most inefficient hope. What is it? Does it really lead them to purify themselves as Christ is pure? Nothing like it. It is not a hope that they shall see Christ as He is, and be forever with Him, and altogether like Him too, but it is mainly a hope that they shall escape hell, and go as an alternative to some unknown heaven.

Such professed Christians can not but know that their experience lacks the witness of their own consciences that they are living for God and bearing His image. If such are ever saved, they must first be convinced of the folly of a hope that leaves them unsanctified.

Ye professors of religion who have lived a worldly life so long, are you not ashamed of your hope? Have you not good reason to be ashamed of a hope that has no more power than yours has had? Are there not many in this house who in the honesty of their hearts must say, "Either there is no power in the Gospel, or I don't know anything about it? "For the Gospel affirms as a universal fact of all those who are not under the law, but under grace, "sin shall not have dominion over you."

Now will you go before God and say, "Lord, Thou hast said, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' but, Lord, that is all false, for I believe the Gospel and am under grace, but sin still has dominion over me! "No doubt in this case there is a mistake somewhere; and it becomes you to ask solemnly Shall I charge this mistake and falsehood upon God, or shall I admit that it must be in myself alone?

The apostle Paul has said, "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Is it so to you?

He has also said, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you know this by your own experience? He adds also that we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience. and patience, experience: and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Is all this in accordance with your experience, professed Christian? Is it true that your hope makes not ashamed? Does it produce such glorious fruits unto holiness as are here described? If you were to try your experience by the word of the living God, and open your heart to be searched by the Spirit, would not you be convinced that you do not embrace the Gospel in reality?

Again, the Spirit convinces men that all their goodness is selfish; and that self is the end of all their efforts, of all their prayers and religious exercises.

I once spent a little time in the family of a man who was a leading member in a Presbyterian Church. He said to me, "What should you think of a man who is praying for the Spirit every day, but does not get the blessing?" I answered, "I should presume that he is praying selfishly." "But suppose," replied he, "that he is praying for the sake of promoting his own happiness?" "He may be purely selfish in that," I replied; the "devil might do as much, and would, perhaps, do just the same if he supposed he could make himself happier by it." I then cited the prayer of David: "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me: restore unto me the joys of Thy salvation: then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." This seemed to be new doctrine to him, and he turned away, as I found afterwards, in great anger and trouble. In the first gush of feeling he prayed that God would cut him down and send him to hell, lest he should have to confess his sin and shame before all the people. He saw that, in fact, his past religion had been all selfish; but the dread of confessing this was at first appalling. He saw, however, the possibility of mistake, that his hopes had been all delusive, and that he had been working his self-deceived course fast down toward the depths of hell.

Finally, it is the Spirit's work to make self-deceived men feel that they are now having their last call from the Spirit. When this impression is made, let it by all means be heeded. It is God's own voice to the soul. Out of a great multitude of cases under my observation in which God has distinctly made sinners feel that the present was their last call, I do not recollect one in which it did not prove to be so. This is a truth of solemn moment to the sinner, and ought to make the warning voice of God ring in his ear like the forewarning knell of the second death.

## V. WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE SPIRIT'S NOT STRIVING ALWAYS?

The meaning I take to be, not that He will at some period withdraw from among mankind, but that He will withdraw from the individual in question, or perhaps as in the text from a whole generation of sinners. In its general application now, the principle seems to be that the Spirit will not follow the sinner onward down to his grave that there will be a limit to His efforts

in the case of each sinner, and that this limit is perhaps ordinarily reached a longer or a shorter time before death. At some uncertain, awful point, he will reach and pass it; and it therefore becomes every sinner to understand his peril of grieving the Spirit forever away.

## VI. WE, ARE NEXT TO INQUIRE, WHY GOD'S SPIRIT WILL NOT STRIVE ALWAYS

I answer, not because God is not compassionate forbearing, slow to anger and great in mercy; not because He gets out of patience and acts unreasonably by no means; nothing of this at all. But the reasons are

- 1.** Because longer striving will do the sinner no good. For by the very laws of mind, conversion must be effected through the influence of truth. But it is a known law of mind that truth once and again resisted, loses its power upon the mind that resists it. Every successive instance of resistance weakens its power. If the truth does not take hold with energy when fresh, it is not likely to do so ever after. Hence when the Spirit reveals truth to the sinner, and he hardens himself against it, and resists the Spirit, there remains little hope for him. We may expect God to give him up for lost. So the Bible teaches.
- 2.** If again we ask, Why does God cease to strive with sinners? The answer may be, Because to strive longer not only does the sinner no good, but positive evil. For guilt is graduated by light. The more light the greater guilt. Hence more light revealed by the Spirit and longer striving might serve only to augment the sinner's guilt, and of course his final woe. It is better then for the sinner himself, after all hope of his repentance is gone, that the Spirit should leave him, than that his efforts should be prolonged in vain, to no other result than to increase the sinner's light and guilt, and consequently his endless curse. It is in this case a real mercy to the sinner, that God should withdraw His Spirit and let him alone.
- 3.** Because sinners sin willfully when they resist the Holy Ghost. It is the very work of the Spirit to throw light before their minds. Of course in resisting the Spirit they must sin against light. Hence their dreadful guilt.

We are often greatly shocked with the bold and daring sins of men who may not after all have much illumination of the Spirit, and of course comparatively little guilt. But when God's ministers come to the souls of men with His messages of truth, and men despise or neglect them; when God's providence also enforces His truth, and still men resist, they are greatly guilty. How much more so when God comes by His Spirit, and they resist God under the blazing light of His Spirit's illuminations! How infinitely aggravated is their guilt now!

**4.** Again, their resistance tempts the forbearance of God. Never do sinners so grievously tempt the forbearance of God as when they resist His Spirit. You may see this developed in the Jews of Stephen's time. "Ye stiff-necked," said he, "and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did so do ye." He had been following down the track of their national history, and running fearlessly across their Jewish prejudices, laboring in the deep sincerity and faithfulness of his soul, to set before them their guilt in persecuting and murdering the Son of God. And what do they do? Enraged at these rebukes, they gnashed on him with their teeth they set upon him with the spirit of demons, and stoned him to death, although they saw the very glory of God beaming in his eye and on his countenance as if it had been an angel's. And did not this fearful deed of theirs seal up their damnation? Read the history of their nation and see. They had tempted God to the last limit of His forbearance; and now what remained for them but swift and awful judgments? The wrath of God arose against them, and there was no remedy. Their resistance of the Holy Ghost pressed the forbearance of God till it could bear no more.

It is a solemn truth that sinners tempt God's forbearance most dangerously when they resist His Spirit. Think how long some of you have resisted the Holy Spirit. The claims of God have been presented and pressed again and again, but you have as often put them away. You have said unto God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways."

And now have you not the utmost reason to expect that God will take you at your word?

**5.** There is a point beyond which forbearance is no virtue. This is and must be true in all governments. No government could possibly be maintained which should push the indulgence of a spirit of forbearance toward the guilty beyond all limits. There must be a point beyond which God can not go without peril to His government; and over this point we may be assured He will never pass.

Suppose we should as often see old, gray-headed sinners converted as youthful sinners, and this should be the general course of things. Would not this work ruin to God's government ruin even to sinners themselves? Would not sinners take encouragement from this, and hold on in their sins till their lusts were worn out, and till they themselves should rot down in their corruptions? They would say, "We shall be just as likely to be converted in our old age, putrid with long- indulged lusts, and rank with the unchecked growth of every abomination of the heart of man, as if we were to turn to God in the freshness of our youth; so let us have the pleasures of sin first, and the unwelcomeness of religion when the world can give us no more to enjoy."

But God means to have men converted young if at all, and one reason for this is that He intends to convert the world, and therefore must have laborers trained up for the work in the morning of life. If He were to make no discrimination between the young and the aged, converting from each class alike, or chiefly from the aged, the means for converting the world must utterly fail, and in fact on such a scheme the result would be that no sinners at all would be converted. There is therefore a necessity for the general fact that sinners must submit to God in early life.

## VII. CONSEQUENCES OF THE SPIRIT'S CEASING TO STRIVE WITH MEN

- 1.** One consequence will be a confirmed hardness of heart. It is inevitable that the heart will become much more hardened, and the will more fully set to do evil.
- 2.** Another consequence will be a confirmed opposition to religion. This will be wont to manifest itself in dislike to everything on the subject, often

with great impatience and peevishness when pressed to attend to the subject seriously. Perhaps they will refuse to have anything said to themselves personally, so settled is their opposition to God and His claims

**3.** You may also expect to see them opposed to revivals and to gospel ministers, and pre-eminently to those ministers who are most faithful to their souls. All those means of promoting revivals which are adapted to rouse the conscience, will be peculiarly odious to their hearts. Usually such persons become sour in their dispositions, misanthropic, haters of all Christians, delighting if they dare to retail slander and abuse against those whose piety annoys and disturbs their stupid repose in sin.

**4.** Another consequence of being forsaken of the Spirit is that men will betake themselves to some refuge of lies, and will settle down in some form of fatal error. I have often thought it almost impossible for men to embrace fatal error heartily. Unless first forsaken by the Spirit of God. From observation of numerous cases, I believe this to be the case with the great majority of Universalists. They are described by Paul: "They receive not the love of the truth that, they may be saved, and for this cause God sends them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." They hate the truth, are more than willing to be deceived are restive when pressed with Gospel claims, and therefore are ready to grasp at any form of delusion which sets aside these claims and boldly asserts, "Ye shall not surely die." It has long been an impression on my mind that this is the usual course of feeling and thought which leads to Universalism. There may be exceptions; but the mass go into this delusion from the starting point of being abandoned by the Spirit. Thus abandoned they become cross and misanthropic they hate all Christians, and all those truths that God and His people love. This could not be the case if they had the love of God in their hearts. It could not well be the case if they, were enlightened and restrained by the present agency of the divine Spirit.

**5.** Again, generally those who are left of God, come to ham a seared conscience. They are distinguished by great insensibility of mind. They are of choice blind and hardened in respect to the nature and guilt of sin. Although their intelligence affirms that sin is. wrong, yet they do not feel it, or care for it. They can know the truth and yet be reckless of its

application to their own hearts and lives. God has left them, and of course the natural tendencies of a depraved heart are developed without restraint.

**6.** Again, this class of sinners will inevitably wax worse and worse. They become loose in habits lax in their observance of the Sabbath- slide backwards in regard to temperance and all kindred moral subjects slip into some of the many forms of sin and perhaps vice and crime; if they have been conscientious against the use of tobacco, they relinquish their conscientiousness and throw a loose rein on their lusts; in short, they are wont to wax worse and worse in every branch of morals, and often become so changed that you would hardly recognize them. It will be no strange thing if they become profane swearers steal a little and anon a good deal; and if God does not restrain them, they go down by a short and steep descent to the depths of hell.

**7.** Another consequence of being abandoned by the Spirit will be certain damnation. There can be no mistake about this. It is just as certain as if they were already there.

This state is not always attended with apathy of feeling. There may be at times a most intense excitement of the sensibility. The Bible describes the case of some who “sin willfully after they have received a knowledge of the truth, and there remains for them only a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” Some persons of this description I have seen, and such agony and such wretchedness I pray God I may never see again. I have seen them, the very pictures of despair and horror. Their eyes fully open to see their ruined state, exclaiming, “I know I am abandoned of God forever I have sinned away my day of hope and mercy, and I know I never shall repent I have no heart to repent, although I know that I must, or be damned;” such language as this they utter with a settled, positive tones! and An air of agony and despair which is enough to break a heart of stone.

**8.** Another consequence often is that Christians find themselves unable to pray in faith for such sinners. There are some in almost every community for whom Christians cannot pray. It is, I believe, common for many Christians, without being aware of each other’s state, to have a similar experience. For example, several Christians are praying in secret for some one individual, and with considerable freedom up to a certain moment, and



then they find that they can pray for him no longer. They chance to meet together, and one says, "I have been praying a long time with great interest for that certain impenitent sinner, but at a particular time I found myself all shut up; I could not get hold of the Lord again for him, and never have been able to since." Says another, and another, "I have felt just so myself. I did not know that any one else felt as I have, but you have described my case precisely."

Now if you will go to that sinner, he will tell you a story which will develop the whole case, and show that he came at that eventful moment to some fatal determination, grieved the Spirit, and was abandoned of God. The Spirit ceased to strive with him, and consequently ceased to elicit prayer in his behalf in the hearts of God's people.

**9.** Finally, when God has ceased to strive with sinners, no means whatever, employed for the purpose, can be effectual for their salvation. If you, sinner, have passed that dreadful point, you will no more be profited by my preaching though I were to preach to you five thousand sermons; nay, you could not be profited though an angel should come and preach to you, or even Christ Himself. All would be only in vain, You are left of God to fill up the measure of your iniquities.

## REMARKS

**1.** Christians may understand how to account for the fact already noticed, that there are some for whom they can not pray. Even while they are walking with God, and trying to pray for particular individuals, they may find themselves utterly unable to do so; and this may be the explanation. I would not, however, in such a case, take it for granted that all is right with myself, for perhaps it is not; but if I have the best evidence that all is right between myself and God, then I must infer that God has forsaken that sinner and does not wish me to pray any longer for him.

**2.** Sinners should be aware that light and guilt keep pace with each other. They are augmented and lessened together. Hence the solemn responsibility of being under the light and the strivings of the Spirit.

While enlightened and pressed to duty by the Spirit, sinners are under the most solemn circumstances that can ever occur in their whole lives. Indeed, no period of the sinner's existence through its eternal duration can be so momentous as this. Yes, sinner, while the Spirit of God is pleading and striving with you, angels appreciate the solemnity of the hour they know that the destiny of your soul is being decided for eternity. What an object of infinite interest! An immortal mind on the pivot of its eternal destiny God debating and persuading he resisting, and the struggle about to be broken off as hopeless former. Suppose, sinner, you could set yourself aside and could look on and be a spectator of such a scene. Were you ever in a court of justice when the question of life and death was about to be decided? The witnesses have all been heard the counsel have been heard it is announced that the jury are ready to deliver their verdict. Now pause and mark the scene. Note the anxiety depicted in every countenance, and how eagerly and yet with what awful solemnity they wait for the decision about to be made; and with good reason for a question of momentous interest is to be decided. But if this question, involving only the temporal life, is so momentous, how much more so is the sinner's case when the life of the soul for eternity is pending!! O how solemn while the question still pends while the Spirit still strives, and still, the sinner resists, and none can tell how soon the last moment of the Spirit's striving may come!

This ought to be the most solemn world in the universe. In other worlds, the destinies of the souls are already fixed, It is so in hell. All there is fixed and changeless forever. It is a solemn thing indeed for a sinner to go to hell, but the most solemn point in the whole duration of his existence is that one in which the decision is made.

O what a world is this! Throughout all its years and centuries we can not see one moment on whose tender point, there hangs not a balancing of the question of eternal life or eternal death! And is this a place to trifle? This a place to be mad and foolish and vain? Ah, no! it were more reasonable to trifle in any other world than in this. The awful destinies of the soul are being determined here. Heaven sees it and hell too, and all are filled with solicitude, swelling almost to agony; but you who are the subjects of all this anxiety you can trifle and play the fool and dance on the brink of everlasting woe. The Psalmist says:

“I heard the wretch profanely boast, Till at thy frown he fell; His honors in a dream were lost, And he awoke in hell.”

God represents the sinner as on a slippery steep, his feet just sliding on the very verge of an awful chasm God holding him up a short moment, and he trifling away even this short moment in mad folly. All hearts in heaven and in hell are beating and throbbing with intense emotion: but he can be reckless! O what madness!

If sinners duly estimated this danger of resisting the Spirit, they would be more afraid of it than of anything else whatever. They would deem no other dangers worthy of a moment's thought or care compared with this.

Again, it is a very common thing for sinners to grieve away the Spirit long before death. So I believe, although some, I am aware, are greatly opposed to this doctrine. Do you doubt it? Think of almost the whole Jewish nation in the time of the Savior, given up to unbelief and reprobacy abandoned of the Spirit of God; yet they sinned against far less light and of course with much less guilt than sinners now do. If God could give them up then, why may He not do so with sinners now? If He could give up the whole population of the world in Noah's time when he alone stood forth a preacher of righteousness, why may He not give up individual sinners now who are incomparably more guilty than they, because they have sinned against greater light than had ever shone then? O it is infinitely cruel to sinners themselves to conceal from them this truth. Let them know that they are in peril of grieving away the Spirit beyond recall, long before they die. This truth ought to be proclaimed over all the earth. Let its echo ring out through every valley and over every mountain-top, the world around. Let every living sinner hear it and take the timely warning!

Again, we see why so few aged sinners are converted. The fact is striking and unquestionable. Take the age of sixty, and count the number converted past that age. You will find it small indeed. Few and scattered are they, like beacons on mountaintops, just barely enough to prevent the aged from utter despair of ever being converted. I am aware that infidels seize upon this fact to extort from it a cavil against religion, saying, “How does it happen that the aged and wise, whose minds are developed by thought and experience, and who have passed by the period of warm youthful passion, never embrace the Gospel?” They would fain have it, that none but

children and women become religious, and that this is to be accounted for on the ground that the Christian religion rests on its appeal to the sensibilities, and not to the intelligence. But infidels make a most egregious mistake in this inference of theirs. The fact under consideration should be referred to an entirely different class of causes. The aged are converted but rarely, because they have grieved away the Spirit have become entangled in the mazes of some loved and soul-ruinous delusion, and hardened in sin past the moral possibility of being converted. Indeed, it would be unwise on the part of God to convert many sinners in old age; it would be too great a temptation for human nature to bear. At all the earlier periods of life, sinners would be looking forward to old age as the time for conversion.

I have already said what I wish here to repeat that it is an awfully interesting, moment when God's Spirit strives with sinners. I have reason to know that the Spirit is striving with some of you. Even within the past week your attention has been solemnly arrested, and God has been calling upon you to repent. And now are you aware that while God is calling, you must listen that when He speaks, you should pause and give Him your attention? Does God call you away from your lesson, and are you replying O, I must, I must get my lesson? Ah, your lesson! and what is your first and chief lesson? "Prepare to meet thy God." But you say, "O the bell will toll in a few minutes, and I have not got my lesson!!" Yes, sinner, soon the great bell will toll unseen spirits will seize hold of the bell-rope and toll the dread death-knell of eternity, echoing the summons Come to judgment; and the bell will toll, toll, TOLL! and where, sinner, Will you be then! Are you prepared? Have you got that one great lesson, "Prepare to meet thy God?"

In the long elapsing ages of your lost doom you will be asked, how and why you came into this place of torment; and you will have to answer, "Oh, I was getting my lesson there in Oberlin when God came by His Spirit, and I could not stop to hear His call! So I exchanged my soul for my lesson! O what a fool was I!!"

Let me ask the people of God, Should you not be awake in such an hour as this? How many sinners during the past week have besought you to pray for their perishing souls? And have you no heart to pray? How full of critical interest and peril are these passing moments? Did you ever see the

magnetic needle of the compass vacillate, quiver, quiver, and finally settle down fixed to its position? So with the sinner's destiny today.

Sinners, think of your destiny as being now about to assume its fixed position. Soon you will decide it forever and forever!

Do you say, Let me first go to my room, and there I will give myself up to God? No, sinner, no! go not away hence in your sin; for now is your accepted time now today, after so long a time now is the only hour of promise now is perhaps the last hour of the Spirit's presence and grace to your soul!

# CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE

*“And if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world,” 1 John 2:1, 2*

THE Bible abounds with governmental analogies. These are designed for our instruction; but if we receive instruction from them, it is because there is a real analogy in many points between the government of God and human governments.

- I. PROPOSE TO INQUIRE,**
- II. WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?**

What is the idea of an advocate when the term is used to express a governmental office or relation?

An advocate is one who pleads the cause of another; who represents another, and acts in his name; one who uses his influence in behalf of another by his request.

## II. PURPOSES FOR WHICH AN ADVOCATE MAY BE EMPLOYED

- 1.** To secure justice, in case any question involving justice is to be tried.
- 2.** To defend the accused. If one has been accused of committing a crime, an advocate may be employed to conduct his trial on his behalf; to defend him against the charge, and prevent his conviction if possible.
- 3.** An advocate may be employed to secure a pardon, when a criminal has been justly condemned, and is under sentence. That is, an advocate may be employed either to secure justice for his client, or to obtain mercy for him, in case he is condemned; may be employed either to prevent his conviction, or when convicted, may be employed in setting aside the execution of the law upon the criminal.

### III. THE SENSE IN WHICH CHRIST IS THE ADVOCATE OF SINNERS

He is employed to plead the cause of sinners, not at the bar of justice; not to defend them against the charge of sin, because the question of their guilt is already settled. The Bible represents them as condemned already; and such is the fact, as every sinner knows. Every sinner in the world knows that he has sinned, and that consequently he must be condemned by the law of God. This office, then, is exercised by Christ in respect to sinners; not at the bar of justice, but at the throne of grace, at the footstool of sovereign mercy. He is employed, not to prevent the conviction of the sinner, but to prevent his execution; not to prevent his being condemned, but being already condemned, to prevent his being damned.

### IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN HIS BEING THE ADVOCATE OF SINNERS

- 1.** His being employed at a throne of grace and not at the bar of justice, to plead for sinners, as such, and not for those who are merely charged with sin, but the charge not established. This implies that the guilt of the sinner is already ascertained, the verdict of guilty given, the sentence of the law pronounced, and that the sinner awaits his execution.
- 2.** His being appointed by God as the Advocate of sinners implies a merciful disposition in God. If God had not been mercifully disposed towards sinners, no Advocate had been appointed, no question of forgiveness had been raised.
- 3.** It implies also that the exercise of mercy on certain conditions is possible. Not only is God mercifully disposed, but to manifest this disposition in the actual pardon of sin is possible. Had not this been the case, no Advocate had been appointed.
- 4.** It implies that there is hope, then, for the condemned. Sinners are prisoners; but in this world they are not yet prisoners of despair, but are prisoners of hope.

**5.** It implies that there is a governmental necessity for the interposition of an advocate; that the sinner's relations are such, and his character such, that he can not be admitted to plead his own cause in his own name. He is condemned, he is no longer on trial. In this respect he is under sentence for a capital crime; consequently he is an outlaw, and the government can not recognize him as being capable of performing any legal act. His relations to the government forbid that in his own name, or in his own person, he should appear before God. So far as his own personal influence with the government is concerned, he is as a dead man he is civilly dead. Therefore, he must appear by his next friend, or by his advocate, if he is heard at all. He may not appear in his own name and in his own person, but must appear by an advocate who is acceptable to the government.

## V. THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ADVOCATE UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES

**1.** He must be the uncompromising friend of the government. Observe, he appears to pray for mercy to be extended to the guilty party whom he represents. Of course he must not himself be the enemy of the government of whom he asks so great a favor; but he should be known to be the devoted friend of the government whose mercy he prays may be extended to the guilty.

**2.** He must be the uncompromising friend of the dishonored law. The sinner has greatly dishonored, and by his conduct denounced, both the law and the Law-giver. By his uniform disobedience the sinner has proclaimed, in the most emphatic manner, that the law is not worthy of obedience, and that the Law-giver is a tyrant. Now the Advocate must be a friend to this law; he must not sell himself to the dishonor of the law nor consent to its dishonor. He must not reflect upon the law; for in this case he places the Lawgiver in a position in which, if he should set aside the penalty and exercise mercy, he would consent to the dishonor of the law, and by a public act himself condemn the law. The Advocate seeks to dispense with the execution of the law; but he must not offer, as a reason, that the law is unreasonable and unjust. For in this case he renders it impossible for the Law-giver to set aside the execution without consenting to the assertion



that the law is not good. In that case the Law-giver would condemn himself instead of the sinner. It is plain, then, that he must be the uncompromising friend of the law, or he can never secure the exercise of mercy without involving the Law-giver himself in the crime of dishonoring the law.

**3.** The Advocate must be righteous; that is, he must be clear of any complicity in the crime of the sinner. He must have no fellowship with his crime; there must be no charge or suspicion of guilt resting upon the Advocate. Unless he himself be clear of the crime of which the criminal is accused, he is not the proper person to represent him before a throne of mercy.

**4.** He must be the compassionate friend of the sinner not of his sins, but of the sinner himself. This distinction is very plain. Every one knows that a parent can be greatly opposed to the wickedness of his children, while he has great compassion for their person. He is not a true friend to the sinner who really sympathizes with his sins.

I have several times heard sinners render as an excuse for not being Christians, that their friends were opposed to it. They have a great many dear friends who are opposed to their becoming Christians and obeying God. They desire them to live on in their sins. They do not want them to change and be come holy, but desire them to remain in their worldly-mindedness and sinfulness. I tell such persons that those are their friends in the same sense that the devil is their friend.

And would they call the devil their good friend, their kind friend, because he sympathizes with their sins, and wishes them not to become Christians? Would you call a man your friend, who wished you to commit murder, or robbery, to tell a lie, or commit any crime? Suppose he should come and appeal to you, and because you are his friend should desire you to commit some great crime, would you regard that man as your friend?

No! No man is a true friend of a sinner, unless he is desirous that he should abandon his sins. If any person would have you continue in your sins, he is the adversary of your soul. Instead of being in any proper sense your friend, he is playing the devil's part to ruin you.

Now observe: Christ is the compassionate friend of sinners, a friend in the best and truest sense. He does not sympathize with your sins, but His

heart is set upon saving you from your sins. I said He must be the compassionate friend of sinners; and His compassion must be stronger than death, or He will never meet the necessities of the case.

**5.** Another qualification must be, that He is able sufficiently to honor the law, which sinners by their transgression have dishonored. He seeks to avoid the execution of the dishonored law of God. The law having been dishonored by sin in the highest degree, must either be honored. by its execution on the criminal, or the Law-giver must in some other way bear testimony in favor of the law, before He can justly dispense with the execution of its penalty. The law is not to be repealed; the law must not be dishonored. It is the law of God's nature, the unalterable law of His government, the eternal law of heaven, the law for the government of moral agents in all worlds, and in all time, and to all eternity. Sinners have home their most emphatic testimony against it, by pouring contempt upon it in utterly refusing to obey it. Now sin must not be treated lightly this law must be honored.

God might pour a flash of glory over it by executing its penalty upon the whole race that have despised it. This would be the solemn testimony of God to sustain its authority and vindicate its claims. If our Advocate appears before God to ask for the remission of sin, that the penalty of this law may be set aside and not executed, the question immediately arises, But how shall the dishonor of this law be avoided? What shall compensate for the reckless and blasphemous contempt with which this law has been treated? How shall sin be forgiven without apparently making light of it?

It is plain that sin has placed the whole question in such a light that God's testimony must in some way be borne in a most emphatic manner against sin, and to sustain the authority of this dishonored law.

It behooves the Advocate of sinners to provide Himself with a plea that shall meet this difficulty. He must meet this necessity, if He would secure the setting aside of the penalty. He must be able to provide an adequate substitute for its execution. He must be able to do that which will as effectually bear testimony in favor of the law and against sin as the execution, of the law upon the criminal would do. In other words, He must be able to meet the demands of public justice.

**6.** He must be willing to volunteer a gratuitous service. He can not be called upon in justice to volunteer a service, or suffer for the sake of sinners.

He may volunteer His service and it may be accepted; but if He does volunteer His service, He must be able and willing to endure whatever pain or sacrifice is necessary to meet the case.

If the law must be honored by obedience; if, “without the shedding of blood, there can be no remission;” if an emphatic governmental testimony must be borne against sin, and in honor of the law; if He must become the representative of sinners, offering Himself before the whole universe as a propitiation for sin, He must be willing to meet the case and make the sacrifice.

**7.** He must have a good plea. In other words, when He appears before the mercy-seat, He must be able to present such considerations as shall really meet the necessities of the case, and render it safe, proper, honorable, glorious in God to forgive.

## VI. WHAT HIS PLEA IN BEHALF OF SINNERS IS

It should be remembered that the appeal is not to justice. Since the fall of man, God has plainly suspended the execution of strict justice upon our race. To us, as a matter of fact, He has set upon a throne of mercy. Mercy, and not justice, has been the rule of His administration, since men were involved in sin.

This is simple fact. Men do sin, and they are not cut off immediately and sent to hell. The execution of justice is suspended; and God is represented as seated upon a throne of grace, or upon a mercy-seat. It is here at a mercy-seat that Christ executes the office of Advocate for sinners.

**2.** Christ’s plea for sinners can not be that they are not guilty. They are guilty, and condemned. No question can be raised as it respects their guilt and their ill-desert; such questions are settled. It has often appeared strange to me that men overlook the fact that they are condemned already, and that no question respecting their guilt or desert of punishment can ever be raised.

**3.** Christ as our Advocate can not, and need not, plead a justification. A plea of justification admits the fact charged; but asserts that under the circumstances the accused had a Tight to do as he did. This plea Christ can never make. This is entirely out of place, the case having been already tried, and sentence passed.

**4.** He may not plead what will reflect, in any wise, upon the law. He can not plead that the law was too strict in its precept, or too severe in its penalty; for in that case he would not really plead for mercy, but for justice. He would plead in that case that no injustice might be done the criminal. For if he intimates that the law is not just, then the sinner does not deserve the punishment; hence it would be unjust to punish him, and his plea would amount to this, that the sinner be not punished, because he does not deserve it. But if this plea should be allowed to prevail, it would be a public acknowledgment on the part of God that His law was unjust. But this may never be.

**5.** He may not plead anything that shall reflect upon the administration of the Law-giver. Should he plead that men had been hardly treated by the Law-giver, either in their creation, or by His providential arrangements, or by suffering them to be so tempted or if, in any wise, he brings forward a plea that reflects upon the Law-giver, in creation, or in the administration of His government, the Law-giver can not listen to his plea, and forgive the sinner, without condemning Himself. In that case, instead of insisting that the sinner should repent, virtually the Law-giver would be called upon Himself to repent.

**6.** He may not plead any excuse whatever for the sinner in mitigation of his guilt, or in extenuation of his conduct.

For if he does, and the Law-giver should forgive in answer to such a plea, He would confess that He had been wrong, and that the sinner did not deserve the sentence that had been pronounced against him.

He must not plead that the sinner does not deserve the damnation of hell; for, should he urge this plea, it would virtually accuse the justice of God, and would be equivalent to begging that the sinner might not be sent unjustly to hell. This would not be a proper plea for mercy, but rather an issue with justice. It would be asking that the sinner might not be sent to

hell, not because of the mercy of God, but because the justice of God forbids it. This will never be.

**7.** He can not plead as our Advocate that He has paid our debt, in such a sense that He can demand our discharge on the ground of justice. He has not paid our debt in such a sense that we do not still owe it. He has not atoned for our sins in such a sense that we might not still be justly punished for them. Indeed, such a thing is impossible and absurd. One being can not suffer for another in such a sense as to remove the guilt of that other. He may suffer for another's guilt in such a sense that it will be safe to forgive the sinner, for whom the suffering has been endured; but the suffering of the substitute can never, in the least degree, diminish the intrinsic guilt of the criminal. Our Advocate may urge that He has borne such suffering for us to honor the law that we had dishonored, that now it is safe to extend mercy to us; but He never can demand our discharge on the ground that we do not deserve to be punished. The fact of our intrinsic guilt remains, and must forever remain; and our forgiveness is just as much an act of sovereign mercy, as if Christ had never died for us.

**8.** But Christ may plead His sin-offering to sanction the law, as fulfilling a condition, upon which we may be forgiven.

This offering is not to be regarded as the ground upon which justice demands our forgiveness. The appeal of our Advocate is not to this offering as payment in such a sense that now in justice He can demand that we shall be set free. No. As I said before, it is simply the fulfilling of a condition, upon which it is safe for the mercy of God to arrest and set aside the execution of the law, in the case of the penitent sinner.

Some theologians appear to me to have been unable to see this distinction. They insist upon it that the atonement of Christ is the ground of our forgiveness. They seem to assume that He literally bore the penalty for us in such a sense that Christ now no longer appeals to mercy, but demands justice for us. To be consistent they must maintain that Christ does not plead at a mercy-seat for us, but having paid our debt, appears before a throne of justice, and demands our discharge.

I cannot accept this view. I insist that His offering could not touch the question of our intrinsic desert of damnation. His appeal is to the infinite

mercy of God, to His loving disposition to pardon; and He points to His atonement, not as demanding our release, but as fulfilling a condition upon which our release is honorable to God. His obedience to the law and the shedding of His blood He may plead as a substitute for the execution of the law upon us in short, He may plead the whole of His work as God-man and Mediator. Thus He may give us the full benefit of what He has done to sustain the authority of law and to vindicate the character of the Law-giver, as fulfilling conditions that have rendered it possible for God to be just and still justify the penitent sinner.

**9.** But the plea is directed to the merciful disposition of God. He may point to the promise made to him in Isaiah, chap. 52d, from v. 13 to the end, and chap. 53, vs. 1, 2:

“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

“As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:)

“So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

**10.** He may plead also that He becomes our surety, that He undertakes for us, that He is our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; and point to His official relations. His infinite fullness, willingness, and ability to restore us to obedience) and to fit us for the service, the employments, and enjoyments of heaven. It is said that He is made the surety of a better covenant than the legal one; and a covenant founded upon better promises.

**11.** He may urge as a reason for our pardon the great pleasure it will afford to God, to set aside the execution of the law. “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment.” Judgment is His strange work; but He delighteth in mercy.

It is said of Victoria that when her prime minister presented a pardon, and asked her if she would sign a pardon in the case of some individual who was sentenced to death, she seized the pen, and said, “Yes! with all my heart!” Could such an appeal be made to a woman’s heart, think you, without its leaping for joy to be placed in a position in which it could save the life of a fellow-being?

It is said that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;” and think you not that it affords God the sincerest joy to be able to forgive the wretched sinner, and save him from the doom of hell? He has no pleasure in our death.

It is a grief to Him to be obliged to execute His law on sinners; and no doubt it affords Him infinitely higher pleasure to forgive us, than it does us to be forgiven. He knows full well what are the unutterable horrors of hell and damnation. He knows the sinner can not bear it. He says, “Can thine heart endure, and can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? And what wilt thou do when I shall punish thee?” Our Advocate knows that to punish the sinner is that in which God has no delight that He will forgive and sign the pardon with all His heart.

And think you such an appeal to the heart of God, to His merciful disposition, will have no avail? It is said of Christ, our Advocate, that “for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, and despised the shame.” So great was the love of our Advocate for us that He regarded it a pleasure and a joy so great to save us from hell, that He counted the shame and agony of the cross as a mere trifle He despised them.

This, then, is a disclosure of the heart of our Advocate. And how surely may He assume that it will afford God the sincerest joy, eternal joy, to be able honorably to seal to us a pardon.

**12.** He may urge the glory that will redound to the Son of God, for the part that He has taken in this work.

Will it not be eternally honorable in the Son to have advocated the cause of sinners? to have undertaken at so great expense to Himself a cause so desperate? and to have carried it through at the expense of such agony and blood?

Will not the universe of creatures forever wonder and adore, as they see this Advocate surrounded with the innumerable throng of souls, for whom His advocacy has prevailed? 13. Our Advocate may plead the gratitude of the redeemed, and the profound thanks and praise of all good beings.

Think you not that the whole family of virtuous beings will forever feel obliged for the intervention of Christ as our Advocate, and for the mercy, forbearance, and love that has saved our race?

## REMARKS

You see what it is to become a Christian. It is to employ Christ as your Advocate, by committing your cause entirely to Him. You can not be saved by your works, you can not be saved by your sufferings, by your prayers in any way except by the intervention of this Advocate. "He ever lives to make intercession for you."

He proposes to undertake your cause; and to be a Christian is to at once surrender your whole cause, your whole life and being to Him as your Advocate.

- 2.** He is an Advocate that loses no causes. Every cause committed to Him, and continued in His hands, is infallibly gained. His advocacy is all-prevalent. God has appointed Him as an Advocate; and wherever He appears in behalf of any sinner who has committed his cause to Him one word of His is sure to prevail. Hence you see,
- 3.** The safety of believers. Christ is always at His post, ever ready to attend to all the concerns of those who have made Him their Advocate. He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him; and abiding in Him you are forever safe.
- 4.** You see the position of unbelievers. You have no advocate. God has appointed an Advocate; but you reject Him. You think to get along



without. Perhaps some of you think you will be punished for your sins, and not ask forgiveness. Others of you may think you will approach in your own name; and, without any atonement, or without any advocate, you will plead your own cause. But God will not suffer it. He has appointed an Advocate to act in your behalf, and unless you approach through Him, God will not hear you.

Out of Christ, He is to you a consuming fire. When the judgement shall set, and you appear in your own name, you will surely appear unsanctified and unsaved. You will not be able to lift up your head, and you will be ashamed to look in the face of the Advocate, who will then sit both as judge, and Advocate.

**5.** I ask, Have you retained. Him? Have you, by your own consent, made Him your Advocate?

It is not enough that God should have appointed Him to act in this relation.

He can, not act for you in this relation unless you individually commit yourself and your case to His advocacy.

This is done, as I have said, by confiding or committing the whole question of your salvation to Him.

**6.** Do any of you say that you are unable to employ Him? But remember, the fee which He requires of you, is your heart. You have a heart. It is not money, but your heart that He seeks.

The poor, then, may employ Him as well as the rich; the children, who have not a penny of their own, well as their rich parents. All may employ Him, for all have hearts.

**7.** He tenders His services gratuitously to all, requiring nothing of them but confidence, gratitude, love, obedience. This the poor and the rich alike must render; this they are alike able to render.

**8.** Can any of you do without Him? Have you ever considered how it will be with you? But the question comes now to this Will you consent to give up your sins, and trust your souls to the advocacy of Christ? to give Him

the fee that He asks your heart, your confidence, your grateful love, your obedience?

Shall He be your Advocate or shall He not? Suppose He stood before you, as I do, and in His hand the book of life with a pen dipped in the very light of heaven, and should ask, "Who of you will now consent to make Me your Advocate?" Suppose He should inquire of you, sinner, "Can I be of any service to you? Can I do anything for you, dying sinner? Can I befriend and help you in any wise? Can I speak a good word for you? Can I interpose My blood, My death, My life, My advocacy, to save you from the depths of hell? And will you consent? Shall I take down your name? Shall I write it in the book of life? Shall it today be told in heaven that you are saved? And may I report that you have committed your cause to Me. and thus give joy in heaven? Or will you reject Me, stand upon your own defense, and attempt to carry your cause through at the solemn judgement?"

*Sinner, I warn you in the name of Christ not now to say me nay.  
Consent now and here, and let it be written in heaven.*

**9.** Have any of you made His advocacy sure by committing all to Him? If you have, He has attended to your cause, because He has secured your pardon; and the evidence you have in your peace of mind. Has He attended to your cause? Have you the inward sense of reconciliation, the inward witness that you believe that you are forgiven, that you are accepted, that Christ has undertaken for you, and that He has already prevailed and secured for you pardon, and given in your own soul the peace of God that passeth understanding to rule in your heart? It is a striking fact in Christian experience, that whenever we really commit our cause to Jesus, He without delay secures our pardon, and in the inward peace that follows, gives us the assurance of our acceptance, that He has interposed His blood, that His blood is accepted for us, that His advocacy has prevailed, and that we are saved.

Do not stop short of this; for if your peace is truly made with God if you are in fact forgiven the sting of remorse is gone; there is no longer any chafing or any irritation between your spirit and the Spirit of God; the sense of condemnation and remorse has given place to the spirit of Gospel liberty, peace, and love.

The stony heart is gone; the heart of flesh has taken its place; the dry sensibility is melted, and peace flows like a river. Have you this? Is this a matter of consciousness with you?

If so, then leave your cause, by a continual committal of it, to the advocacy of Christ; abide in Him, and let Him abide in you, and you are safe as the surroundings of Almighty arms can make you.

## GOD'S LOVE COMMENDED TO US

*“But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, died for us.” — Romans 5:8.*

WHAT is meant here by “commend?” To recommend to set forth in a clear and strong light.

Towards whom is this love exercised? Towards us towards all beings of our lost race. To each one of us He manifests this love. Is it not written, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life?”

How does He commend this love? By giving His Son to die for us. By giving one who was a Son and a Son well-beloved. It is written that God “gave Him a ransom for all;” and that “He tasted death for every man.” We are not to suppose that He died for the sum total of mankind in such a sense that His death is not truly for each one in particular. It is a great mistake into which some fall, to suppose that Christ died for the race in general, and not for each one in particular. By this mistake, the Gospel is likely to lose much of its practical power on our hearts. We need to apprehend it as Paul did, who said of Jesus Christ, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” We need to make this personal application of Christ’s death. No doubt this was the great secret of Paul’s holy life, and of his great power in preaching the Gospel. So we are to regard Jesus as having loved us personally and individually. Let us consider how much pains God has taken to make us feel that He cares for us personally. It is so in His providence, and so also in His Gospel. He would fain make us single ourselves from the mass and feel that His loving eye and heart are upon us individually.

For what end does He commend His love to us? Is it an ambition to make a display? Surely there can be no affectation in this. God is infinitely above all affectation. He must from His very nature act honestly. Of course He must have some good reason for this manifestation of His love. No doubt He seeks to prove to us the reality of His love. Feeling the most perfect

love towards our lost race, He deemed it best to reveal this love and make it manifest, both to us and to all His creatures. And what could evince His love, if this gift of His Son does not? Oh, how gloriously is love revealed in this great sacrifice! How this makes divine love stand out prominently before the universe! What else could He have done that would prove His love so effectually?

Again: He would show that His love is unselfish, for Jesus did not die for us as friends, but as enemies. It was while we were yet enemies that He died for us. On this point, Paul suggests that “scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die.” But our race were far as possible from being good. Indeed, they were not even righteous, but were utterly wicked. For a very dear friend one might be willing to die. There have been soldiers who, to save the life of a beloved officer, have taken into their own bosom the shaft of death; but for one who is merely just and not so much as good, this sacrifice could scarcely be made. How much less for an enemy! Herein we may see how greatly “God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.” Notice yet further, that this love of God to us can not be the love of esteem or complacency, because there is in us no ground for such a love. It can be no other than the love of unselfish benevolence. This love had been called in question. Satan had questioned it in Eden. He made bold to insinuate, “Hath your God indeed said, Ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?” Why should he wish to debar you from such a pleasure? So the old Serpent sought to cast suspicion on the benevolence of God. Hence there was the more reason why God should vindicate His love.

He would also commend the great strength of this love. We should think we gave evidence of strong love if we were to give our friend a great sum of money.

But what is any sum of money compared with giving up a dear Son to die? Oh, surely it is surpassing love, beyond measure wonderful, that Jesus should not only labor and suffer, but should really die! Was ever love like this?

Again: God designed also to reveal the moral character of His love for men, and especially its justice. He could not show favors to the guilty until His

government was made secure and His law was duly honored. Without this sacrifice, He knew it could not be safe to pardon. God must maintain the honor of His throne. He must show that He could never wink at sin. He felt the solemn necessity of giving a public rebuke of sin before the universe. This rebuke was the more expressive because Jesus Himself was sinless. Of course it must be seen that sin His death God was not frowning on His sin, but on the sin of those whose sins He bore and in whose place He stood.

This shows God's abhorrence of sin since Jesus stood as our representative. While He stood in this position, God could not spare Him, but laid on Him the chastisement of our iniquities. Oh, what a rebuke of sin was that! How expressively did it show that God abhorred sin, yet loved the sinner! These were among the great objects in view no beget in our souls the two-fold conviction of His love for us and of our sin against Him. He would make those convictions strong and abiding. So He sets forth Jesus crucified before our eyes a far more expressive thing than any mere words. No saying that He loved us could approximate towards the strength and impressiveness of this manifestation. In no other way could He make it seem so much a reality so touching and so overpowering. Thus he commends it to our regard. Thus He invites us to look at it. He tells us angels desire to look into it. He would have us weigh this great fact, examine all its bearings, until it shall come full upon our souls with its power to save. He commends it to us to be reciprocated, as if He would incite us to love Him who has so loved us. Of course He would have us understand this love, and appreciate it, that we may requite it with responsive love in return. It is an example For us that we may love our enemies and, much more, our brethren. Oh, when this love has taken its effect on our hearts, how deeply do we feel that we can not hate any one for whom Christ died? Then instead of selfishly thrusting our neighbor off, and grasping the good to which his claim is fully as great as ours, we love him with a love so deep and so pure that it can not be in our heart to do him wrong.

It was thus a part of the divine purpose to show us what true love is. As one said in prayer, "We thank Thee, Father, that Thou hast given us Thy Son to teach us how to love." Yes, God would let us know that He Himself is love, and hence that if we would be His children, we too must

love Him and love one another. He would reveal His love so as to draw us into sympathy with Himself and make us like Him. Do you not suppose that a thorough consideration of God's love, as manifested in Christ, does actually teach us what love is, and serve to draw our souls into such love? The question is often asked How shall I love? The answer is given in this example. Herein is love! Look at it and drink in its spirit. Man is prone to love himself supremely. Put here is a totally different sort of love from that. This love commends itself in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. How forcibly does this rebuke our selfishness! How much we need this lesson, to subdue our narrow selfishness, and shame our unbelief!

How strange it is that men do not realize the love of God! The wife of a minister, who had herself labored in many revivals, said to me, "I never, till a few days since, knew that God is love." "What do you mean?" said I. "I mean that I never apprehended it in all its bearings before." Oh, I assure you, it is a great and blessed truth, and it is a great thing to see it as it is! When it becomes a reality to the soul, and you come under its powerful sympathy, then you will find the Gospel indeed the power of God unto salvation, Paul prayed for his Ephesian converts that they might "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of God that passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God."

God sought, in thus commending His love to us, to subdue our slavish fear. Some one said, "When I was young, I was sensible of fearing God, but I knew I did not love Him. The instruction I received led me to fear, but not to love." So long as we think of God only as One to be feared, not to be loved, there will be a prejudice against Him as more an enemy than a friend. Every sinner knows that he deserves to be hated of God. He sees plainly that God must have good reason to be displeased with him. The selfish sinner judges God from himself. Knowing how he should feel toward one who had wronged him, he unconsciously infers that God must feel so toward every sinner. When he tries to pray, his heart won't; it is nothing but terror. He feels no attraction toward God, no real love. The child spirit comes before God, weeping indeed, but loving and trusting. Now the state of feeling which fears only, God would fain put away, and make us know that He loves us still. We must not regard Him as being altogether such as ourselves. He would undeceive us and make us realize

that though He has It spoken against us, yet He does earnestly remember us still.” He would have us interpret His dealings fairly and without prejudice. He sees how, when He thwarts men’s plans, they are bent on misunderstanding Him. They will think that He is reckless of their welfare, and they are blind to the precious truth that He shapes all His ways toward them in love and kindness. He would lead us to judge thus, that if God spared not His own Son, but gave Him up freely for us all, then He will much more give us all things else most freely.

Yet again: He would lead us to serve Him in love and not in bondage. He would draw us forth into the liberty of the sons of God. He loves to see the obedience of the heart. He would inspire love enough to make all our service free and cheerful and full of joy. If you wish to make others love you, you must give them your love. Show your servants the love of your heart, so will you break their bondage, and make their service one of love. In this way God commends His love towards us in order to win our hearts to Himself, and thus get us ready and fit to dwell forever in His eternal home. His ultimate aim is to save us from our sins that He may fill us forever with His own joy and peace.

## REMARKS

- 1.** We see that saving faith must be the heart’s belief of this great fact that God so loved us. Saving faith receives the death of Christ as an expression of God’s love to us. No other sort of faith no faith in anything else wins our heart to love God. Saving faith saves us from our bondage and our prejudice against Him. It is this which makes it saving. Any faith that leaves out this great truth must fail to save us. If any one element of faith is vital, it is this. Let any man doubt this fact of God’s love in Christ, and I would not give much for all his religion. It is worthless.
- 2.** The Old Testament system is full of this idea. All those bloody sacrifices are full of it. When the priest, in behalf of all the people, came forward and laid his hand on the head of the innocent victim and then confessed his sins and the sins of all, and then when this animal was slain and its blood poured out before the Lord, and He gave tokens that He accepted the offering, it was a solemn manifestation that God substituted



for the sufferings due the sinner, the death of an innocent lamb.

Throughout that ancient system, we find the same idea, showing how God would have men see His love in the gift of His own dear Son.

**3.** One great reason why men find it so difficult to repent and submit to God, is that they do not receive this great fact do not accept it in simple faith. If they were to accept it and let it come home to their hearts, it would carry with it a power to subdue the heart to submission and to love.

**4.** One reason why young men are so afraid they shall be called into the ministry, is their lack of confidence in this love.

Oh, if they saw and believed this great love, surely they would not let eight hundred millions go down to hell in ignorance of this Gospel! Oh, how it would agonize their heart that so many should go to their graves and to an eternal hell, and never know the love of Jesus to their perishing souls! And yet here is a young man for whom Christ has died, who can not bear to go and tell them they have a Savior! What do you think of his magnanimity? How much is his heart like Christ's heart? Do you wonder that Paul could not hold his peace, but felt that he must go to the ends of the earth and preach the name of Jesus where it had never been known before? How deeply he felt that he must let the world know these glad tidings of great joy! How amazing that young men now can let the Gospel die unknown and not go forth to bless the lost! Ah, did they ever taste its blessedness? Have they ever known its power? And do you solemnly intend to conceal it, that it may never bless your dying brethren?

**5.** This matter of commending God's love is the strongest and most expressive He could employ. In no other way possible could He so forcibly demonstrate His great love to our race.

Hence, if this fails to subdue men's enmity, prejudice, and unbelief, what can avail? What methods shall He use after this proves unavailing? The Bible demands, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Well may it make this appeal, for if this fails to win us, what can succeed?

**6.** If we had been His friends, there had been no need of His dying for us. It was only because we were yet sinners that He died for us. How great, then, are the claims of this love on our hearts!

**7.** Sinners often think if they were pious and good, the Lord might love them. So they try to win His love by doing some good things. They try in every such way to make God love them, and especially by mending their manners rather than their hearts. Alas, they seem not to know that the very fact of their being sunk so low in sin is moving God's heart to its very foundations! A sinless angel enjoys God's complacency, but not His pity; he is not an object of pity, and there is no call for it. The same is true of a good child. He receives the complacency of his parents, but not their compassion. But suppose this child becomes vicious. Then his parents mourn over his fall, and their compassion is moved. They look on him with pity and anxiety as they see him going down to the depths of vice, crime, and degradation. More and more as he sinks lower and lower in the filth and abominations of sin, they mourn over him; and as they see how changed he is, they stand in tears, saying Alas, this is our son, our once-honored son! But how fallen now! Our bowels are moved for him, and there is nothing we would not do or suffer, if we might save him!

So the sinner's great degradation moves the compassions of his divine Father to their very depths. When the Lord passes by and sees him lying in his blood in the open field, he says That is my son! He bears the image of his Maker. "Since I have spoken against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Sinners should remember that the very fact of their being sinners is the thing that moves God's compassion and pity. Do you say I do not see how God can make it consistent with His holiness to pardon and love such a sinner as I am? I can tell you how By giving His own Son to die in your stead!

**8.** Christ died for us that He might save us, not from, our sins. Then must it not grieve Him exceedingly that we should continue in sin? What do you think? Suppose you were to see Jesus face to face, and He were to show you those wounds in His hands and in His side, and were to say I died for you because I saw you lost beyond hope, and because I would save you from your sins; and now, will you repeat those sins again? Can you go on yet longer to sin against me?

**9.** You may infer from our subject that Jesus must be willing to save you from wrath, if you truly repent and accept Him as your Savior. How can you doubt it?

Having suffered unto death for this very purpose, surely it only remains for you to meet the conditions, and you are saved from wrath through Him.

**10.** You may infer also that God, having spared not His Son, will also with Him freely give you all things else: grace enough to meet all your wants; the kind care of His providence; the love of His heart; everything you can need. To continue in sin despite of such grace and love must be monstrous! It must grieve His heart exceedingly.

A friend of mine who has charge of one hundred and fifty boys in a Reform School, is accustomed, when they misbehave, to put them for a time on bread and water. What do you think he does himself in some of these cases? He goes and puts himself with them on bread and water! The boys in the school see this, and they learn love of their superintendent and father. Now, when tempted to crime, they must say to themselves, "If I do wrong, I shall have to live on bread and water; but the worst of all is, my father will come and eat bread and water with me and for my sake; and how can I bear that? How can I bear to have my father who loves me so well, confine himself to bread and water for my sake!"

So Jesus Ruts Himself on pain and shame and death that you might have joy and life that you might be forgiven and saved from sinning; and now will you go on to sin more? Have you no heart to appreciate His dying love? Can you go on and sin yet more and none the less for all the love shown you on Calvary?

You understand that Christ died to redeem you from sin. Suppose your own eyes were to see Him face to face, and He should tell you all He has done for you. Sister, He says, I died to save you from that sin; will you do it again? Can you go on and sin just the same as if I had never died for you?

In that Reform School of which I spoke, the effects produced on even the worst boys by the love shown them is really striking. The Superintendent had long insisted that he did not want locks and bars to confine his boys.

The Directors had said You must lock them in; if you don't they will run away. On one occasion, the Superintendent was to be absent two weeks. A Director came to him urging that he must lock up the boys before he left, for while he was absent, they would certainly run away. The Superintendent replied I think not; I have confidence in those boys. But, responds the Director, give us some guarantee. Are you willing to pledge your city lot, conditioned that if they do run away, the lot goes to the Reform School Fund? After a little reflection, he consents, "I will give you my lot all the little property I have in the world if any of my boys run away while I am gone." Before he sets off, he calls all the boys together; explains to them his pledge; asks them to look at his dependent family, and then appeals to their honor and their love for him. "Would you be willing to see me stripped of all my property? I think I can trust you." He went; returned a little unexpectedly and late on one Saturday night. Scarce had he entered the yard, when the word rang through the sleeping halls, "Our father has come!" and almost in a moment they were there greeting him and shouting, "We are all here! we are all here!"

Can not Christ's love have as much power as that? Shall the love the Reform School boys bear to their official father hold them to their place during the long days and nights of his absence; and shall not Christ's love to us restrain us from sinning? What do you say? Will you say thus? "If Christ loves me so much, then it is plain He won't send me to hell, and therefore I will go on and sin all I please." Do you say that? Then there is no hope for you. The Gospel that ought to save you can do nothing for you but sink you deeper in moral and eternal ruin. You are fully bent to pervert it, to your utter damnation! If those Reform School boys had said thus, "Our Father loves us so well, he will eat bread and water with us, and therefore we know he will not punish us to hurt us" would they not certainly bring a curse on themselves? Would not their reformation be utterly hopeless? So of the sinner who can make light of the Savior's dying love. Oh, is it possible that when Jesus has died for you to save your soul from sin and from hell you can do it again and yet again? Will you live on in sin only the more because He has loved you so much?

Think of this and make up your mind. "If Christ has died to redeem me from sin, then away with all sinning henceforth and forever I forsake all

my sins from this hour! I can afford to live or to die with my Redeemer; why not? So help me God. I have no more to do with sinning forever!”

# PRAYER AND LABOR FOR THE GATHERING OF THE GREAT HARVEST

“But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.” Matthew. 9:36-38.

IN discussing this subject, I propose-

- I. TO CONSIDER TO WHOM THIS PRECEPT IS ADDRESSED,**
- II. WHAT IT MEANS;**
- III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE PRAYER REQUIRED;**
- IV. SHOW THAT THE STATE OF MIND WHICH CONSTITUTES OBEDIENCE TO THIS PRECEPT IS AN INDISPENSABLE CONDITION OF SALVATION.**

## I. TO WHOM THIS PRECEPT IS ADDRESSED,

Beyond question, the precept is addressed to all who are under obligation to be benevolent; therefore, to all classes and all beings upon whom the law of love is imposed. Consequently, it is addressed to all human beings, for all who are human bear moral responsibility ought to care for the souls of their fellows, and of course fall under the broad sweep of this requisition.

Note the occasion of Christ’s remark. He was traversing the cities and villages of His country, “teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” He saw multitudes before Him, mostly in great

ignorance of God and salvation; and His deeply compassionate heart was moved," because He saw them fainting and scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd." Alas! they were perishing for lack of the bread of heaven, and who should go and break it to their needy souls?

His feelings were the more affected because He saw that they felt hungry. They not only were famishing for the bread of life, but they seemed to have some consciousness of the fact. They were just then in the condition of a harvest-field, the white grain of which is ready for the sickle, and waits the coming of the reapers. So the multitudes were ready to be gathered into the granary of the great Lord of the harvest. No wonder this sight should touch the deepest compassions of His benevolent heart.

## II. WHAT IS REALLY INTENDED IN THE PRECEPT,

“Pray ye the Lord of the harvest,  
that He would send forth laborers into His harvest?”

Every precept relating to external conduct has its spirit and also its letter, the letter referring to the external, but the spirit to the internal; yet both involved in real obedience. In the present case, the letter of the precept requires prayer; but let no one suppose that merely using the words of prayer is real obedience. Besides the words there must be a praying state of mind. The precept does not require us to lie and play the hypocrite before God. No one can for a moment suppose this to be the case. Therefore, it must be admitted that the precept requires the spirit of prayer as well as the letter. It requires first in value a praying state of mind, and then also its due expression in the forms of prayer.

What, then, is the true spirit of this precept? answer, love for souls. Certainly it does not require us to pray for men without any heart in our prayer; but that we should pray with a sincere heart, full of real love for human welfare a love for immortal souls and a deep concern for their salvation. It doubtless requires the same compassion that Jesus Himself had for souls.

His heart was gushing with real compassion for dying souls, and He was conscious that His own was a right state of mind. Therefore, He could not

do less than require the same state of mind of all His people. Hence. He requires that we should have real and deep compassion for souls, such compassion as really moves the heart, for such most obviously was His.

This involves a full committal of the soul to this object. Christ had committed His soul to the great labor of saving men; for this He labored and toiled; for this His heart agonized; for this His life was ready to be offered; therefore, He could do no less than require the same of His people.

Again, an honest offering of this prayer implies a willingness on our part that God should use us in His harvest-field in any capacity He pleases. When the farmer gathers his harvest, many things are to be done, and often he needs many hands to do them. Some he sends in to cut the grain, others to bind it; some gather into the barn, and others glean the field, that nothing be lost. So Christ will have a variety of labors for His servants in the great harvest-field; and no men can be of real use to Him unless they are willing to work in any department of their Master's service, thankful for the privilege of doing the humblest service for such a Master and in such a cause.

Hence, it is implied in honest prayer for this object that we are really committed to the work, and that we have given ourselves up most sincerely and entirely to do all we can for Christ and His cause on earth. We are always on hand, ready for any labor or any suffering. For, plainly, if we have not this mind, we need not think to pray to any good purpose. It would be but a sorry and insulting prayer to say, "Lord, send somebody else to do all the hard work, and let me do little or nothing." Everybody knows that such a prayer would only affront God and curse the offerer.

Hence, sincere prayer for Christ's cause implies that you are willing to do anything you can do to promote its interests, in the actual and absolute devotion of all your powers and resources for this object. You may not withhold even your own children. Nothing shall be too dear for you to offer on God's altar.

Suppose a man should give nothing should withhold all his means and suppress all efforts, only he says he will Pray. He professes indeed to pray. But do you suppose that his prayer has any heart in it? Does he mean what he says? Does he love the object more than all things else?



Nay, verily. You never could say that a young man does all he can for Christ's harvest if he refuses to go into the field to work. nor that an aged, but wealthy, man is doing all he can if he refuses to give anything to help sustain the field-laborers.

### III. WHAT, THEN, IS IMPLIED IN REALLY OBEYING THIS PRECEPT?

**1.** A sense of personal responsibility in respect to the salvation of the world. No man ever begins to obey this command who does not feel a personal responsibility in this thing which brings it home to his soul as his own work. He must really feel, "This is my work for life. For this I am to live and spend my strength." It matters not on this point whether you are young enough to go abroad into the foreign field, or whether you are qualified for the Gospel ministry; you must feel such a sense of responsibility that you will cheerfully and most heartily do all you can. You can do the hewing of the wood or the drawing of the water, even if you can not fill the more responsible trusts. An honest and consecrated heart is willing to do any sort of toil bear any sort of burden. Unless you are willing to do anything you can successfully and wisely do, you will not comply with the conditions of a prayerful state of mind.

Another element is a sense of the value of souls. You must see impressively that souls are precious that their guilt while in unpardoned sin is fearful and their danger most appalling.

Without such a sense of the value of the interests at stake, you will not pray with fervent, strong desire; and without a just apprehension of their guilt, danger, and remedy, you will not pray in faith for God's interposing grace. Indeed, you must have so much of the love of God a love like God's love for sinners in, your soul, that you are ready for any sacrifice or any labor. You need to feel as God feels. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever should believe in Him might not perish. You need so to love the world that your love will draw you to make similar sacrifices and put forth similar labors. love for souls, the same in kind as God had in giving up His Son to die, and as Christ had in coming cheerfully down to make Himself the offering, each servant of God must

have, or his prayers for this object will have little heart and no power with God. This love for souls is always implied in acceptable prayer, that God would send forth laborers into His harvest. I have often thought that the reason why so many pray only in form and not in heart for the salvation of souls, is that they lack this love, like God's love, for the souls of the perishing.

Acceptable prayer for this object implies confidence in the ability, wisdom, and willingness of God to push forward this work. No man can pray for what he supposes may be opposed to God's will, or beyond His ability or too complicated for His wisdom. If you ask God to send forth laborers, the very prayer assumes that you confide in His ability to do the work well, and in His willingness, in answer to prayer, to press it forward.

The very idea of prayer implies that you understand this to be a part of the divine plan that Christians should pray for God's interposing power and wisdom to carry forward this great work. You do not pray till you see that God gives you the privilege, enjoins the duty, and encourages it by assuring you that it is an essential means, an indispensable condition of His interposing His power to give success. You remember it is said, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the House of Israel to do it for them."

Again, no one complies with the spirit of this condition who does not pray with his might fervently and with great perseverance and urgency for the blessing. He must feel the pressure of a great cause, and must feel, moreover, that it can not prosper without God's interposing power. Pressed by these considerations, He will pour out His soul with intensely, fervent supplications.

Unless the Church is filled with the spirit of prayer, God will not send forth the laborers into His harvest. Plainly the command to pray for such laborers implies that God expects prayer, and will wait until it be made, The prayer comes into His plan as one of the appointed agencies, and can by no means be dispensed with. Doubtless it was in answer to prayer that God sent out such a multitude of strong men after the ascension. How obviously did prayer and the special hand of God bring in a Saul of Tarsus and send him forth to call in whole tribes and nations of the Gentile world! And along with him were an host. "The Lord gave the word, great was the company that published it."

That this prayer should be in faith, reposing in assurance on God's everlasting promise, is too obvious to need proof or illustration.

Honest, sincere prayer implies that we lay ourselves and all we have upon His altar. We must feel that this is our business, and that our disposable strength and resources are to be appropriated to its prosecution. It is only, then, when we are given up to the work, that we can honestly ask God to raise up laborers and press the work forward. When a man's lips say, "Lord, send forth laborers; "but his life in an undertone proclaims, "I don't care whether a man goes or not; I'll not help on the work," you will, of course, know that he is only playing the hypocrite before God.

By this I do not imply that every honest servant of Christ must feel himself called to the ministry, and must enter it; by no means; for God does not call every pious man into this field, but has many other fields and labors which are essential parts of the great whole. The thing I have to say is that we must be ready for any part whatever which God's providence assigns us.

When we can go, and are in a situation to obtain the needful education, then the true spirit of the prayer in our text implies that we pray that God would send us. If we are in A condition to go, then, plainly, this prayer implies that we have the heart to beg the privilege for ourselves that God would put us into His missionary work. Then we shall say with the ancient prophet, "Lord, here am I, send me." Do you not suppose Christ expected His disciples to go, and to desire to go? Did He not assume that they would pray for the privilege of being put into this precious trust? How can we be in real sympathy with Christ unless we love the work of laboring in this Gospel harvest, and long to be commissioned to go forth and put in our sickle with our own hand? Most certainly, if we were in Christ's spirit we should say I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished? We should cry out, Lord, let me go! let me go for dying millions are just now perishing in their sins. How can I pray God to send out others if I am in heart unwilling to go myself? I have heard many say O that I were young; how I should rejoice to go myself. This seems like a state of mind that can honestly pray for God to send forth laborers.

The spirit of this prayer implies that we are willing to make any personal sacrifices in order to go. Are not men always willing to make personal sacrifices in order to gain the great object of their heart's desire? Did ever a merchant, seeking goodly pearls, find one of great value but he was quite willing to go and sell all that he had and buy it?

Moreover, an honest heart before God in this prayer implies that you are willing to do all you can to prepare your selves to accomplish this work. Each young man or young woman should say God requires something of me in this work. It may be God wants you as a servant in some missionary family; if so, you are ready to go. No matter what the work may be no labor done for God or for man is degrading. In the spirit of this prayer, you will say If I may but wash the feet of my Lord's servants, I shall richly enjoy it. All young persons especially, feeling that life is before them, should say I must devote myself, in the most effective way possible, to the promotion of my Savior's cause. Suppose a man bows his soul in earnest prayer before God, saying, "O Lord, send out hosts of men into this harvest-field," does not this imply that he girds himself up for this work with his might? Does it not imply that he is ready to do the utmost he can in any way whatever?

Again, this prayer, made honestly, implies that we do all we can to prepare others to go out. Our prayer, will be, "Lord, give us hearts to prepare others, and get as many ready as possible and as well prepared as possible for the gathering in of this great harvest."

Of course it is also implied that we abstain from whatever would hinder us, and make no arrangements that would tie our hands. Many young Christians do this, sometimes heedlessly, often in a way which shows that they are by no means fully set to do God's work, first of all.

When we honestly pray God to send out laborers, and our own circumstances allow us to go, we are to expect that He will send us. What! does God need laborers of every description, and will He not send us? Depend on it, He will send out the man who prays right, and whose heart is deeply and fully with God. And we need not be suspicious lest God should lack the needful wisdom to manage His matters well. He will put all His men where they should be, into the fields they are best qualified to fill.

The good reaper will be put into his post, sickle in hand; and if there are feeble ones who can only glean, He puts them there.

When youth have health and the means for obtaining an education, they must assume that God calls them to this work. They should assume that God expects them to enter the field. They will fix their eye upon this work as their own. Thinking of the masses of God's true children who are lifting up this prayer, "Lord, send forth laborers to gather in the nations to Thy Son," they will assuredly infer that the Lord will answer these prayers and send out all His faithful, fit, and true men into this field. Most assuredly, if God has given you the mind, the training, the tact, the heart, and the opportunity to get all needful preparation, you may know He will send you forth. What! is it possible that I am prepared, ready, waiting, and the hosts of the Church praying that God would send laborers forth, and yet He will not send me! Impossible!

One indispensable part of this preparation is a heart for it. Most plainly so, for God wants no men in His harvest-field whose hearts are not there. You would not want workmen in your field who have no heart for their work. Neither does God. But He expects us to have this preparation. And He will accept of no man's excuse from service, that he has no heart to engage in it. The want of a heart for this work is not your misfortune, but your fault, your great and damning sin.

This brings me to my next general proposition,

#### IV. THAT THIS STATE OF MIND IS AN INDISPENSABLE CONDITION OF SALVATION

The Church are many of them dreadfully in the dark about the conditions of salvation. I was once preaching on this subject, and urging that holiness is one condition of salvation, "without which no man can see the Lord," when I was confronted and strenuously opposed by a Doctor of Divinity. He said, The Bible makes faith the sole and only condition of salvation. Paul, said he, preached that faith is the condition, and plainly meant to exclude every other condition. But I answered, Why did Paul press so earnestly and hold up so prominently the doctrine of salvation by faith?

Because he had to oppose the great Jewish error of salvation by works. Such preaching was greatly and specially needed then, and Paul pressed into the field to meet the emergency. But when Antinomianism developed itself, Tames was called out to uphold with equal decision the doctrine that faith without works is dead, and that good works are the legitimate fruit of living faith, and are essential to evince its life and genuineness. This at once raised a new question about the nature of Gospel faith. James held that all true Gospel faith must work by love. It must be an affectionate filial confidence, such as draws the soul into sympathy with Christ, and leads it forward powerfully to do all His will.

Many professed Christians hold that nothing is needful but simply faith and repentance, and that faith may exist without real benevolence, and consequently without good works. No mistake can be greater than this. The grand requisition which God makes upon man is that he become truly benevolent. This is the essence of all true religion, a state of mind that has compassion like God's compassion for human souls; that cries out in earnest prayer for their salvation, and that shrinks from no labor to effect this object. If, therefore, true religion be a condition of salvation, then is the state of mind developed in our text also a condition.

## REMARKS

- 1.** This state of mind is as obligatory upon sinners as upon saints. All men ought to feel this compassion for souls. Why not? Can any reason be named why a sinner should not feel as much compassion for souls as a Christian? Or why he ought not to love God and man as ardently?
- 2.** Professors of religion who do not obey the true spirit of these precepts are hypocrites, without one exception. They profess to be truly religious, but a" they? Certainly not, unless they are on the altar, devoted to God's work and in heart sincerely sympathizing in it. Without this, every one of them is a hypocrite. You profess to have the spirit of Christ; but when you see the multitudes as He saw them, perishing for lack of Gospel light, do you cry out in mighty prayer with compassion for their souls? If you have not this spirit, write yourself down a hypocrite.

**3.** Many do not pray that God would send forth laborers because they are afraid He will send them. I can recollect when religion was repulsive to me because I feared that if I should be converted, God would send me to preach the Gospel. But I thought further on this subject. God, said I, has a right to dispose of me as He pleases, and I have no right to resist. If I do resist, He will put me in hell. If God wants me to be a minister of His Gospel and I resist and rebel, He surely ought to put me in hell, and doubtless He will.

But there are many young men in this college who never give themselves to prayer for the conversion of the world, lest God should send them into this work. You would blush to pray, “Lord, send forth laborers, but don’t send me.” If the reason you don’t want to go is that you have no heart for it, you may write yourself down a hypocrite, and no mistake.

If you say, “I have a heart for the work, but I am not qualified to go,” then you may consider that God will not call you unless you are or can be qualified. He does not want unfit men in the service.

**4.** The ministry for the last quarter of a century has fallen into disgrace for this reason; many young men have entered it who never should have entered. Their hearts are not fixed, and they shrink from making sacrifices for Christ and His cause. Hence, they do not go straight forward, true to the right, firm for the oppressed, and strong for every good word and work. By whole platoons, they back out from the position which they have sworn to maintain. The hearts of multitudes of lay brethren and sisters are in great distress, crying out over this fearful defection. To a minister who was complaining of the public reproach cast on his order, a layman of Boston replied, “I am sorry there is so much occasion for it; God means to rebuke the ministry, and He ought to rebuke them since they so richly deserve it.” Do not understand me to say that this vacillation of the ministry is universal; no, indeed; I am glad to know there are exceptions; but still the painful fact is that many have relapsed, and, consequently, as a class, they have lost character, and this has discouraged many young men from entering the ministry.

Let this be so no longer. Let the young men now preparing for the ministry come up to the spirit of their Master and rush to the front rank of the battle. Let them toil for the good of souls, and love this toil as their great

Lord has done before them. Thus by their fidelity let them redeem the character of this class of men from the reproach under which it now lies. Let them rally in their strength and lay themselves with one heart on the altar of God. So doing, not one generation should pass away ere it will be said Mark the faithful men; note the men whose heart is in and on their work; the ministry is redeemed!

**5.** With sorrow I am compelled to say Many don't care whether the work is done or not. They are all swallowed up with ambitious aspirings. Who does not know that they do not sympathize with Jesus Christ?

Beloved, let me ask you if you are honestly conscious of sympathizing with your great Leader? I never can read the passage before us without being affected by the manifestation it makes of Christ's tenderness and love. There were the thronging multitudes before Him. To the merely external eye, all might have been fair; but to one who thought of their spiritual state, there was enough to move the deep fountains of compassion. Christ saw them scattered abroad as sheep who have no shepherd. They had no teachers or guides in whom they could repose confidence.

They were in darkness and moral death. Christ wept over them, and called on His disciples to sympathize in their case, and unite with Him in mighty prayer to the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers. Such was His spirit. And now, dear young men, do you care whether or not this work is done?

**6.** Many seem determined to shirk this labor and leave it all for others to do. Indeed, they will hardly entertain the question what part God wants them to take and perform.

Now let me ask you Will such as they be welcomed and applauded at last by the herald of judgment destiny, crying. out, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord?" Never; no never!

**7.** Many say I am not called, but really they are not devoted to this work so as to whether they are called or not. They do not want to be called not they!



Now the very fact that you have the requisite qualifications, means, and facilities for preparation, indicates God's call. These constitute the voice of His providence, saying, Go forth, and prepare for labor in my vineyard! There is your scholarship; use it: there the classes for you to enter; go in and occupy till you are ready to enter the great white fields of the Savior's harvest. If providential indications favor, you must strive to keep up with their summons; pray for the baptisms of the Holy Ghost; seek the divine anointing, and give yourself no rest till you are in all things furnished for the work God assigns you.

It is painful to see that many are committing themselves in some way or other against the work. They are putting themselves in a position which of itself forbids their engaging in it. But do let me ask you, young men, can you expect ever to be saved if, when you have the power and the means to engage in this work, you have no heart for it? No, indeed! You knock in vain at the gate of the blessed! You may go there and knock, but what will be the answer? Are ye my faithful servants? Were ye among the few, faithful among the faithless quick and ready at your Master's call? O no, no; you studied how you could shun the labor and shirk the self-denial! I know you not! Your portion lies without the city walls!

Let no one excuse himself, as not called, for God calls all to some sort of labor in the great harvest field. You never need, therefore, to excuse yourself as one not called to some service for your Lord and Master. And let no one excuse himself from the ministry unless his heart is on the altar and he himself praying and longing to go, and only held back by an obvious call of God, through His providence, to some other part of the great labor.

Many will be sent to hell at last for treating this subject as they have, with so much selfishness at heart! I know the young man who for a long time struggled between a strong conviction that God called him to the ministry and a great repellency against engaging in this work. I know what this feeling is, for I felt it a long time myself. A long time I had a secret conviction that I should be a minister, though my heart repelled it. In fact, my conversion turned very much upon my giving up this contest with God, and subduing this repellency of feeling against God's call.

**8.** You can see what it is to be a Christian, and what God demands of men at conversion. The turning point is Will you really and honestly serve

God? With students especially the question is wont to be Will you abandon all your ambitious schemes and devote yourself to the humble, unambitious toil of preaching Christ's Gospel to the poor? Most of this class are ambitious and aspiring; they have schemes of self-elevation, which it were a trial to renounce altogether. Hence with you, your being a Christian and being saved at last will turn much, perhaps altogether, on your giving yourself up to this work in the true self-denial of the Gospel spirit.

**9.** Many have been called to this work, who afterwards backslide and abandon it. They begin well, but backslide; get into a state of great perplexity about their duty; perhaps, like Balaam, they are so unwilling to see their duty and so anxious to evade it, that God will not struggle with them any longer, but gives them up to their covetousness, or their ambition.

Young man, are you earnestly crying out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" Be assured, God wants you in His field somewhere; He has not abandoned His harvest to perish; He wants you in it, but He wants you first to repent and prepare your heart for the Gospel ministry. You need not enter it till you have done this.

Many are waiting for a miraculous call. This is a great mistake. God does not call men in any miraculous way. The finger of His providence points out the path, and the fitness He gives you indicates the work for you to do. You need not fear that God will call you wrong. He will point out the work He would have you do. Therefore, ask Him to guide you to the right spot in the great field. He will surely do it.

Young men, will you deal kindly and truly with my Master in this matter? Do you say, "O my God, I am on hand, ready for any part of the work Thou hast for me to do?"

What say you? Are you prepared to take this ground? Will you consecrate your education to this work? Are you ready and panting to consecrate your all to the work of your Lord? Do you say, "Yes, God shall have all my powers, entirely and forever?" "I do beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." The altar of God is

before you. A whole sacrifice is the thing required. Are you ready to forego all your selfish schemes? Ye who have talents fitting you for the ministry, will you devote them with all your soul to this work? Say, will you deal honestly and truly with my Master? Say, do you love His cause, and count it your highest glory to be a laborer together with God, in gathering in the nations of lost men to the fold of your Redeemer?

# CONVERTING SINNERS A CHRISTIAN DUTY

*“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” James 5:19, 20.*

A SUBJECT of present duty and of great practical importance is brought before us in this text. That we may clearly apprehend it, let us-

## I. WHAT CONSTITUTES A SINNER?

**1.** A sinner is, essentially, a moral agent. So much he must be, whatever else he may or may not be. He must have free will, in the sense of being able to originate his own activities. He must be the responsible author of his own acts, in such a sense that he is not compelled irresistibly to act one way or another, otherwise than according to his own free choice.

He must also have intellect, so that he can understand his own relations and apprehend his moral responsibilities. An idiot, lacking this element of constitutional character, is not a moral agent and can not be a sinner.

He must also have sensibility, so that he can be moved to action so that there can be inducement to voluntary activity, and also a capacity to appropriate the motives for right or wrong action.

These are the essential elements of mind necessary to constitute a moral agent. Yet these are not all the facts which develop themselves in a sinner.

**2.** He is a selfish moral agent devoted to his own interests, making himself his own supreme end of action. He looks on his own things, not on the things of others. His own interests, not the interests of others, are his chief concern.

Thus every sinner is a moral agent, acting under this law of selfishness, having free will and all the powers of a moral agent, but making self the great end of all his action. This is a sinner.

**3.** We have here the true idea of sin. It is in an important sense, error. A sinner is one that “erreth.” “He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways.” It is not a mere mistake, for mistakes are made through ignorance or incapacity. Nor is it a mere defect of constitution, attributable to its author. But it is an “error in his ways.” It is missing the mark in his voluntary course of conduct. It is a voluntary divergence from the line of duty. It is not an innocent mistake, but a reckless yielding to impulse. It involves a wrong end a bad intention a being influenced by appetite or passion, in opposition to reason and conscience. It is an attempt to secure some present gratification at the expense of resisting convictions of duty. This is most emphatically missing the mark.

## II. WHAT IS CONVERSION?

What is it to “convert the sinner from the error of his ways?”

This error lies in his having a wrong object of life his own present worldly interests. Hence to convert him from the error of his ways is to turn him from this course to a benevolent consecration of himself to God and to human well-being. This is precisely what is meant by conversion. It is changing the great moral end of action. It supplants selfishness and substitutes benevolence in its stead.

## III. IN WHAT SENSE DOES MAN CONVERT A SINNER?

Our text reads, “If any of you do err from the truth and one convert him” implying that man may convert a sinner. But in what sense can this be said and done?

I answer, the change must of necessity be a voluntary one, not a change in the essence of the soul, nor in the essence of the body not any change in the created constitutional faculties; but a change which the mind itself, acting under various influences, makes as to its own voluntary end of action. It is an intelligent change the mind, acting intelligently and freely, changes its moral course, and does it for perceived reasons.

The Bible ascribes conversion to various agencies:

- 1.** To God. God is spoken of as converting sinners, and Christians with propriety pray to God to do so.
- 2.** Christians are spoken of as converting sinners. We see this in our text.
- 3.** The truth is also said to convert sinners.

Again, let it be considered, no man can convert another without the co-operation and consent of that other. His conversion consists in his yielding up his will and changing his voluntary course. He can never do this against his own free will. He may be persuaded and induced to change his voluntary course; but to be persuaded is simply to be led to change one's chosen course and choose another.

Even God can not convert a sinner without his own consent. He can not, for the simple reason that the thing involves a contradiction. The being converted implies his own consent else it is no conversion at all. God converts men, therefore, only as He persuades them to turn from the error of their selfish ways to the rightness of benevolent was.

So, also, man can convert a sinner only in the sense of presenting the reasons that induce the voluntary change and thus persuading him to repent. If he can do this, then he converts a sinner from the error of his ways. But the Bible informs us that man alone never does or can convert a sinner.

It holds, however, that when man acts humbly, depending on God, God works with him and by him. Men are "laborers together with God." They present reasons and God enforces those reasons on the mind. When the minister preaches, or when you converse with sinners, man presents truth, and God causes the mind to see it with great clearness and to feel its personal application with great power. Man persuades and God persuades; man speaks to his ear God speaks to his heart. Man presents truth through the medium of his senses to reach his free mind; God presses it upon his mind so as to secure his voluntary yielding to its claims. Thus the Bible speaks of sinners as being persuaded, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." In this the language of the Bible is entirely natural. just as if you should say you had turned a man from his purpose, or that

your arguments had turned him, or that his own convictions of truth had turned him. So the language of the Bible on this subject is altogether simple and artless, speaking right out in perfect harmony with the laws of mind.

#### IV. WHAT KIND OF DEATH IS MEANT BY THE TEXT “SHALL SAVE A SOUL FROM DEATH.”

Observe, it is a soul, not a body, that is to be saved from death; consequently we may dismiss all thought of the death of the body in this connection. However truly converted, his body must nevertheless die.

The passage speaks of the death of the soul.

By the death of the soul is sometimes meant spiritual death, a state in which the mind is not influenced by truth as it should be. The man is under the dominion of sin and repels the influence of truth.

Or the death of the soul may be eternal death the utter loss of the soul, and its final ruin. The sinner is, of course, spiritually dead, and if this condition were to continue through eternity, this would become eternal death. Yet the Bible represents the sinner dying unpardoned, as “going away into everlasting punishment,” and as being “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.” To be always a sinner is awful enough is a death of fearful horror; but how terribly augmented is even this when you conceive of it as heightened by everlasting punishment, far away “from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power!”

#### V. THE IMPORTANCE OF SAVING A SOUL FROM DEATH

Our text says, he who converts a sinner saves a soul from death. Consequently he saves him from all the misery he else must have endured. So much misery is saved.

And this amount is greater in the case of each sinner saved than all that has been experienced in our entire world up to this hour. This may startle you

at first view and may seem incredible. Yet you have only to consider the matter attentively and you will see it must be true. That which has no end which swells utterly beyond all our capacities for computation must surpass any finite amount, however great.

Yet the amount of actual misery experienced in this world has been very great. As you go about the great cities in any country you can not fail to see it. Suppose you could ascend some lofty eminence and stretch your vision over a whole continent, just to take in at one glance all its miseries. Suppose you had an eye to see all forms of human woe and measure their magnitude all the woes of slavery, oppression, intemperance, war, lust, disease, heart-anguish; suppose you could stand above some battle-field and hear as in one ascending volume all its groans and curses, and take the gauge and dimensions of its unutterable woes; suppose you could hear the echo of its agonies as they roll up to the very heavens; you must say There is indeed an ocean of agony here; yet all this is only a drop in the bucket compared with that vast amount, defying all calculation, which each sinner, lost, must endure, and from which each sinner, converted, is saved. If you were to see the cars rush over a dozen men at once, grinding their flesh and bones, you could not bear the sight. Perhaps you would even faint away. Oh, if you could see all the agonies of the earth accumulated, and could hear the awful groans ascending in one deafening roar that would shake the very earth, how must your nerves quiver! Yet all this would be merely nothing compared with the eternal sufferings of one lost soul! And this is true, however low may be the degree of this lost soul's suffering, each moment of his existence.

Yet farther. The amount of suffering thus saved is greater not only than all that ever has been, but than all that ever will be endured in this world. And this is true, even although the number of inhabitants be supposed to be increased a million-fold, and their miseries be augmented in like proportion. No matter how low the degree of suffering which the sinner would endure, yet our supposition, if the earth's population increased a million-fold, and its aggregate of miseries augmented in like proportion, can not begin to measure the agonies of the lost spirit.

Or we may extend our comparison and take in all that has yet been endured in the universe all the agonies of earth and all the agonies of hell



combined, up to this hour ye; even so, our aggregate is utterly too scanty to measure the amount of suffering saved, when one sinner is converted. Nay, more, the amount thus saved is greater than the created universe ever can endure in any finite duration. Aye, it is even greater, myriads of times greater, than all finite minds can ever conceive. You may embrace the entire conception of all finite minds, of every man and every angel, of all minds but that of God, and still the man who saves one soul from death saves in that single act more misery from being endured than all this immeasurable amount. He saves more misery, by myriads of times, than the entire universe of created minds can conceive.

I am afraid many of you have never given yourselves the trouble to think of this subject. You are not to escape from this fearful conclusion by saying that suffering is only a natural consequence of sin, and that there is no governmental infliction of pain. It matters not at all whether the suffering be governmental or natural. The amount is all I speak of now. If he continues in his sins, he will be miserable forever by natural law; and, therefore, the man who converts a sinner from his sins saves all this immeasurable amount of suffering.

You may recollect the illustration used by an old divine who attempted to give an approximate conception of this idea an enlarged conception by means of the understanding. There are two methods of studying and of endeavoring to apprehend the infinite: one by the reason, which simply affirms the infinite and another by the understanding, which only approximates toward it by conceptions and estimates of the finite. Both these modes of conception may be developed by culture. Let a man stand on the deck of a ship and cast his eye abroad upon the shoreless expanse of waters, he may get some idea of the vast; or, better, let him go out and look at the stars in the dimmed light of evening; he can get some idea of their number and of the vastness of that space in which they are scattered abroad. On the other hand, his reason tells him at once that this space is unlimited. His understanding only helps him to approximate toward this great idea. Let him suppose, as he gazes upon the countless stars of ether, that he has the power of rising into space at pleasure, and that he does ascend with the rapidity of lightning for thousands of years. Approaching those glorious orbs, one after another, he takes in more and more clear and grand conceptions of their magnitude, as he soars on past the moon, the

sun, and other suns of surpassing splendor and glory. So of the conceptions of the understanding in reference to the great idea of eternity.

The old writer to whom I alluded supposes a bird to be removing a globe of earth by taking away a single grain of sand once in a thousand years. What an eternity, almost, it would take! And yet this would not measure eternity.

Suppose, sinner, that it is you yourself who is suffering during all this period, and that you are destined to suffer until this supposed bird has removed the last grain of sand away. Suppose you are to suffer nothing more than you have sometimes felt; yet suppose that bird must remove, in this slow process, not this world only for this is but a little speck comparatively but also the whole material universe. Only a single grain at a time!

Or suppose the universe were a million times more extensive than it is, and then that you must be a sufferer through all this time, while the bird removes slowly a single minute grain once in each thousand years! Would it not appear to you like an eternity? If you knew that you must be deprived of all happiness for all time, would not the knowledge sink into your soul with a force perfectly crushing?

But, after all, this is only an understanding conception. Let this time thus measured roll on, until all is removed that God ever created or ever can create; even so, it affords scarcely a comparison, for eternity has no end. You can not even approximate towards its end. After the lapse of the longest period you can conceive, you have approached no nearer than you were when you first begun. O, sinner, “can your heart endure, or your hands be strong in the day when God shall deal thus with you?”

But let us look at still another view of the case. He who converts a sinner not only saves more misery, but confers more happiness than all the world has yet enjoyed, or even all the created universe. You have converted a sinner, have you? Indeed! Then think what has been gained! Does any one ask What then? Let the facts of the case give the answer. The time will come when he will say In my experience of God and divine things, I have enjoyed more than all the created universe had done up to the general judgment more than the aggregate happiness of all creatures, during the

whole duration of our world; and yet my happiness is only just begun! Onward, still onward onward forever rolls the deep tide of my blessedness, and evermore increasing!

Then look also at the work in which this converted man is engaged. just look at it. In some sunny hour when you have caught glimpses of God and of His love, and have said O, if this might only last forever! O, you have said, if this stormy world were not around me! O, if my soul had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest. Those were only aspirations for the rest of heaven this which the converted man enjoys above is heaven. You must add to this the rich and glorious idea of eternal enlargement perpetual increase. His blessedness not only endures forever, but increases forever. And this is the bliss of every converted sinner.

If these things be true, then-

- 1.** Converting sinners is the work of the Christian life. It is the great work to which we, as Christians, are especially appointed. Who can doubt this?
- 2.** It is the great work of life because its importance demands that it should be. It is so much beyond any other work in importance that it can not, be rationally regarded as anything other or less than the great work of life.
- 3.** It can be made the great work of life, because Jesus Christ has made provision for it. His atonement covers the human race and lays the foundation so broad that whosoever will may come. The promise of His Spirit to aid each Christian in this work is equally broad, and was designed to open the way for each one to become a laborer together with God in this work of saving souls.
- 4.** Benevolence can never stop short of it. Where so much good can be done and so much misery can be prevented, how is it possible that benevolence can fail to do its utmost?
- 5.** Living to save others is the condition of saving our selves. No man is truly converted who does not live to save others. Every truly converted man turns from selfishness to benevolence, and benevolence surely leads him to do all he can to save the souls of his fellow-man. This is the changeless law of benevolent action.

**6.** The self-deceived are always to be distinguished by this peculiarity they live to save themselves. This is the chief end of all their religion. All their religious efforts and activities tend toward this sole object. If they can secure their own conversion so as to be pretty sure of it, they are satisfied. Sometimes the ties of natural sympathy embrace those who are especially near to them; but selfishness goes commonly no further, except as a good name may prompt them on.

**7.** Some persons take no pains to convert sinners, but act as if this were a matter of no consequence whatever. They do not labor to persuade men to be reconciled to God.

Some seem to be waiting for miraculous interposition. They take no pains with their children or friends. Very much as if they felt no interest in the great issue, they wait and wait for God or miracle to move. Alas, they do nothing in this great work of human life!

Many professed Christians have no faith in God's blessing, and no expectation, thereby, of success. Consequently they make no effort in faith. Their own experience is good for nothing to help them, because never having had faith, they never have had success. Many ministers preach so as to do no good. Having failed so long, they have lost all faith. They have not gone to work expecting success, and hence they have not had success.

Many professors of religion, not ministers, seem to have lost all confidence. Ask them if they are doing anything they answer truly nothing. But if their hearts were full of the love of souls or of the love of Christ, they would certainly make efforts. They would at least try to convert sinners from the error of their ways. They would live religion would hold up its light as a natural spontaneous thing.

Each one, male or female, of every age, and in any position in life whatsoever, should make it a business to save souls. There are, indeed, many other things to be done; let them have their place. But don't neglect the greatest of all.

Many professed Christians seem never to convert sinners. Let me ask you how is it with you? Some of you might reply Under God, I have been the means of saving some souls. But some of you can not even say this. You know you have never labored honestly and with all your heart for this

object. And you do not know that you have ever been the means of converting one sinner.

What shall I say of those young converts here? Have you given yourselves up to this work? Are you laboring for God? Have you gone to your impenitent friends, even to their rooms, and by personal, affectionate entreaty, besought them to be reconciled to God?

By your pen and by every form of influence you can command have you sought to save souls and do what you can in this work? Have you succeeded?

Suppose all the professors of religion in this congregation were to do this, each in their sphere and each doing all they severally could do, how many would be left unconverted? If each one should say, "I lay myself on the altar of my God for this work; I confess all my past delinquencies; henceforth, God helping me, this shall be the labor of my life; "if each one should begin with removing all the old offences and occasions of stumbling should publicly confess and deplore his remissness and every other form of public offence, confessing how little you have done for souls, crying out: O how wickedly I have lived in this matter! but

I must reform, must confess, repent, and change altogether the course of my life; if you were all to do this and then set yourselves each in your place, to lay your hand in all earnestness upon your neighbor and pluck him out of the fire how glorious would be the result!

But to neglect the souls of others and think you shall yet be saved yourself is one of guilt's worst blunders! For unless you live to save others, how can you hope to be saved yourself? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

# MEN OFTEN HIGHLY ESTEEM WHAT GOD ABHORS

*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God.” Luke 16:15.*

CHRIST had just spoken the parable of the unjust steward, in which He presented the case of one who unjustly used the property of others entrusted to him, for the purpose of laying them under obligation to provide for himself after expulsion from His trust. Our Lord represents this conduct of the steward as being wise in the sense of forethoughtful, and provident for self a wisdom of the world, void of all morality. He uses the case to illustrate and recommend the using of wealth in such a way as to make friends for ourselves who at our death shall welcome us into “everlasting habitations.” Then going deeper, even to the bottom principle that should control us in all our use of wealth, He lays it down that no man can serve both God and Mammon. Rich and covetous men who were serving Mammon need not suppose they could serve God too at the same time. The service of the one is not to be reconciled with the service of the other.

The covetous Pharisees heard all these things, and they derided Him. As if they would say, “Indeed, you seem to be very sanctimonious, to tell us that we do not serve God acceptably! When has there ever been a tithe of mint that we did not pay?” Those Pharisees did not admit His orthodoxy, by any means. They thought they could serve God and Mammon both. Let whoever would say they served Mammon, they knew they served God also, and they had nothing but scorn for those teachings that showed the inconsistency and absurdity of their worshiping two opposing gods and serving two opposing masters.

Our Lord replied to them in the words of our text, “Ye are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

In pursuing the subject thus presented, I shall-

Show how and why it is that men highly esteem that which God abhors.

**1.** They have a different rule of judgment. God judges by one rule; they by another. God's rule requires universal benevolence; their rule is satisfied with any amount of selfishness, so be it sufficiently refined to meet the times. God requires men to devote themselves not to their own interests, but to His interests and those of His great family. He sets up but one great end the highest glory of His name and kingdom. He asks them to become divinely patriotic, devoting themselves to their Creator and to the good of His creatures.

The world adopts an entirely different rule, allowing men to set up their own happiness as their end. It is curious that some pretended philosophers have laid down the same rule viz.: that men should pursue their own happiness supremely, and only take care not to infringe on others' happiness too much. Their doctrine allows men to pursue a selfish course, only not in a way to infringe too palpably on others' rights and interests.

But God's rule is, "Seek not thine own." His law is explicit, "Thou shalt love (not thyself, but) the Lord thy God with all thy heart." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Charity (this same love) seeketh not her own." This is characteristic of the love which the law of God requires it does not seek its own. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's." 1 Corinthians 10:24. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." "For all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Philippians 2:4, 21.

To seek their own interests and not Jesus Christ's, Paul regards as an entire departure from the rule of true Christianity.

God regards nothing as virtue except devotion to the ends. The right end is not one's own, but the general good. Hence God's rule requires virtue, while man's rule at best only restrains vice. All human governments are founded on this principle, as all who study the subject know. They do not require benevolence, they only restrain selfishness. In the foundation principles of our government. it is affirmed that men have certain inalienable rights, one of which is the right to pursue each his own happiness. This is affirmed to be an inalienable right, and is always

assumed to be right in itself, provided it does not infringe on others' rights of happiness. But God's rule requires positive benevolence and regards nothing else as virtue except devotion to the highest good. Man's rule condemns nothing, provided man so restrains himself as not to infringe on others' rights.

Moral character is as the end sought. It can not be predicated of muscular action, but must always turn on the end which the mind has in view. Men always really assume and know this. They know that the moral character is really as the end to which man devotes himself. Hence God's law and man's law being as they are, to obey God's is holiness; to obey only man's law is sin.

Men very inconsiderately judge themselves and others, not by God's rule, but by man's. They do this to an extent truly wonderful. Look into men's real opinions and you will see this. Often, without being at all aware of it, men judge themselves, not by God's rule, but by their own.

Here I must notice some of the evidences of this, and furnish some illustrations.

Thus, for example, a mere negative morality is highly esteemed by some men. If a man lives in a community and does no harm, defrauds no man, does not cheat, or lie does no palpable injury to society; transacts his business in a way deemed highly honorable and virtuous this man stands in high repute according to the standard of the world. But what does all this really amount to? The man is just taking care of himself; that is all. His morality is wholly of this negative form. All you can say of him is, He does no hurt. Yet this morality is often spoken of in a manner which shows that the world highly esteem it. But does God highly esteem it? Nay, but it is abomination in His sight.

Again, a religion which is merely negative is often highly esteemed. Men of this religion are careful not to do wrong but what is doing wrong? It is thought no wrong to neglect the souls of their neighbors. What do they deem wrong? Cheating, lying, stealing. These and such like things they will admit are wrong. But what are they doing? Look round about you even here and see what men of this class are doing. Many of them never try to save a soul. They are highly esteemed for their inoffensive life; they do no



wrong; but they do nothing to save a soul. Their religion is a mere negation. Perhaps they would not cross a ferry on the Sabbath; but never would they save a soul from death. They would let their own clerks go to hell without one earnest effort to save them. Must not such a religion be an abomination to God?

So, also, of a religion which at best consists of forms and prayers and does not add to these the energies of benevolent effort. Such a religion is all hollow. Is it serving God to do nothing but ask favors for one's self?

Some keep up Sabbath duties, as they are termed, and family prayer, but all their religion consists in keeping up their forms of worship. If they add nothing to these, their religion is only an abomination before God.

There are still other facts which show that men loosely set up a false standard, which they highly esteem, but which God abhors. For example, they will require true religion only of ministers; but no real religion of anybody else. All men agree in requiring that ministers should be really pious. They judge them by the right rule. For example, they require ministers to be benevolent. They must enter upon their profession for the high object of doing good, and not for the mere sake of a living not for filthy lucre's sake, but for the sake of souls and from disinterested love. Else they will have no confidence in a minister.

But turn this over and apply it to business men. Do they judge themselves by this rule? Do they judge each other by this rule? Before they will have Christian confidence in a merchant or a mechanic, do they insist that these shall be as much above the greed for gain as a minister should be. Should be as willing to give up their time to the sick as a minister be as ready to forego a better salary for the sake of doing more good, as they insist a minister should be? Who does not know that they demand of business men no such conditions of Christian character as those which they impose on Gospel ministers? Let us see. If a man of business does any service for you, he makes out his bill, and if need be, he collects it. Now suppose I should go and visit a sick man to give him spiritual counsel should attend him from time to time for counsel and for prayer, till he died, and then should attend his funeral; and having done this service, should make up my bill and send it in, and even collect it; would there not be some talk? People would say, What right has he to do that? He ought to perform that service

for the love of souls, and make no charge for it. This applies to those ministers who are not under salary to perform this service, of whom there are many. Let any one of these men go and labor ever so much among the sick or at funerals, they must not take pay. But let one of these ministers send his saw to be filed, and he must pay for it. He may send it to that very man whose sick family he has visited by day and by night, and whose dead he has buried without charge, and “for the love of souls;” but no such “love of souls” binds the mechanic in his service. The truth is, they call that religion in a layman which they call sin in a minister. That is the fact. I do not complain that men take pay for labor, but that they do not apply the same principle to a minister.

Again, the business aims and practices of business men are almost universally an abomination in the sight of God. Almost all of these are based on the same principle as human governments are, namely, that the only restraints imposed shall be to prevent men from being too selfish, allowing them to be just as selfish as they can be and yet leave others an equal chance to be selfish too.

Shall we go into an enumeration of the principles of business men respecting their objects and modes of doing business? What would it all amount to? Seeking their own ends; doing something, not for others, but for self. Provided they do it in a way regarded as honest and honorable among men, no further restriction shall be imposed.

Take the Bible Society for an illustration. This institution is not a speculation, entered upon for the good of those who print and publish. But the object aimed at is to furnish them as cheap to the purchaser as possible, so as to put a Bible into the hands of every human being at the lowest possible price. Now it is easy to see that any other course and any different principle from this would be universally condemned. If Bible societies should become merely a speculation they would cease to be benevolent institutions at all, and to claim this character would bring down on them the curses of men. But all business ought to be done as benevolently as the making of Bibles; why not? If it be not, can it be a benevolent business? and if not benevolent, how can it have the approval of God? what is a benevolent business? The doing of the utmost good that which is; undertaken for the one only end of doing good, and which simply

aims to do the utmost good possible. In just this sense, men should be patriotic, benevolent, should have a single eye to God's glory in all they do, whether they eat or drink or whatever they may do.

Yet where do you find the man who holds his fellow-men practically to this rule as a condition of their being esteemed Christians, viz., that in all their business they should be as benevolent as Bible societies are? What should we say of a Bible society which should enter upon a manifest speculation and should get as much as they can for their Bibles, instead of selling at the lowest living price? What would you say of such a Bible society? You would say, "Horrible hypocrite!" I must say the same of every Christian who does the same thing. Ungodly men do not profess any Christian benevolence, so we will not charge this hypocrisy on them, but we will try to get this light before their mind.

Now place a minister directly before your own mind, and ask, Do you judge yourself as you judge him? Do you say of yourself, I ought to do for others gratuitously all and whatever I require him to do gratuitously? Do you judge yourself by the same rule by which you judge him?

Apply this to all business men. No matter what your business is, whether high or low, small or great; filing saws, or counting out bank bills; you call the Bible society benevolent; do you make your business as much so and as truly so in your ends and aims? If not, why not? What business have you to be less benevolent than those who print, publish, and sell Bibles?

Here is another thing which is highly esteemed among men, yet is an abomination before God, viz.: selfish ambition. How often do you see this highly esteemed! I have been amazed to see how men form judgments on this matter, Here is a young man who is a good student in the sense of making great progress in his studies (a thing the devil might do), yet for this only, such young men are often spoken of in the highest terms. Provided they do well for themselves, nothing more seems to be asked or expected in order to entitle them to high commendation.

So of professional men. I have in my mind's eye the case of a lawyer who was greatly esteemed and caressed by his fellow-men; who was often spoken of well by Christians; but what was he? Nothing but an ambitious young lawyer, doing everything for ambition ready at any time to take the

stump and canvass the whole country for what? To get some good for himself. Yet he is courted by Christian families! Why? Because he is doing well for himself. See Daniel Webster. How lauded, I had almost said canonized! Perhaps he will be yet. Certainly the same spirit we now see would canonize him If this were a Catholic country. But what has he done? He has just played the part of an ambitious lawyer and an ambitious statesmen; that is all. He has sought great things for himself; and having said that. you have said all. Yet how have men lauded Daniel Webster! When I came to Syracuse, I saw a vast procession. What, said I, is there a funeral here? Who is dead? Daniel Webster. But, said I, he has been dead a long time. Yes, but they are playing up funeral because he was a great man. What was Daniel Webster? Not a Christian, not a benevolent man; everybody knows this. And what have Christians to do in lauding and canonizing a merely selfish ambition? They may esteem it highly, yet let them know, God abhors it as utterly as they admire it.

The world's entire morality and that of a large portion of the Church are only a spurious benevolence. You see a family very much united and you say, How they love one another! So they do; but they may be very exclusive. They may exclude themselves and shut off their sympathies almost utterly from all other families, and they may consequently exclude themselves from doing good in the world. The same kind of morality may be seen in towns and in nations. This makes up the entire morality of the world.

Many have what they call humanity, without any piety; and this is often highly esteemed among men. They pretend to love men, but yet after all do not honor God, nor even aim at it. And in their love of men they fall below some animals. I doubt whether many men, not pious, would do what

I knew a dog to do. His master wanted to kill him, and for this purpose took him out into the river in a boat and tied a stone about his neck. In the struggle to throw dog and stone overboard together, the boat upset; the man was in the river; the dog, by extra effort, released himself of his weight, and seizing his master by the collar, swam with him to land. Few men would have had humanity enough without piety to have done this. Indeed, men without piety are not often half so kind to each other as animals are. Men are more degraded and more depraved. Animals will make

greater sacrifices for each other than the human race do. Go and ask a whaleman what he sees among the whales when they suffer themselves to be murdered to protect a school of their young. Yet many mothers think they do most meritorious things because they take care of their children.

But men, as compared with animals, ought to act from higher motives than they. If they do not, they act wickedly. Knowing more having the knowledge of God and of the dying Savior as their example and rule they have higher responsibilities than animals can have.

Men often make a great virtue of their abolitionism though it be only of the infidel stamp. But perhaps there is no virtue in this, a whit higher than a mere animal might have, Whoever understands the subject of slavery and is a good man at heart will certainly be an abolitionist. But a man may be an abolitionist without the least virtue. There may not be the least regard for God in his abolitionism, nor even any honest regard to human well-being. He may stand on a principle which would make him a slaveholder himself, if his circumstances favored it. Such men certainly do act on slaveholding principles. They develop principles and adopt practices which show that if they had the power, they would enslave the race. They will not believe that a man can be a colonizationist, and yet be a good man. I am no colonizationist, but I know good men who are. Some men not only lord it over the bodies of their fellow-men, but over their minds and souls their opinions and consciences which is much worse oppression and tyranny than simply to enslave the body.

Often there is a bitter and an acrimonious spirit not by any means the spirit of Christ; for while Christ no doubt condemns the slaveholder, He does not hate him. This biting hatred of evil-doers is only malevolence after all; and though men may ever so highly esteem it, God abominates it.

On the other hand, many call that piety which has no humanity in it. Whip up their slaves to get money to give to the Bible Society! Touch up the gang; put on the cat-o-nine-tails; the agent is coming along for money for the Bible Society! Here is piety (so called) without humanity. I abhor a piety, which has no humanity with it and in it, as deeply as I condemn its converse humanity without piety. God loves both piety and humanity. How greatly, then, must He abhor either when unnaturally divorced from the other!

All those so-called religious efforts which men make, haying only self for their end, are an abomination to God.

There is a wealthy man who consents to give two hundred dollars towards building a splendid church. He thinks this is a very benevolent offering, and it may be highly esteemed among men. But before God approves of it He will look into the motives of the giver; and so may we, if we please. The man, we find, owns a good deal of real estate in the village, which he expects will rise in value on the very day that shall see the church building determined on, enough to put back into his pocket two or three fold what he pays out. Besides this he has other motives. He thinks of the increased respectability of having a fine house and himself the best seat in it. And yet further, he has some interest in having good morals sustained in the village, for vice is troublesome to rich men and withal somewhat dangerous. And then he has an indefinable sort of expectation that this new church and his handsome donation to build it will somehow improve his prospects for heaven.

Inasmuch as these are rather dim at best, the improvement, though indefinite, is decidedly an object. Now if you scan these motives, you will see that from first to last they are altogether selfish. Of course they are an abomination in God's sight.

The motives for getting a popular minister are often of the same sort, The object is not to get a man sent of God, to labor for God and with God, and one with whom the people may labor and pray for souls and for God's kingdom. But the object being something else than this, is an abomination before God.

The highest forms of the world's morality are only abominations in God's sight. The world has what it calls good husbands, good wives, good children; but what sort of goodness is this? The husband loves his wife and seeks to please her. She also loves and seeks to please him. But do either of them love or seek to please God in these relations? By no means. Nothing can be farther from their thoughts. They never go beyond the narrow circle of self. Take all these human relations in their best earthly form, and you will find they never rise above the morality of the lower animals. They fondle and caress each other, and seem to take some interest in the care of their children. So do your domestic fowls, not less, and

perhaps even more. Often these fowls in your poultry yard go beyond the world's morality in these qualities which the world calls good.

Should not human beings have vastly higher ends than these? Can God deem their highly esteemed qualities any other than an abomination if in fact they are even below the level of the domestic animals?

An unsanctified education comes into the same category. A good education is indeed a great good; but if not sanctified, it is all the more odious to God. Yes, let me tell you, if not improved for God, it is only the more odious to Him in proportion as you get light on the subject of duty, and sin against that light the more. Those very acquisitions which will give you higher esteem among men will, if unsanctified, make your character more utterly odious before God. You are a polished writer and a beautiful speaker. You stand at the head of the college. in these important respects. Your friends look forward with hopeful interest to the time when you will be heard of on the floor of Senates, moving them to admiration by your eloquence. But alas, you have no piety! When we ask, How does God look upon such talents, unsanctified, we are compelled to answer Only as an abomination. This eloquent young student is only the more odious to God by reason of all his unsanctified powers. The very things which give you the more honor among men will make you only the scoff of hell. The spirits of the nether pit will meet you as they did the fallen monarch of Babylon, tauntingly saying, "What, are you here? You who could shake kingdoms by your eloquence, are you brought down to the sides of the pit? You who might have been an angel of light you who lived in Oberlin; you, a selfish, doomed sinner away and be out of our company! We have nobody here so guilty and so deeply damned as you!"

So of all unsanctified talents beauty, education, accomplishments; all, if unsanctified, are an abomination in the sight of God. All of those things which might make you more useful in the sight of God are, if misused, only the greater abomination in His sight.

So a legal religion, with which you serve God only because you must. You go to church, yet not in love to God or to His worship, but from regard to your reputation, to your hope, or your conscience. Must not such a religion be, of all things, most abominable to God?

## REMARKS

The world have mainly lost the true idea of religion. This is too obvious from all I have said to need more illustration.

The same is true to a great extent of the Church. Professed Christians judge themselves falsely because they judge by a false standard.

One of the most common and fatal mistakes is to employ a merely negative standard. Here are men complaining of a want of conviction. Why don't they take the right standard and judge themselves by that? Suppose you had let a house burn down and made no effort to save it; what would you think of the guilt of stupidity and laziness there? Two women and five children are burnt to ashes in the conflagration; why did not you give the alarm when you saw the fire getting hold? Why did not you rush into the building and drag out the unconscious inmates? Oh, you felt stupid that morning just as people talk of being "stupid" in religion! Well, you hope not to be judged very hard, since you did not set the house on fire; you only let it alone; all you did was to do nothing! That is all many persons plead as to their religious duties. They do nothing to pluck sinners out of the fire, and they seem to think this is a very estimable religion! Was this the religion of Jesus Christ or of Paul? Is it the religion of real benevolence? or of common sense?

You see how many persons who have a Christian hope indulge it on merely negative grounds. Often I ask persons how they are getting along in religion. They answer, pretty well; and yet they are doing nothing that is really religious. They are making no effort to save souls are doing nothing to serve God. What are they doing? Oh, they keep up the forms of prayer! Suppose you should employ a servant and pay him off each week, yet he does nothing all the long day but pray to you!

Religion is very intelligible and is easily understood. It is a warfare. What is a warrior's service? He devotes himself to the service of his country. If need be, he lays down his life on her altar. He is expected to do this.

So a man is to lay down his life on God's altar, to be used in life or death, as God may please, in His service.



The things most highly esteemed among men are often the very things God most abhors. Take, for example, the legalist's religion. The more he is bound in conscience and enslaved, by so much the more, usually, does his esteem as a Christian rise.

The more earnestly he groans under his bondage to sin, the more truly he has to say

“Reason I bear, her counsels weigh, And all her words approve; Yet still I find it hard to obey And harder yet to love,”-

By so much the more does the world esteem and God abhor his religion. The good man, they say he was all his lifetime subject to bondage! He was in doubts and fears all his life! But why did he not come by faith into that liberty with which Christ makes His people free?

A morality, based on the most refined selfishness, stands in the highest esteem among men. So good a man of the world they say almost a saint; yet God must hold him in utter abomination.

The good Christian in the world's esteem is never abrupt, never aggressive, yet he is greatly admired. He has a selfish devotion to pleasing men, than which nothing is more admired. I heard of a minister who had not an enemy in the world. He was said to be most like Christ among all the men they knew. I thought it strange that a man so like Christ should have no enemies, for Christ, more like Himself than any other man can be, had a great many enemies, and very bitter enemies too. Indeed, it is said, “If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution.”

But when I came to learn the facts of the case I understood the man. He never allowed himself to preach anything that could displease even Universalists. In fact, he had two Universalists in his Session. In the number of his Session were some Calvinists also, and he must by no means displease them. His preaching was indeed a model of its kind. His motto was Please the people nothing but please the people. In the midst of a revival, he would leave the meetings and go to a party; why? To please the people.

Now this may be highly esteemed among men; but does not God abhor it?

It is a light thing to be judged of man's judgment, and all the lighter since they are so prone to judge by a false standard. What is it to me that men condemn me if God only approve? The longer I live, the less I think of human opinions on the great questions of right and wrong as God sees them. They will judge both themselves and others falsely. Even the Church sometimes condemns and excommunicates her best men. I have known cases, and could name them, in which I am confident they have done this very thing. They have cut men off from their communion, and now everybody sees that the men excommunicated were the best men of the Church.

It is a blessed thought that the only thing we need to care for is to please God. The only inquiry we need make is What will God think of it? We have only one mind to please, and that the Great Mind of the universe. Let this be our single aim and we shall not fail to please Him. But if we do not aim at this, all we can do is only an abomination in His sight.

# VICTORY OVER THE WORLD THROUGH FAITH

*“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:4.*

THE discussion of this text naturally leads us to make four inquiries

- I. WHAT IS IT TO OVERCOME THE WORLD?**
- II. WHO ARE THEY THAT OVERCOME?**
- III. WHY DO THEY OVERCOME THE WORLD?**
- IV. HOW DO THEY DO IT?**

These are the natural questions which a serious mind would ask upon reading this text.

## I. WHAT IS IT TO OVERCOME THE WORLD?

**1.** It is to get above the spirit of covetousness which possesses the men of the world. The spirit of the world is eminently the spirit of covetousness. It is a greediness after the things of the world. Some worldly men covet one thing and some another; but all classes of worldly men are living in the spirit of covetousness in some of its forms. This spirit has supreme possession of their minds.

Now the first thing in overcoming the world is, that the spirit of covetousness in respect to worldly things and objects be overcome. The man who does not overcome this spirit of bustling, and scrambling after the good which this world proffers has by no means overcome it.

**2.** Overcoming the world implies rising above its engrossments. When a man has overcome the world his thoughts are no longer engrossed and swallowed up with worldly things. A man certainly does not overcome the world unless he gets above being engrossed and absorbed with its concerns.

Now we all know how exceedingly engrossed worldly men are with some form of worldly good. One is swallowed up with study; another with politics; a third with money-getting; and a fourth perhaps with fashion and with pleasure; but each in his chosen way makes earthly good the all-engrossing object.

The man who gains the victory over the world must overcome not one form only of its pursuits, but every form must overcome the world itself and all that it has to present as an allurement to the human heart.

### **3. Overcoming the world implies overcoming the fear of the world.**

It is a mournful fact that most men, and indeed all men of worldly character, have so much regard to public opinion that they dare not act according to the dictates of their consciences when acting thus would incur the popular frown. One is afraid lest his business should suffer if his course runs counter to public opinion; another fears lest if he stand up for the truth it will injure his reputation, and curiously imagines and tries to believe that advocating an unpopular truth will diminish and perhaps destroy his good influence -as if a man could exert a good influence in any possible way besides maintaining the truth.

Great multitudes, it must be admitted, are under this influence of fearing the world; yet some, perhaps many, of them, are not aware of this fact. If you or if they could thoroughly sound the reasons of their backwardness in duty, fear of the world would be found among the chief.

Their fear of the world's displeasure is so much stronger than their fear of God's displeasure that they are completely enslaved by it. Who does not know that some ministers dare not preach what they know is true, and even what they know is important truth, lest they should offend some whose good opinion they seek to retain? The society is weak, perhaps, and the favor of some rich man in it seems indispensable to its very existence. Hence the terror of these rich men is continually before their eyes when they write a sermon, or preach, or are called to take a stand in favor of any truth or cause which may be unpopular with men of more wealth than piety or conscience. Alas! this bondage to man! Too many Gospel ministers are so troubled by it that their time-serving policy is virtually renouncing Christ and serving the world.

Overcoming the world is thoroughly subduing this servility to men.

**4.** Overcoming the world implies overcoming a state of worldly anxiety. You know there is a state of great carefulness and anxiety which is common and almost universal among worldly men. It is perfectly natural if the heart is set upon securing worldly good, and has not learned to receive all good from the hand of a great Father and trust Him to give or withhold with His own unerring wisdom. But he who loves the world is the enemy of God, and hence can never have this filial trust in a parental Benefactor, nor the peace of soul which it imparts. Hence worldly men are almost incessantly in a fever of anxiety lest their worldly schemes should fail. They sometimes get a momentary relief when all things seem to go well; but some mishap is sure to befall them at some point soon, so that scarce a day passes that brings not with it some corroding anxiety. Their bosoms are like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But the man who gets above the world gets above this state of ceaseless and corroding anxiety.

**5.** The victory under consideration implies that we cease to be enslaved and in bondage to the world in any of its forms.

There is a worldly spirit and there is also a heavenly spirit; and one or the other exists in the heart of every man and controls his whole being. Those who are under the control of the world, of course have not overcome the world. No man overcomes the world till his heart is imbued with the spirit of heaven.

One form which the spirit of the world assumes is being enslaved to the customs and fashions of the day.

It is marvelous to see what a goddess Fashion becomes. No heathen goddess was ever worshiped with costlier offerings or more devout homage or more implicit subjection. And surely no heathen deity since the world began has ever had more universal patronage. Where will you go to find the man of the world or the woman of the world who does not hasten to worship at her shrine?

But overcoming the world implies that the spell of this goddess is broken.

They who have overcome the world are no longer careful either to secure its favor or avert its frown; and the good or the ill opinion of the world is to them a small matter. "To me," said Paul, "it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment." So of every real Christian; his care is to secure the approbation of God; this is his chief concern, to commend himself to God and to his own conscience. No man has overcome the world unless he has attained this state of mind.

Almost no feature of Christian character is more striking or more decisive than this indifference to the opinions of the world.

Since I have been in the ministry I have been blessed with the acquaintance of some men who were peculiarly distinguished by this quality of character. Some of you may have known Rev. James Patterson, late of Philadelphia. If so, you know him to have been eminently distinguished in this respect. He seemed to have the least possible disposition to secure the applause of men or avoid their censure. It seemed to be of no consequence to him to commend himself to men. For him it was enough if he might please God.

Hence you were sure to find him in everlasting war against sin, all sin, however popular, however entrenched by custom or sustained by wealth, or public opinion. Yet he always opposed sin with a most remarkable spirit a spirit of inflexible decision and yet of great mellowness and tenderness. While he was saying the most severe things in the most decided language, you might see the big tears rolling down his cheeks.

It is wonderful that most men never complained of his having a bad spirit. Much as they dreaded his rebuke and writhed under his strong and daring exposures of wickedness, they could never say that Father Patterson had any other than a good spirit. This was a most beautiful and striking exemplification of having overcome the world.

Men who are not thus dead to the world have not escaped its bondage. The victorious Christian is in a state where he is no longer in bondage to man. He is bound only to serve God.

## II. WHO ARE THOSE THAT OVERCOME THE WORLD?

Our text gives the ready answer: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." You cannot fail to observe that this is a universal proposition all who are born of God overcome the world all these, and it is obviously implied none others. You may know who are born of God by this characteristic they overcome the world. Of course the second question is answered.

## III. WHY DO BELIEVERS OVERCOME THE WORLD? ON WHAT PRINCIPLE IS THIS RESULT EFFECTED?

I answer, this victory over the world results as naturally from the spiritual or heavenly birth, as coming into bondage to the world results from the natural birth.

It may be well to revert a moment to the law of connection in the latter case, viz., between coming into the world by natural birth and bondage to the world. This law obviously admits of a philosophical explanation, at once simple and palpable to every one's observation. Natural birth reveals to the mind objects of sense and these only. It brings the mind into contact with worldly things. Of course it is natural that the mind should become deeply interested in these objects thus presented through its external senses, especially as most of them sustain so intimate a relation to our sentient nature and become the first and chief sources of our happiness.

Hence our affections are gradually entwined around these objects, and we become thoroughly lovers of this world ere our eyes have been opened upon it many months.

Now alongside of this universal fact let another be placed of equal importance and not less universal, namely, that those intuitive powers of the mind which were created to take cognizance of our moral relations, and hence to counteract the too great influence of worldly objects, come into action very slowly, and are not developed so as to act vigorously until years are numbered as months are in the case of the external organs of

sense. The very early and vigorous development of the latter brings the soul so entirely under the control of worldly objects that when the reason and the conscience come to speak, their voice is little heeded.

As a matter of fact, we find it universally true that unless divine power interpose, the bondage to the world thus induced upon the soul is never broken.

But the point which I particularly desired to elucidate was simply this, that natural birth, with its attendant laws of physical and mental development, becomes the occasion of bondage to this world.

Right over against this lies the birth into the kingdom of God by the Spirit. By this the soul is brought into new relations we might rather say, into intimate contact with spiritual things. The Spirit of God seems to usher the soul into the spiritual world, in a manner strictly analogous to the result of the natural birth upon our physical being. The great truths of the spiritual world are opened to our view through the illumination of the Spirit of God; we seem to see with new eyes, and to have a new world of spiritual objects around us.

As in regard to natural objects, men not only speculate about them, but realize them; so in the case of spiritual children do spiritual things become not merely matters of speculation, but of full and practical realization also. When God reveals Himself to the mind, spiritual things are seen in their real light, and make the impression of realities.

Consequently, when spiritual objects are thus revealed to the mind, and thus apprehended, they will supremely interest that mind. Such is our mental constitution that the truth of God when thoroughly apprehended cannot fail to interest us. If these truths were clearly revealed to the wickedest man on earth, so that he should apprehend them as realities, it could not fail to rouse up his soul to most intense action. He might hate the light, and might stubbornly resist the claims of God upon his heart, but he could not fail to feel a thrilling interest in truths that so take hold of the great and vital things of human well-being.

Let me ask, is there a sinner in this house, or can there be a sinner on this wide earth, who does not see that if God's presence was made as manifest



and as real to his mind as the presence of his fellow-men, it would supremely engross his soul even though it might not subdue his heart.

This revelation of God's presence and character might not convert him, but it would, at least for the time being, kill his attention to the world.

You often see this in the case of persons deeply convicted you have doubtless seen persons so fearfully convicted of sin, that they cared nothing at all for their food nor their dress. O, they cried out in the agony of their souls, what matter all these things to us, if we even get them all, and then must he down in hell!

But these thrilling and all-absorbing convictions do not necessarily convert the soul, and I have alluded to them here only to show the controlling power of realizing views of divine truth.

When real conversion has taken place, and the soul is born of God, then realizing views of truth not only awaken interest, as they might do in an unrenewed mind, but they also tend to excite a deep and ardent love for these truths. They draw out the heart. Spiritual truth now takes possession of his mind, and draws him into its warm and life-giving embrace. Before, error, falsehood, death, had drawn him under their power; now the Spirit of God draws him into the very embrace of God. Now he is begotten of God, and breathes the spirit of sonship. Now, according to the Bible, "the seed of God remaineth in him," that very truth, and those movings, of the spirit which give him birth into the kingdom of God, continue still in power upon his mind, and hence he continues a Christian, and as the Bible states it, "he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The seed of God is in him, and the fruit of it brings his soul deeply into sympathy with his own Father in heaven.

Again, the first birth makes us acquainted with earthly things, the second with God; the first with the finite, the second with the infinite; the first with things correlated with our animal nature, the second with those great things which stand connected with our spiritual nature, things so lovely, and so glorious as to overcome all the ensnarements of the world.

Again, the first begets a worldly, and the second a heavenly temper. Under the first, the mind is brought into a snare, under the second, it is delivered

from that snare. Under the first, the conversation is earthly; under the second, “our conversation is in heaven.”

But we must pass to inquire,

## IV. HOW THIS VICTORY OVER THE WORLD IS ACHIEVED

The great agent is the Holy Spirit. Without Him, no good result is ever achieved in the Christian’s heart or life. The text, you observe, says, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” But here the question might be raised: Does this mean that faith of itself overcomes the world, or, is this the meaning, that we overcome by or through our faith? Doubtless the latter is the precise meaning. Believing in God, and having realizing impressions of His truth and character made upon our mind by the Holy Ghost given to those who truly believe, we gain the victory over the world.

Faith implies three things.

1. Perception of truth.
2. An interest in it.
3. The committal or giving up of the mind to be interested and controlled by these objects of faith.

Perception of the truth must come first in order, for there can be no belief of unknown and unperceived truth. Next, there must be an interest in the truth which shall wake up the mind to fixed and active attention; and thirdly, there must be a voluntary committal of the mind to the control of truth. The mind must wholly yield itself up to God, to be governed entirely by His will, and to trust Him and Him alone as its own present and eternal portion.

Again, faith receives Christ. The mind first perceives Christ’s character and His relations to us sees what He does for us, and then deeply feeling its own need of such a Savior, and of such a work wrought in and for us as Jesus alone can do, it goes forth to receive and embrace Jesus as its own

Savior. This action of the soul in receiving and embracing Christ is not sluggish it is not a state of dozing quietism. No; it involves the soul's most strenuous activity. And this committal of the soul must become a glorious, living, energizing principle the mind not only perceiving, but yielding itself up with the most fervid intensity to be Christ's and to receive all the benefits of His salvation into our own souls.

Again, faith receives Christ into the soul as King, in all His relations, to rule over the whole being to have our heart's supreme confidence and affection to receive the entire homage of our obedience and adoration; to rule, in short, over us, and fulfil all the functions of supreme King over our whole moral being. Within our very souls we receive Christ to live and energize there, to reign forever there as on His own rightful throne.

Now a great many seem to stop short of this entire and perfect committal of their whole soul to Christ. They stop short perhaps with merely perceiving the truth, satisfied and pleased that they have learned the theory of the Gospel. Or perhaps some go one step further, and stop with being interested with having their feelings excited by the things of the Gospel, thus going only to the second stage; or perhaps they seem to take faith, but not Christ; they think to believe, but after all do not cordially and with all the heart welcome, Christ Himself into the soul.

All these various steps stop short of really taking hold of Christ. They none of them result in giving the victory over the world.

The true Bible doctrine of faith represents Christ as coming into the very soul. "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with Me." What could more forcibly and beautifully teach the doctrine that by faith Christ is introduced into the very soul of the believer to dwell there by His gracious presence?

Since my mind has been drawn to the subject, I have been astonished to see how long I have been in a purblind state of perception in respect to this particular view of faith. Of a long time I had scarcely seen it; now I see it beaming forth in lines of glory on almost every page. The Bible seems to blaze with the glorious truth, Christ in the soul, the hope of glory; God, Christ, dwelling in our body as in a temple. I am amazed that a truth so

rich and so blessed should have been seen so dimly, when the Bible reveals it so plainly. Christ received into the very soul by faith, and thus brought into the nearest possible relations to our heart and life; Christ Himself becoming the all-sustaining Power within us, and thus securing the victory over the world; Christ, living and energizing in our hearts this is the great central truth in the plan of sanctification, and this no Christian should fail to understand, as he values the victory over the world and the living communion of the soul with its Maker.

## REMARKS

**1.** It is in the very nature of the case impossible that if faith receive Christ into the soul, it should not overcome the world. If the new birth actually brings the mind into this new state, and brings Christ into the soul, then, of course, Christ will reign in that soul; the supreme affections will be yielded most delightfully to Him, and the power of the world over that mind will be broken. Christ cannot dwell in any soul without absorbing the supreme interest of that soul. And this is, of course, equivalent to giving the victory over the world.

**2.** He who does not habitually overcome the world is not born of God. In saying this, I do not intend to affirm that a true Christian may not sometimes be overcome by sin; but I do affirm that overcoming the world is the general rule, and falling into sin is only the exception. This is the least that can be meant by the language of our text and by similar declarations which often occur in the Bible. Just as in the passage, "He that is born of God doth not commit sin, and he cannot sin because he is born of God," nothing less can be meant than this that he cannot sin uniformly; cannot make sinning his business, and can sin, if at all, only occasionally and aside from the general current of his life. In the same manner we should say of a man who is in general truthful, that he is not a liar.

I will not contend for more than this respecting either of these passages; but for so much as this I must contend, that the new-born souls here spoken of do in general overcome the world. The general fact respecting them is that they do not sin and are not in bondage to Satan. The

affirmations of Scripture respecting them must at least embrace their general character.

**3.** What is a religion good for that does not overcome the world? What is the benefit of being born into such a religion if it leave the world still swaying its dominion over our hearts? What avails a new birth which after all fails to bring us into a likeness to God, into the sympathies of His family and of His kingdom; which leaves us still in bondage to the world and to Satan? What can there be of such a religion more than the name? With what reason can any man suppose that such a religion fits his heart for heaven, supposing it leaves him earthly- minded, sensual, and selfish.

**4.** We see why it is that infidels have proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to be a failure. You may not be aware that of late infidels have taken the ground that the Gospel of Christ is a failure. They maintain that it professes to bring men out from the world, but fails to do so; and hence is manifestly a failure. Now you must observe that the Bible does indeed affirm, as infidels say, that those who are truly born of God do overcome the world. This we cannot deny, and should not wish to deny it. Now, if the infidel can show that the new birth fails to produce this result, he has carried his point, and we must yield ours. This is perfectly plain, and there can be no escape for us.

But the infidel is in fault in his premises. He assumes the current Christianity of the age as a specimen of real religion, and builds his estimate upon this. He proves, as he thinks, and perhaps proves truly, that the current Christianity does not overcome the world.

We must demur to his assuming this current Christianity as real religion. For this religion of the mass of nominal professors does not answer the descriptions given of true piety in the Word of God. And, moreover, if this current type of religion were all that the Gospel and the Divine Spirit can do for lost man, then we might as well give up the point in controversy with the infidel; for such a religion could not give us much evidence of coming from God, and would be of very little value to man; so little as scarcely to be worth contending for. Truly, if we must take the professedly Christian world as Bible Christians, who would not be ashamed and confounded in attempting to confront the infidel? We know but too well that the great mass of professed Christians do not overcome

the world, and we should be confounded quickly if we were to maintain that they do. Those professed Christians themselves know that they do not overcome the world. Of course they could not testify concerning themselves that in their own case the power of the Gospel is exemplified.

In view of facts like these, I have often been astonished to see ministers setting themselves to persuade their people that they are really converted, trying to lull their fears and sustain their tottering hopes. Vain effort! Those same ministers, it would seem, must know that they themselves do not overcome the world; and equally well must they know that their people do not. How fatal, then, to the soul must be such efforts to “heal the hurt of God’s professed people slightly; crying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace!”

Let us sift this matter to the bottom, pushing the inquiry Do the great mass of professed Christians really overcome the world? It is a fact beyond question that with them the things of this world are the realities, and the things of God are mere theories. Who does not know that this is the real state of great multitudes in the nominal Church?

Let the searching inquiry run through this congregation What are those things that set your soul on fire that stir up your warmest emotions and deeply agitate your nervous system? Are these the things of earth, or the things of heaven? the things of time, or the things of eternity? the things of self, or the things of God?

How is it when you go into your closets? Do you go there to seek and find God? Do you in fact find there a present God, and do you hold communion there as friend with friend? How is this?

Now you certainly should know that if your state is such that spiritual things are mere theories and speculations, you are altogether worldly and nothing more. It would be egregious folly and falsehood to call you spiritual-minded, and for you to think yourselves spiritual would be the most fatal and foolish self-deception. You give none of the appropriate proofs of being born of God. Your state is not that of one who is personally acquainted with God, and who loves Him personally with supreme affection.

**5.** Until we can put away from the minds of men the common error that the current Christianity of the Church is true Christianity, we can make but little progress in converting the world. For in the first place, we cannot save the Church itself from bondage to the world in this life, nor from the direst doom of the hypocrite in the next. We cannot unite and arm the Church in vigorous onset upon Satan's kingdom, so that the world may be converted to God. We cannot even convince intelligent men of the world that our religion is from God, and brings to fallen men a remedy for their depravity. For if the common Christianity of the age is the best that can be, and this does not give men the victory over the world, what is it good for? And if it really is of little worth or none, how can we hope to make thinking men prize it as of great value?

**6.** There are but very few infidels who are as much in the dark as they profess to be on these points. There are very few of that class of men who are not acquainted with some humble Christians, whose lives commend Christianity and condemn their own ungodliness. Of course they know the truth, that there is a reality in the religion of the Bible, and they blind their own eyes selfishly and most foolishly when they try to believe that the religion of the Bible is a failure, and that the Bible is therefore a fabrication. Deep in their heart lies the conviction that here and there are men who are real Christians, who overcome the world and live by a faith unknown to themselves. In how many cases does God set some burning examples of Christian life before those wicked, skeptical men, to rebuke them for their sin and their scepticism perhaps their own wife or their children, their neighbors or their servants. By such means the truth is lodged in their mind, and God has a witness for Himself in their consciences.

I have perhaps before mentioned a fact which occurred at the South, and was stated to me by a minister of the Gospel who was acquainted with the circumstances of the case. There resided in that region a very worldly and a most ungodly man, who held a great slave property, and was withal much given to horse-racing. Heedless of all religion and avowedly sceptical, he gave full swing to every evil propensity. But wicked men must one day see trouble; and this man was taken sick and brought to the very gates of the grave. His weeping wife and friends gather round his bed, and begin to think of having some Christian called in to pray for the dying man's soul. Husband, said the anxious wife, shall I not send for our minister to pray

with you before you die? No, said he, I know him of old; I have no confidence in him; I have seen him too many times at horse-races; there he was my friend and I was his; but I don't want to see him now.

But who shall we get, then? continued the wife. Send for my slave Tom, replied he; he is one of my hostlers. I have often overheard him praying and I know he can pray; besides, I have watched his life and his temper, and I never saw anything in him inconsistent with Christian character; call him in I should be glad to hear him pray.

Tom comes slowly and modestly in, drops his hat at the door, looks on his sick and dying master. Tom, said the dying sceptic, do you ever pray? do you know how to pray? can you pray for your dying master and forgive him? O yes, massa, with all my heart; and drops on his knees and pours out a prayer for his soul.

Now the moral of this story is obvious. Place the sceptic on his dying bed, let that solemn hour arrive, and the inner convictions of his heart be revealed, and he knows of at least one man who is a Christian. He knows one man whose prayers he values more than all the friendship of all his former associates. He knows now that there is such a thing as Christianity; and yet you cannot suppose that he has this moment learned a lesson he never knew before. No, he knew just as much before; an honest hour has brought the inner convictions of his soul to light. Infidels generally know more than they have honesty enough to admit.

**7.** The great error of those who profess religion, but are not born of God is this: they are trying to be Christians without being born of God. They need to have that done to them which is said of Adam, "God breathed into him the breath of life, and he became a living soul." Their religion has in it none of the breath of God: it is a cold, lifeless theory; there is none of the living vitality of God in it. It is perhaps a heartless orthodoxy, and they may take a flattering unction to their hearts that their creed is sound; but do they love that truth which they profess to believe? They think, it may be, that they have zeal, and that their zeal is right and their heart right; but is their soul on fire for God and His cause? Where are they, and what are they doing? Are they spinning out some fond theory, or defending it at the point of the sword? Ah, do they care for souls? Does their heart tremble for the interests of Zion? Do their very nerves quiver under the mighty



power of God's truth? Does their love for God and for souls set their orthodoxy and their creeds on fire so that every truth burns in their souls and glows forth from their very faces? If so, then you will not see them absent from the prayer-meetings; but you will see that divine things take hold of their soul with overwhelming interest and power. You will see them living Christians, burning and shining lights in the world. Brethren, it cannot be too strongly impressed on every mind, that the decisive characteristic of true religion is energy, not apathy: that its vital essence is life, not death.

# DEATH TO SIN THROUGH CHRIST

*“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:11.*

THE connection of this passage will help us to understand its meaning. Near the close of the previous chapter Paul had said, “The law entered that the offence might abound; but 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.” He speaks here of sin as being a reigning principle or monarch, and of grace also as reigning. Then, in chapter vi., he proceeds, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

You observe here that Paul speaks of the man, the old sinner, as being crucified with Christ, so destroyed by the moral power of the Cross that he who was once a sinner shall no longer serve sin. When he speaks of our being planted or buried with Christ, we must of course understand him as employing figures of speech to teach the great truth that the Gospel redeems the soul from sin. As Christ died for sin, so by a general analogy we die to sin; while, on the other hand, as He rose to a new and infinitely glorious life, so the convert rises to a new and blessed life of purity and holiness.

But recurring particularly to our text, let me say The language used in our translation would seem to denote that our death to sin is precisely analogous to Christ’s death for sin; but this is not the case. We are dead to sin in the sense that it is no longer to be our master, implying that it has been in power over us. But sin never was in power over Jesus Christ never was His master. Christ died to abolish its power over us not to abolish any power of sin over Himself, for it had none. The analogy between Christ’s death in relation to sin and our dying to sin, goes to this extent and no farther: He died for the sake of making an atonement for sin and of creating

a moral power that should be effective to kill the love of sin in all hearts; but the Christian dies unto sin in the sense of being divorced from all sympathy with sin and emancipated from its control.

But I must proceed to remark upon the text itself, and shall inquire,

- I. WHAT IT IS TO BE DEAD UNTO SIN IN THE SENSE OF THE TEXT.**
- II. WHAT IT IS TO BE ALIVE UNTO GOD.**
- III. WHAT IT IS TO RECKON OURSELVES TO BE DEAD UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.**
- IV. WHAT IT IS TO BE ALIVE UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. V. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE EXHORTATION OF OUR TEXT.**

## **I. WHAT IT IS TO BE DEAD UNTO SIN IN THE SENSE OF THE TEXT**

Being dead to sin must obviously be the opposite of being dead in sin. The latter must undeniably be a state of entire sinfulness a state in which the soul is dead to all good through the power of sin over it. But right over against this, to be dead to sin, must be to be indifferent to its attractions beyond the reach of its influence as fully removed from its influences as the dead are from the objects of sense in this world. As he who is dead in the natural sense has nothing more to do with earthly things, so he who is dead to sin has nothing to do any more with sin's attractions or with sinning itself.

## **II. WHAT IS IT TO BE ALIVE UNTO GOD?**

To be full of life for Him to be altogether active and on the alert to do His will; to make our whole lives a perpetual offering to Him, constantly delivering up ourselves to Him and His service that we may glorify His name and subserve His interests.

### III. WHAT IS IT TO RECKON OURSELVES DEAD INDEED UNTO HIM?

The word rendered reckon is sometimes rendered account. Abraham's faith was accounted unto him for righteousness. So, in this passage, reckon must mean believe, esteem yourselves dead indeed unto sin. Account this to be the case. Regard this as truly your relation to sin; you are entirely dead to it; it shall have no more dominion over you.

A careful examination of the passages where this original word is used will show that this is its usual and natural sense. And this gives us the true idea of Gospel faith embracing personally the salvation which is by faith in Jesus Christ. But more of this hereafter.

### IV. WHAT IS MEANT BY RECKONING YOURSELVES ALIVE INDEED UNTO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST?

Plainly this: that you are to expect to be saved by Jesus Christ and to calculate on this salvation as your own. You are to esteem yourself as wholly dead to sin and as consequently brought into life and peace in Christ Jesus.

### V. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE EXHORTATION OF OUR TEXT?

That there is an adequate provision for this expectation, and for realizing these blessings in fact. For if there were no ground for realization this, the injunction would be most absurd. A precept requiring us to account ourselves dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God, would be utterly untenable if there were no probability of the thing if no provision were made for our coming into such relations to Sin on the one hand and to God through Christ on the other. For if these blessings could not be reasonably expected, there could be no rational ground for the expectation. If it were not reasonable to expect it, then to enjoin us to expect it would be

palpably unreasonable. Who does not see that the very injunction implies that there is a foundation laid and adequate provision made for the state required?

What is implied in complying with this injunction

**1.** Believing such a thing to be possible. Believing it possible that through Christ we may live in the required manner, that we may avoid sin desist from sinning give it up and abandon it altogether, and put it forever away. There can be no such thing as an intelligent compliance with this precept, except as there shall underlie it this belief in its practicability.

A state actually made practicable by adequate grace, adapted to the laws of mind and to the actual moral condition of lost men.

**2.** That we cease from all expectation of attaining this state of ourselves, and by our own independent, unaided efforts. There is no beginning to receive by grace till we renounce all expectation of attaining by natural works. It is only when empty of self that we begin to be filled of Christ.

**3.** A present willingness to be saved from sin. We must actually renounce all sin as such that is, renounce sin because it is sin, and for what it is. This position the mind must take: I can have nothing more to do with sinning for God hates sin, and I am to live henceforth and for ever to please and glorify Him. My soul is committed with its utmost strength of purpose to this pleasing of God and doing His will.

**4.** It implies also an entire committal of your whole case to Jesus Christ, not only for present, but for all future salvation from sin. This is absolutely essential. It must always be the vital step the cardinal act in this great work of salvation from sin.

**5.** It implies also the foreclosing of the mind against temptation, in such a sense that the mind truly expects to live a life purely devoted to God. This is the same sort of foreclosing of the mind as takes place under a faithful marriage contract. The Bible everywhere keeps this figure prominent. Christians are represented as the bride of Christ. They stand in a relation to Him which is closely analogous to that of a bride to her husband. Hence when they commit their whole hearts to Him, reposing their affections in Him, and trusting Him for all good, their hearts are strongly foreclosed

against temptation. The principle here involved, we see illustrated in the merely human relation. When parties are solemnly betrothed in mutual honest fidelity, there is no longer any thought of letting the eye rove or the heart go abroad for a fresh object of interest and love. The heart is fixed willingly and by plighted faith fixed, and this fact shuts out the power of temptation almost entirely. It renders it comparatively an easy matter to keep the heart safely above the influence of temptation to apostasy. Before the sacred vows are taken, individuals may be excused for looking round and making any observations or inquiries: but never after the solemn vow is made. After the parties have become one by vow of marriage, never to be broken, there is to be no more question as to a better choice no further thought about changing the relation or withdrawing the heart's affections. No wavering is admissible now; the pledge is made for everlasting faithfulness, settled once and forever! This is God's own illustration, and surely none need be more apt or more forcible. It shows how the Christian should look upon sin and upon all temptation to sin. He must say, Away from my heart for ever! I am married to Jesus Christ; how then can I look after other lovers? My mind is forever settled. It rests in the deep repose of one whose affections are plighted and fixed to rove no more! Sin? I can think of yielding to its seductions no longer. I cannot entertain the question for a moment. I can have nothing to do with sinning. My mind is settled the question forever foreclosed, and I can no more admit the temptation to small sins than to great sins no more consent to give my heart to worldly idols than to commit murder! I did not enter upon religion as upon an experiment, to see how I might like it no more, than a wife or husband take on themselves the marriage vow as an experiment. No; my whole soul has committed itself to Jesus Christ with as much expectation of being faithful forever as the most faithful husband and wife have of fulfilling their vows in all fidelity till death shall part them.

Christians in this state of mind no more expect to commit small sins than great sins. Hating all sin for its own sake and for its hatefulness to Christ, any sin, however small, is to them as murder. Hence if the heart is ever afterwards seduced and overcome by temptation, it is altogether contrary to their expectation and purpose; it was not embraced in their plan by any means, but was distinctly excluded; it was not deliberately indulged

aforetime, but broke on them unexpectedly through the vantage ground of old habits or associations.

Again, the state of mind in question implies that the Christian knows where his great strength lies. He knows it does not lie in works of fasting, giving alms, making prayers, doing public duties or private duties nothing of this sort; not even in resolutions or any self-originated efforts, but only in Christ received by faith. He no more expects spiritual life of himself apart from Christ, than a man in his senses would expect to fly by swinging his arms in the air. Deep in his soul lies the conviction that his whole strength lies in Christ alone.

When men are so enlightened as truly to apprehend this subject, then to expect less than this from Jesus Christ as the result of committing the whole soul to Him for full salvation, is virtually to reject Him as a revealed Savior. It does not honor Him for what He is; it does not honor the revelations He has made of Himself in His word by accepting Him as there presented. For consider, what is the first element of this salvation? Not being saved from hell, but being saved from sin. Salvation from punishment is quite a secondary thing, in every sense. It is only a result of being saved from sin, and not the prime element in the Gospel salvation. Why was the infant Messiah to be called Jesus? Because He should save His people from their sins. And does the Bible anywhere teach any other or different view from this?

## REMARKS

**1.** This text alone, “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ” most entirely justifies the expectation of living without sin through all-abounding grace. If there were no other passage bearing on this point, this alone is adequate, and for a Christian to offer this only as a reason for such a hope in Him is to offer as good a reason as need be given. There are indeed many others that fully justify this expectation.

**2.** To teach that such an expectation is a dangerous error is to teach unbelief. What if the apostle had added to this injunction which requires us to account ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, this singular

avertment: “Yet let me warn you, nobody can rationally hope to be free from sin in this world. You must remember that to entertain such an expectation as God enjoins in this language is a dangerous error.” What should be thought of this if it were attached to Rom. vi. 11?

No man can deny that the passage treats of sanctification. The whole question is, Shall Christians “continue in sin” after having been forgiven and accepted in their Redeemer? Paul labors to show that they should, and of course that they may die to sin even as Christ died for sin; and may also live a new, a spiritual life (through faith in His grace), even as Christ does a higher and more glorious life.

Let me refer here to another passage, in which it is said he not unequally yoked with unbelievers what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

“Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”-2 Corinthians 6:11-18, and 7:1.

This is a very remarkable passage. Note how precept and promise are intermingled, and how, finally, upon the basis of a most glorious promise, is founded the precept enjoining us to perfect holiness. Now what should we think of Paul and of the Divine Spirit who spake through Paul, if He had immediately subjoined, “Take care lest any of you should be led by these remarks to indulge the very dangerous and erroneous expectation that you can “perfect holiness,” or cleanse yourselves from any sin, either of flesh or spirit, in this world? “Would not this have been trifling with the intelligence and Christian sensibility of every reader of his words throughout all time? Should we not account it as substantially blasphemous?

It so happens that the Bible never gainsays its own teachings; but I ask What if it had? What if the Bible had solemnly asserted, “No mere man, either of himself or by any grace received in this life, has ever kept or shall



ever keep the commandments of God wholly, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed?

To teach that such an expectation is dangerous is a great deal worse than no teaching at all. Far better to leave men to their own unaided reading of God's word, for this could scarcely in any case so sadly mislead them, however inclined they might be to the misapprehension. Dangerous to expect salvation from sin? Dangerous? What does this mean? What! Dangerous to expect victory over any sin? If so, what is the Gospel worth? What Gospel have we that can be deemed good news at all?

Many indulge the very opposite expectation. Far from expecting any such thing as the apostle authorizes them to expect, they know they have no such expectation.

Of some yet more than this is true they expect to count themselves always in sin. They depend on reckoning themselves, not dead indeed unto sin, but somewhat alive to it through all their mortal life, and in part alive to God through Jesus Christ. It follows as quite a thing of course that expecting no such thing as complete victory over sin they will use no appropriate means, since faith stands foremost among those means, and faith must include at least a confidence that the thing sought is possible to be attained.

In this and the following chapters we have the essence of the good news of the Gospel. Any one who has been wounded and made sore by sin its bitter shafts sinking deep into his moral being—one who has known its bitterness and felt the poison thereof drink up his spirit such an one will see that there is glory in the idea of being delivered from sin. He, will surely see that this deliverance is by far the greatest want of his soul, and that nothing can be compared with escaping from this body of sin and death. Look at Romans 7 There you will have the state of a man who is more than convinced, who is really convicted. It is one thing to be convinced, and a yet further stage of progress in the right direction to be convicted. This term implies the agency of another party. The criminal at the bar may be quite convinced of his guilt by the view he was compelled to take of his own case; but his being convicted is a still further step; the testimony and the jury convict him.

Some of you know what it is to see yourself a sinner, and yet the sight of the fact brings with it no smart no sting; it does not cut deep into your very soul. On the other hand, some of you may know what it is to see your sins all armed like an armed man to pierce you through and through with daggers. Then you cry out as here O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? You feel a piercing sting as if your soul were filled with poison with dark rankling venom, diffusing through the depths of your soul the very agonies of hell! This is what I mean by being convicted, as a state of mind beyond being merely convinced. The shafts and the smiting of sin seem really like the piercings of an arrow, as if arrows from the Almighty did really drink up your spirit. When you experience this, then you can understand what the good news of the Gospel is. A remedy for such pangs must be good news beyond all contradiction. Then to know that the blood of Christ can save, is indeed a cordial of life to the fainting soul.

Place a man in this state of cutting, piercing conviction, and then let him feel that there is actually no remedy, and he sinks under the iron shafts of despair. See his agony! Tell him there can never be any remedy for his guilty soul! You must lie there in you wailing and despair forever! Can any state of mind be more awful?

I remember a case that occurred in Reading, Pa., many years ago. There was a man of hard heart and iron frames strong, burly man, who had stood up against the revival as if he could shake off all the arrows of the Almighty, even as the Mastodon of which the tradition of the red man says, He shook off all the arrows of the warriors from his brow and felt no harm. So he stood. But he had a praying wife and a praying sister, and they gathered their souls in the might of prayer close about him as a party of men would hem in a wild bull in a net.

Soon it was apparent that an arrow from the quiver of the Almighty had pierced between the joints of his harness and had taken hold of his innermost heart. O, was not he in agony then! It was night dark and intensely cold. It seemed that absolutely he could not live. They sent for me to come and see him. I went. While yet sixty rods from his house I heard his screams and wailings of woe. It made me feel awfully solemn so like the echoes of the pit of hell! I reached the house: there he lay on the

floor rolling in his agony and wailing, such as is rarely heard this side the pit of despair. Cold as the weather was, he sweat like rain, every part of his frame being in a most intense perspiration. Oh, his groans! and to see him gnaw his very tongue for pain this could not but give one some idea of the doom of the damned. O, said I, if this be only conviction, what is hell? But he could not bear to hear anything about sin; his conscience was already full of it, and had brought out the awful things of God's law so as to leave nothing more to be done in that direction. I could only put Christ before him, and just hold his mind to the view of Christ alone. This soon brought relief. But suppose I had nothing else to say but this, "Mr. B., there is no help possible for your case! You can wail on and wail on: no being in the universe can help you?" Need you say to him hell has no fire? Oh, he has fire enough in his burning soul already. It seems to him that no hell of fire can possibly be worse than this.

How perfectly chilling and horrible for persons to oppose the idea of expecting deliverance from sin and yet talk calmly of going on in sin all the rest of their earthly days! As an elder whom I knew rose in meeting and told the Lord he had been living in sin thus far, and expected to go on in sin as long as he lived; he had sinned today and should doubtless sin tomorrow and so on and yet he talked as calmly about it all as if it were foolish to make any ado, as well as impossible to attempt any change for the better. Talk of all this calmly think of that! Quite calmly of living alone in sin all the rest of his days! How horrible! Suppose a wife should say to her husband, "I love you some, but you know I love many other men too, and that I find it pleasant to indulge myself with them. You certainly must be aware that all women are frail creatures, and liable to fall continually, and indeed you know that I expect to fall more or less, as it may happen, every day I live, so that you certainly will not expect from me anything so impracticable and fanatical as unblemished virtue! You know we have none of us any idea of being perfect in the present life we don't believe in any such thing!"

Now let me ask you to look at this woman and hear what she has to say. Can you hear her talk so, without having your soul filled with horror? What! is this woman a wife, and does she think and talk in this way about conjugal fidelity?

And yet this is not to be compared in shacking guilt and treason with the case of the Christian who says, "I expect to sin every day I live," and who says this with unmoved carelessness. You expect to be a traitor to Jesus each day of your life; to crucify Him afresh each day; to put Him each day to an open shame; each day to dishonor His name, and grieve His heart, and to bring sorrow and shame upon all who love Christ's cause; and yet you talk about having a good hope through grace! But tell me, does not every true Christian say, "Do not let me live at all if I cannot live without sin; for how can I bear to go on day by day sinning against Him whom I so much love!"

Those who are really opposed to this idea, are either very ignorant of what the Gospel is, or they are impenitent and of course do not care to be delivered from their sins; or at best they are guilty of great unbelief. Into which of these classes the opposers of the doctrine may fall, is a question for themselves to settle, as between their own consciences and their God.

There are two distinct views of salvation entertained among professed Christians, and correspondingly two distinct classes of professors often embraced within the same church. The one class regard the Gospel as a salvation from sin. They think more of this and value it more than the hope of heaven, or of earth either.

The great thing with them is to realize the idea of deliverance from sin. This constitutes the charm and glory of the Gospel. They seek this more than to be saved from hell. They care more by far to be saved from sin itself than from its penal consequences. Of the latter they think and pray but little. It is their glory and their joy that Christ is sent to deliver them from their bondage in iniquity to lift them up from their wretched state and give them the liberty of love. This they labor to realize; this is to them the good news of Gospel salvation.

The other clam are mostly anxious to be saved from hell. The punishment due for sin is the thing they chiefly fear. In fact, fear has been mainly the spring of their religious efforts. The Gospel is not thought of as a means of deliverance from sin, but as a great system of indulgences a vast accommodation to take off the fear and danger of damnation, while yet it leaves them in their sin. Now, here I do not by any means imply that they will call their system of Gospel faith a scheme of indulgences: the name

doubtless will be an offence to them. They may not have distinctly considered this point, and may have failed to notice that in fact it is such and nothing better.

They seem not to notice that a scheme of salvation that removes the fear of damnation for sin, and which yet leaves them in their sins to live for themselves, to please themselves, and which holds that Christ will at last bring them to heaven notwithstanding their having lived in sin all their days, must be a vast scheme of indulgences. Indeed, it is a compromise on a most magnificent scale. By virtue of it, the whole Church is expected to wallow on in sin through life, and be none the less sure of heaven at last.

These opposite views are so prevalent and so palpable you will see them everywhere as you go round among the churches. You will find many in the Church who are altogether worldly and selfish; who live conformed to the world in various neglects of duty, and who expect to indulge themselves in sin more or less all the way through life. You may ask them Do you think that is right? They answer No. Why, then, do you do it? Oh, we are all imperfect, and we can't expect to be any better than imperfect, while here in the flesh. Yet they expect to be saved at last from hell, and to have all their sins forgiven; but how? Not on condition of sincerely turning away from all their sins, but on the assumption that the Gospel is a vast system of indulgences more vast by far than Pope Leo X. ever wielded and worked to comfort sinning professors in his day. For here are not merely those that sin occasionally as there, but those who live in sin and know they do, and expect they shall as long, as they live, yet expect to be saved without fail at last.

The other class of professed Christians have no expectation of being saved only as they have a pure heart and live above the world. Talk to them about living in sin, they hate and dread the very thought. To them the poison of asps is in it. Sin is bitter to their souls. They dread it as they dread death itself

No one can go round within this church or any other without finding these two classes as distinct in their apprehension of the Gospel as I have described them to be. The one clam are in agony if they find themselves even slipping, and they are specially cautious against exposing themselves to temptation.

Not so with the other class. Two ministers of the Gospel being together, one urged the other strongly to engage in a certain service. The other declined. "Why not go?" said the first. "Because I do not think myself justified in exposing myself to such and so much temptation."

"But why stop for that? We expect to sin more or less always; and all we have to do is to repent of it afterwards."

Horror-smitten, the other could only say, "I hold to a, different Gospel from that altogether."

Suppose a wife should say to her husband, "I am determined I will go to the theater." "But, my dear," says he, "you know bad people congregate there, and you may be tempted." But she replies, "Never mind; if I sin I will repent of it afterwards."

The real Christian may be known by this, that the very thought of being drawn into sin drives him to agony. He cannot bear the idea of living in sin; no, not for one moment.

The young people here who are truly Christians, are careful about this ensuing vacation. You will be on your guard, for you are afraid you may be ensnared into sin. I do not mean that you need fear to go where God calls you, but it is a terrible thing to be ensnared into sin, and you cannot but feel it to be so. If you know what it is to be wounded by the arrows of sin in your soul, you will go abroad into apparent danger, walking softly and with caution, and much prayer. You "will surely be much on your guard. But if you say, "Oh, if I sin I will repent," what shall I say of you? You will repent will you? And this will make all right again so easily? Suppose you foresaw that in going abroad for vacation you would get drunk a few times, and would commit one or two murders, would you say, "Oh, I may be a good Christian notwithstanding. I will be careful to repent of it after it is all over." Horrible! And yet you can think yourself a good Christian! Let me tell you, a Christian man who repents of sin, repents of it as sin. He makes no such discriminations as between a little secret sin and a great sin for example, a murder. He knows no such distinction between sins as will leave him to commit the one class without scruple and to shrink from the other. With him anything that grieves God is a horrible thing. Anything

that displeases God, "Ah," he cries out, "God will see it; it will grieve His heart!" How it will affect God this is all in all with him.

One who knows what it is to appear guilty of sin before God, and then who knows also what it is to be delivered from this condition, will understand how the Christian ought to feel in circumstances of temptation, where he feels himself in danger of sinning. His hair all stands on end! How awful to sin against God! Hence, anything that seems likely to, bring him into danger will rouse up all his soul within him, and put him on his guard.

The unbelief of the Church as to what they may receive from Christ is the great stumbling-block, hindering themselves and others from experiencing deliverance. Not only is this a great curse to professed Christians, but it is also a great grief to Jesus Christ and a sore trial.

Many seem to have hardened their hearts against all expectation of this deliverance from sin. They have heard the doctrine preached. They have seen some profess to be in this state of salvation from sin, but they have also seen some of this class fall again, and now they deliberately reject the whole doctrine. But is this consistent with really embracing the Gospel? What is Christ to the believer? What was His errand into the world? What is He doing, and what is He trying to do?

He has come to break the power of sin in the heart, and to be the life of the believer, working in him a perpetual salvation from sin, aiming to bring him thus, and only thus, to heaven at last. What is faith? what but the actual giving of yourself up to Christ that He may do this work for you and in you? What are you to believe of Christ if not this, that He is to save His people from their sins? Can you tell of anything else? Does the Bible tell you to expect something different and less than this? The fact is, that it has been the great stumbling-block to the Church that this thing has not been well understood. The common experience of nominal Christians has misrepresented and belied the truth. The masses forming their views much more from this experience than from the Bible, or at best applying this experience to interpret the Bible, have adopted exceedingly defective, not to say false, opinions as to the nature and design of the Gospel. They seem to forget altogether that Paul, writing to Christians at Rome, assures them that if they are under grace, sin shall not have dominion over them.

When Christians do not expect this blessing from Christ, they will not get it. While they expect so little as they usually do, no wonder they get so little. According to their faith, and not ever very much beyond it, need they expect to receive.

It is often the case that sanctification is held as a theory, while the mind does not yet by any means embrace the truth in love. The due is analogous to that of impenitent sinners who hold in theory that they must have a new heart. They profess to believe thus, but do they really understand it? No. Suppose it were revealed to their minds so that they should really see it as it is, would they not see a new thing? Would they not be startled to see how utterly far they are, while impenitent, from being acceptable to God, and how great the change they must experience before they can enter the kingdom? So of sanctification. Although this class of persons profess to hold it in theory, yet the passages of Scripture which describe it do not enter into their experience. They do not see the whole truth. If they were to see the whole truth, and should then reject it, I believe it would be in them the unpardonable sin. When the Spirit of God discloses to them the real meaning of the Gospel, then if they deliberately reject it, how can the sin be less than what the Scriptures represent as the unpardonable sin? Having once been enlightened, and having received the knowledge of the truth that they might be saved, then turning back, is it not thenceforth impossible that they should be renewed again to repentance? One thing, at least, must be said, there is a peril which many of the professed Christians of our day seem not to realize, in having so much light before the mind as they actually have in regard to the provisions made in the Gospel for present sanctification, and then in rejecting this light practically and living still in sin as if the Gospel made no provision to save the Christian from his sins. Into this awful peril how many rush blindly and to their own destruction!



# THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

*“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness,  
for they shall be filled.” Matthew 5:6.*

THERE are a great many things in the experience of Christians, which, traced out in their natural history, are exceeding interesting. I have been struck to notice how very commonly what is peculiar to Christian experience drops out of the mind; while that which is merely incidental remains, and constitutes the mind’s entire conception of what religion is. Their way of talking of their experience leaves you quite in the dark as to its genuineness, even when they propose to give you especially the reasons of their hope.

My design is first to state some of the facts which belong to the life of God in the soul.

**1.** Hunger and thirst are states of mind, and do not belong to the body. They are of two kinds, natural and spiritual. The objects on which the natural terminates are food and drink. By our very constitution these are necessary to our well-being in the present world. These appetites are natural and terminate on their appropriate objects.

There are also spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst, which are as truly natural as the former. It is no more a figure of speech to use these terms in this case than in the other.

The appetites that demand food and drink are facts and experiences. Everybody knows what it is to have them, and everybody knows in general what those things are which are so related to the human constitution as to meet those demands.

So also the spiritual appetites are not less things of fact and experience, and stand in like manner related to the objects which are adapted to the demand.

**2.** Sin is a fact in the natural history of our race. That it is so, must be attributed to the fall of our first parents. Yet whatever explanation be given of the introduction of sin into the human family, it now exists as an undeniable fact.

Some attention to the manner in which sin is first developed, may serve to show its relations to what I have called the natural history of the race.

We all know it to be a fact that the natural appetites commence their development immediately after the natural birth. The first awakening to a conscious existence in this world seems to be, if not occasioned by, yet closely connected with, a constitutional demand for food. The alternations of demand and supply commence and go on while health continues all the time developing the strength of this class of appetites. Commonly the natural make their development far in advance of the spiritual.

Not much is said in the Bible as to the mode in which sin entered our world and acquired such relations to the human soul, but it is distinctly referred to Adam's first sin, and is asserted to be in some way connected with that event. Facts show that sin has become in a most significant sense natural to the race, so that they all spontaneously, not of necessity, yet spontaneously, if no special grace interpose, begin to sin as soon as they begin to act morally, or in other words, as soon as they become capable of moral action.

Not that men are born sinners, not that they sin before they are born, not that sin is born in them, nor that they are beyond their control born into sin; but yet the constitution of the man body and mind is such, and the law of development is such, that men sin naturally (none the less voluntarily, responsibly, and guiltily), but they all sin of free choice; the temptations to sin being developed in advance of those intellectual and moral powers which should counteract the excessive demands of the sensibility. Mark the developments of the new-born child. Some pain or some appetite awakens its consciousness of existence, and thus is created a demand for the things it perceives itself to need. Then the little infant begins to struggle for good for that particular good which its new-developed sensibility demands. Want, the struggling demand for supply, and the gratification, form a process of development which gives such Rower to the sensibility as generates ere long an intense selfishness; and before the

conscience and the reason are perceptibly developed, have laid the foundation for spiritual death. If the Spirit of God does not excite spiritual wants and arouse the mind to efforts in obtaining them, the mind becomes so engrossed and its sensibilities acquire such habits of control over the will, that when the idea of right and wrong is first developed the mind remains dead to its demands. The appetites have already secured the ascendancy. The mind seems to act as if scarcely aware that it has a soul or any spiritual wants. The spiritual consciousness is at first not developed at all. The mind seems not to know its spiritual relations. When this knowledge first forces itself upon the mind, it finds the ground pre-occupied, the habits fixed, the soul too much engaged for earthly good to be called off. The tendency of this law of development is altogether downward; the appetites become more and more despotic and imperious; the mind has less and less regard for God. The mind comes into a state in which spiritual truth frets and chafes it, and of course it thoroughly inclines to spiritual apathy choosing apathy, though not unaware of its danger before the perpetual annoyance of unwelcome truths. This tends toward a state of dead insensibility to spiritual want.

The first symptom of change is the soul's awaking to spiritual consequences. Sometimes this is feeble at first, or sometimes it may be more strongly aroused to its spiritual relations, position, and wants. This brings on anxiety, desire, a deed sense of what the soul truly needs. From this arises an influence which begins to counteract the power of appetite. It begins to operate as a balance and check to those long unrestrained demands.

Here you may notice that just in proportion as the spiritual consciousness is developed, the mind becomes wretched, for in this proportion the struggle becomes intense and violent. Before, the man was dead. He was like an animal as to the unchecked indulgence of appetite above the mere animal in some things, but below in others. He goes on without that counteracting influence which arises from the spiritual consciousness. You see some who live a giddy, aimless life. They seem not at all aware that they have a spiritual nature or any spiritual wants. When they awake to spiritual consciousness and reflection, conviction produces remorse and agony. This spiritual struggle, at whatever age it may occur, is in its general

character the same as occurs in the infant when its spiritual consciousness is first awakened.

It is but natural that when the spiritual faculties are aroused, men will begin to pray and struggle under a deep sense of being wrong and guilty. At first this may be entirely selfish. But before conversion takes place, there will be a point in which the counter influences of the selfish against the spiritual will balance each other, and then the spiritual will gain the ascendancy. The animal and the selfish must relatively decline and the spiritual gain strength, till victory turns on the side of the spiritual powers. How commonly do you observe that when the mind becomes convicted of sin, the attractions of the world fade away; all it can give looks small; sinners can no longer take the pleasure in worldly things they once had. Indeed, this is a most curious and singular struggle. How rapid and great are the changes through which the sinner passes!

Today, he quenches the light of God in his soul, and gropes on in darkness; tomorrow the light may return and reveal yet greater sin; one day he relapses back to worldliness, and gives up his soul to his own thoughts and pleasures; but ere another has passed, there is bitterness in this cup and he loathes it, and from his soul cries out: This can never satisfy an immortal mind! Now he begins to practice upon external reformation; but anon he finds that this utterly fails to bring peace to his soul. He is full of trouble and anxiety for salvation, yet all his struggles thus far have been entirely selfish, and ere he is converted he must see this to be the case. He is in a horrible pit of miry clay. The more he struggles the deeper he sinks and the more desperate his case becomes. Selfish efforts for spiritual relief are just like a quagmire of thick clay. Each struggle plunges the sinking man the deeper in the pit. The convicted man is ready to put himself to hard labor and mighty effort. At first he works with great hope of success, for he does not readily understand why selfish efforts will not be successful. He prays, but all in a selfish spirit. By this I mean that he thinks only of himself. He has no thought of honoring or pleasing God no thought of any benefit to his fellow-beings. He does not inquire whether his course of life and state of heart are such that God can bless him without detriment to the rest of His great family. In fact, he does not think of caring for the rest of that family nor for the honor of its great Father. Of course, such selfish praying brings no answer; and when he finds this to be the case, he frets

and struggles more than ever. Now he goes on to add to his works and efforts. He attends more meetings, and reads his Bible more, and tries new forms of prayer, All is in vain. His heart is selfish still. What can I do? he cries Out in agony; if I pray I am selfish, and if I desist from prayer, this too is selfish; if I read my Bible or neglect to read it, each alike is selfish, and what can I do? How can I help being selfish?

Alas, he has no idea of acting from any other or higher motive than his own interests. It is his darkness on this very point that makes the sinner's struggle so long and so unprofitable. This is the reason why he can not be converted at once, and why he must needs sink and flounder so much longer in the quagmire of unavailing and despairing works. It is only when he comes at last to see that all this avails nothing, that he begins to take some right views of his case and of his relations. When he learns that indeed he can not work out his own salvation by working at it on this wise he bethinks himself to inquire whether he be not all wrong, at bottom whether his motives of heart are not radically corrupt. Looking round and abroad, he begins to ask whether God may not have some interests and some rights as well as himself. Who is God and where is He? Who is Jesus Christ and what has He done? What did He die for? Is God a great King over all the earth, and should He not have due honor and homage? Was it this great God who so loved the world as to give His Son to die for it? O, I see I have quite neglected to think of God's interests and honor! Now I see how infinitely mean and wicked I have been! Plainly enough, I can not live so. No wonder God did not hear my selfish prayers. There was no hope in that sort of effort, for I had, as I plainly see, no regard to God in anything I was doing then. How reasonable it is that God should ask me to desist from all my selfish endeavors and to put away this selfishness itself, and yield myself entirely and forever to do or suffer all His blessed will!

It is done; and now this long-troubled soul sinks into deep repose. It settles itself down at Jesus' feet, content if only Christ be honored and God's throne made glorious. The final result whether saved or lost seems to give him no longer that agonizing solicitude; the case is submitted to the Great Disposer in trustful humility. God will do all things well. If He takes due care of His own interests and glory, there will be no complaining - nothing but deep and peaceful satisfaction.

In the case of most young converts, this state of peaceful trust in God is subject to interruptions. The natural appetites have been denied their dominion over the will disowned; but they are not dead. By and by they rise to assert their sway. They clamor for indulgence, and sometimes they get it. Alas, the young convert has fallen into sin! His soul is again in bondage and sorrow.

O, how deeply is he mortified to think that he has again given away to temptation, and pierced the bosom on which he loved to recline! He had promised himself he should never sin, but he has sinned, and well for him if he finds no heart to evade or deny the fact. Better admit it all, and most freely, although it wounds his heart more than all his former sins. Mark his agony of spirit! His tears of repentance were never before so bitter! He feels disappointed, and it almost seems to him that this failure must blast all his plans and hopes of leading a Christian life. It does not work as he thought it would. He feels shy of God; for he says, How can God ever trust me again after such developments of unfaithfulness. He can hardly get himself to say a word to God or to Christ. He is almost sure that he has been deceived. But finally he bethinks himself of the Cross of Calvary, and catches a faint ray of light a beam of the light of love. He says, There may be mercy for me yet! I will at least go to Jesus and see, Again he goes, and again he falls into those arms of love and is made consciously welcome. The light of God shines on his soul again, and he find himself once more an accepted son in his Father's presence.

But here a new form of desire is awakened. He has learned something of his own weakness and has tasted the bitterness of sin. With an agony of interest never known before, he asks, Can I ever become established in holiness? Can I have righteousness enough to make me stand in the evil day? This is a new form of spiritual desire, such as our text expresses in the words "hunger and thirst after righteousness."

These extended remarks are only an introduction to my general subject. designed to get before your mind the true idea of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. This state of mind is not merely conviction; it is not remorse, nor sorrow, nor a struggle to obtain a hope or to get out of danger. All these feelings may have preceded, but the hungering after righteousness is none of these. It is a longing desire to realize the idea of spiritual and

moral purity. He has in some measure appreciated the purity of heaven, and the necessity of being himself as pure as the holy there, in order to enjoy their bliss and breathe freely in their atmosphere.

This state of mind is not often developed by writers, and it seems rarely to have engaged the attention of the Church as its importance demands.

When the mind gets a right view of the atmosphere of heaven, it sees plainly it can not breathe there, but must be suffocated, unless its own spirit is congenial to the purity of that world. I remember the case of a man who, after living a Christian life for a season, relapsed into sin. At length God reclaimed His wandering child. When I next saw him, and heard him speak of his state of relapse, he turned suddenly away and burst into tears, saying, "I have been living in sin, almost choked to death in its atmosphere; it seemed as if I could not breathe in it. It almost choked the breath of spiritual life from my system."

Have not some of you known what this means? You could not bear the infernal atmosphere of sin so like the very smoke of the pit! After you get out of it, you say, Let me never be there again! Your soul agonizes and struggles to find some refuge against this awful relapsing into sin. O, you long for a pure atmosphere and a pure heart, that will never hold fellowship with darkness or its works again.

The young convert, like the infant child, may not at first distinctly apprehend its own condition and wants; but such experience as I have been detailing develops the idea of perfect purity, and then the soul longs for it with longings irrepressible. I must, says the now enlightened convert, I must be drawn into living union with God as revealed in Jesus Christ. I can not rest till I find God, and have Him revealed to me as my everlasting refuge and strength.

Some years since, I preached a sermon for the purpose of developing the idea of the spiritual life. The minister for whom I preached said to me, I want to show you a letter written many years ago by a lady now in advanced age, and detailing her remarkable experience on this subject. After her conversion she found herself exceedingly weak, and often wondered if this was all the stability and strength she could hope for from Christ in His Gospel. Is this, she said, all that God can do for me? Long time and with

much prayer she examined her Bible. At last she found, that below what she had ever read and examined before, there lay a class of passages which revealed the real Gospel salvation from sinning. She saw the provisions of the Gospel in full relief. Then she shut herself up, determined to seek this blessing till she should find. Her soul went forth after God, seeking communion with Him, and the great blessing which she so deeply felt that she needed. She had found the needed promises in God's Word, and now she held on upon them as if she could not let them go until they had all been fulfilled in her own joyful experience. She cried mightily to God. She said, "If Thou dost not give me this blessing, I can never believe Thee again." In the issue the Lord showed her that the provisions were already made, and were just as full and as glorious as they needed to be or could be, and that she might receive them by faith if she would. In fact, it was plain that the Spirit of the Lord was pressing upon her acceptance, so that she had only to believe to open wide her mouth that it might be filled. She saw and obeyed: then she became firm and strong. Christ had made her free. She was no longer in bondage; her Lord had absolutely enlarged her soul in faith and love, and triumphantly she could exclaim: Glory be to god! Christ hath made me free.

The state of mind expressed by hungering and thirsting is a real hunger and thirst, and terminates for its object upon the bread and water of life, These figures (if indeed they are to be regarded as figures at all) are kept up fully throughout the Bible, and all true Christians can testify to the fitness of the language to express the idea.

I have said that this state of mind implies conversion; for although the awakened sinner may have agonies and convictions, yet he has no clear conceptions of what this union with Christ is, nor does he clearly apprehend the need of a perfectly cleansed heart. He needs some experience of what holiness is, and often he seems also to need to have tasted some of the exceeding bitterness of sin as felt by one who has been near the Lord, before he shall fully apprehend this great spiritual want of being made a partaker indeed of Christ's own perfect righteousness. By righteousness here, we are not to understand something imputed, but something real. It is imparted, not imputed, Christ draws the souls of His people into such union with Himself, that they become "partakers of the divine nature," or as elsewhere expressed, "partakers of His holiness." For



this the tried Christian pants. Having had a little taste of it, and then having tasted the bitterness of a relapse into sin, his soul is roused to most intense struggles to realize this blessed union with Christ.

A few words should now be said on what is implied in being filled with this righteousness.

Worldly men incessantly hunger and thirst after worldly good. But attainment never outstrips desire. Hence, they are never filled. There is always a conscious want which no acquisition of this sort of good can satisfy. It is most remarkable that worldly men can never be filled with the things they seek. Well do the Scriptures say This desire enlarges itself as hell, and is never satisfied. They really hunger and thirst the more by how much the more they obtain.

Let it be especially remarked that this being filled with righteousness is not perfection in the highest sense of this term. Men often use the term perfection, of that which is absolutely complete a state which precludes improvement and beyond which there can be no progress. There can be no such Perfection among Christians in any world earth or heaven. It can pertain to no being but God. He, and He alone, is perfect beyond possibility of progress.

All else but God are making progress the wicked from bad to worse, the righteous from good to better. Instead of making no more progress in heaven, as some suppose, probably the law of progress is in a geometrical ratio; the more they have, the farther they will advance. I have often queried whether this law which seems to prevail here will operate there, viz., of what I may call impulsive progression. Here we notice that the mind from time to time gives itself to most intense exertion to make attainments in holiness. The attainment having been made, the mind for a season repose, as if it had taken its meal and awaited the natural return of appetite before it should put forth its next great effort. May it not be that the same law of progress obtains even in heaven?

Here we see the operations of this law in the usual Christian progress. Intense longing and desire beget great struggling and earnest prayer; at length the special blessing sought is found, and for the time the soul seems to be filled to overflowing. It seems to be fully satisfied and to have

received all it supposed possible and perhaps even more than was ever asked or thought. The soul cries out before the Lord, I did not know there was such fullness in store for Thy people. How wonderful that God should grant it to such an one as myself! The soul finds itself swallowed up and lost in the great depths and riches of such a blessing.

Oh, how the heart pours itself out in the one most expressive petition: "Thy will be done on earth as in heaven!" All prayer is swallowed up in this. And then the praise, the FULLNESS OF PRAISE! All struggle and agony are suspended: the soul seems to demand a rest from prayer that it may pour itself out in one mighty tide of praise. Some suppose that persons in this state will never again experience those longings after a new baptism; but in this they mistake. The meal they have had may last them a considerable time -longer, perhaps, than Elijah's meal, on the strength of which he went forty days; but the time of comparative hunger will come round again, and they will gird themselves for a new struggle.

This is what is sometimes expressed as a baptism, an anointing, an unction, an anointing of the Spirit, an earnest of the Spirit. All these terms are pertinent and beautiful to denote this special work of the Divine Spirit in the heart.

They who experience it, know how well and aptly it is described as eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Lord Jesus, so really does the soul seem to live on Christ. It, is also the bread and the water of life which are promised freely to him that is athirst. These terms may seem very mystical and unmeaning to those who have had no experience, but they are all plain to him who has known in his own soul what they mean. If you ask why figures of speech are used at all to denote spiritual things, you have the answer in the exigencies of the human mind in regard to apprehending spiritual things. Christ's language must have seemed very mystical to His hearers, yet was it the best He could employ for His purpose. If any man will do His will, he shall know of His doctrine; but how can a selfish, debased, besotted, and withal disobedient mind expect to enter into the spiritual meaning of this language How strangely must Christ's words have sounded on the ears of Jewish priests: "God in us;" "The Holy Ghost dwelling in you;" "Ye shall abide in Me." How could they understand these things? "The bread that came down from heaven,"

what could this mean to them? They thought they understood about the manna from heaven, and they idolized Moses; but how to understand what this Nazarene said about giving them the true bread from heaven which should be for the life of the world, they could not see. No wonder they were confounded, having only legal ideas of religion, and having not even the most remote approximation to the idea of a living union with the Messiah for the purposes of spiritual life.

What are the conditions of receiving this fullness?

That the soul hunger and thirst for it, is the only condition specified in this passage. But we know it is very common to have promises made in the Bible, and yet not have all the conditions of the promise stated in the same connection. If we find them elsewhere, we are to regard them as fixed conditions, and they are to be understood as implied where they are not expressed.

Elsewhere we are told that faith is a fundamental condition. Men must believe for it and receive it by faith. This is as naturally necessary as receiving and eating wheat bread is for the sustenance of the body. Ordinary food must be taken into the system by our own voluntary act. We take and eat; then the system appropriates. So faith, receives and appropriates the bread of life.

In general it is found true that before Christians will sufficiently apprehend the relations of this supply to their wants and to the means of supplying them, this hunger and thirst becomes very intense, so as to overpower and cast into insignificance all their other appetites and desires. As by a general law one master passion throws all minor ones into the shade, and may sometimes suspend them for a season entirely, so we find in this case a soul intensely hungering and thirsting after righteousness almost forgets to hunger and thirst even after its common food and drinks. Place before him his study-books, he can not bring his mind to relish them now. Invite him to a singing-concert, he has no taste that way at present. Ask him into company, his mind is pressing in another direction. He longs to find God, and can take but little interest in any other friend at present. Offer him worldly society, and you will find he takes the Least possible interest in it. He knows such companions will not understand what his soul so intensely craves, and of course it were vain to look for sympathy in that quarter.

It is an important condition that the mind should have somewhat clear apprehensions of the thing needed and of the means of obtaining it. Effort can not be well directed unless the subject be in some good measure understood. What is that en sealing of the Spirit? What is this baptism? I must by all means see what this is before I can intelligently seek it and hope to gain it. True, no man can know before experience is he can and will know afterwards; but he can learn something before and often much more after the light of experience shines in upon his soul. There is no more mystification than there is in hungering for a good dinner, and being refreshed by it after you have eaten it.

Again, if we would have this fullness, we must be sure to believe this promise and all this class of promises. We must regard them as truly promises of God all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and as good for our souls to rely upon as the promise of pardon to the penitent and believing

Yet again we must ask and insist upon their fulfillment to our souls. We are authorized to expect it in answer to our faith. We should be first certain that we ask in sincerity, and then should expect the blessing just as we always expect God to be faithful to His word. Why not? Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He promised and shall He not perform?

We must believe that the promise implies a full supply. Our faith must not limit the power or the grace of Christ. The Christian is not straitened in God. Let him take care, therefore, that he do not straiten himself by his narrow conceptions of what God can do and loves to do for His hungering and thirsting children. Often there is need of great perseverance in the search for this blessing. Because of the darkness of the mind and the smallness of its faith the way may not for a long time be prepared for the full bestowment of this great blessing.

## REMARKS

**1.** The Antinomian Perfectionists mistook the meaning of this and of similar passages. They supposed that whoever believes gets so filled as never to thirst any more.

But the fact is, the mind may rise higher and higher, making still richer attainments in holiness at each rising grade of progress. It may indeed find many resting-places, as Bunyan gives to his pilgrim here at the top of the hill Difficulty, there on the Delectable Mountains, where he passes through scenes of great triumph, great faith and great joy in God.

Subsequently to these scenes will occur other periods of intense desire for new baptisms of the Spirit and for a new ascent upon the heights of the divine life. This is to be the course of things so long at least as we remain in the flesh, and perhaps forever. Perhaps the blest spirits in heaven will never reach a point beyond which there shall not be the same experience new developments of God made to the mind, and by this means new stages of progress and growth in holiness. With what amazement shall we then study these stages of progress, and admire to look abroad over the new fields of knowledge successively opened, and the corresponding developments of mental power and of a holy character, all which stand related to these manifestations of God as effects to their cause. What new and glorious views have been bursting upon us, fast as we could bear them, for myriads of ages! Looking back over the past, we shall say Oh, this everlasting progress this is indeed the blessedness of heaven! How far does this transcend our highest thought when we looked forward to heaven from the dim distance of our earthly pilgrimage! Here there is no end to the disclosures to be made, nor to the truths to be learned.

If there was to no more food, how could there be any more spiritual thirst and spiritual hunger? How, indeed, could there be more spiritual joy? Suppose that somewhere in the lapse of heaven's eternal ages, we should reach a point where nothing more remains to be learned not another thing to be inquired after not another fact to be investigated, or truth to be known. Alas, what a blow to the bliss of heaven!

We are told that the angels are desiring to look into the things of salvation. Oh, yes; when they saw our Messiah born they were, allowed to come so near us with their joyous outbursts of praise that even mortals could hear. Do you not suppose those angels too are growing in grace, and advancing in knowledge? No doubt they are, most wonderfully, and have been ever since they came into being.

How much more they must know of God now than they did before our world was created! And how much more they have yet to learn from God's government over our race Think you they have no more desires after the knowledge of God? And have they no more desire to rise to yet higher conformity of heart and character to the great Model of Heaven?

If so with angels, surely not less so with their younger brethren the holy who are redeemed from among men.

You might suppose, that by studying in this school for a few days, you would learn all human science. This were a great mistake. You might master many sciences and still have other heights to ascend other vast fields of knowledge to explore. You might have the best of human teachers and the best possible opportunities for learning, yet still it would be enough to occupy you the length of many lives to master all there is in even human science. The mind is not made to be so filled to satiety that it craves no more can receive no more. Like the trees planted on the rivers of the waters of life, which bring forth twelve manner of fruits and whose roots go deep and drink largely of those blessed waters-so is the mind which God has endowed with the functions of immortal progress.

As our ideal becomes elevated, and we see higher points to which we may arise, we shall have more enkindlings of desire, and more intense struggles to advance. What Christian does not find, as he reads the Bible over, new and deeper strata of meaning never seen before new truths revealed and new beauties displayed.

Old father O. used to say, "I am reading the Word of God. It is deep and rich, like the great heart of its Author. I have read now two hours and have not got over but two verses. It will take me to all eternity to read it through." So it was. He really found more in the Bible than other men did. He went deeper, and the deeper he went, the richer did he find its precious ores of gold and silver.

So the Psalmist says, "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Have you not been so ravished with love to this blessed book that you wanted to clasp it to your bosom and become purified with its spirit? As you go down into its depths and find in each successive stratum of its deep thoughts new beauties and new fields of

truth to explore, have you not been filled with intense desire to live long enough and have time and strength enough to see, to learn, and to enjoy it all? Like the successive landscapes as you ascend the lofty mountain's side, at each stage you see them spreading out in grander beauty and broader range so, as you really study into the great and rich things of God's spiritual kingdom, there is no limit to this sweep of the knowledge of God; for the fields only become the broader and the more enchanting as you ascend. Do you not think that his soul must be truly blessed who eats and drinks and fills his soul with divine righteousness?

**2.** I am strongly impressed with the conviction that some of you need a new development of the spiritual life. You need to go deeper into the knowledge of God as revealed in the soul; you need to hunger and thirst more intensely, and be by this means filled as you have not often been as yet. Even though you may have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you yet need to eat and drink largely at His table. It will not avail you to live on those old dinners, long past and long since digested. You want a fresh meal. It is time for you to say, "I must know more about this being filled with righteousness. My soul languishes for this heavenly food. I must come again into this banqueting house to be feasted again with His love."

**3.** The full soul can not be satisfied to enjoy its rich spiritual provisions alone. If well fed himself, he will be only more exercised to see others also fed and blessed. The Spirit of Christ in his heart is a spirit of love, and this can never rest except as it sees others reaching the same standard of attainment and enjoyment which is so delightful to itself.

**4.** Real Christians should be, and in the main they will be, growing better and holier as they come nearer heaven. On the other hand, how great and fearful is the contrast between an aged growing Christian and an aged sinner growing in depravity and guilt! The one is ripening for heaven, the other for hell. The one goes on praising and loving, laboring and suffering for God and for his generation according to the will of God; but the other goes on his downward course, scolding and cursing as he goes, abhorred of men and disowned of his Maker. You have seen the awful contrast. You could hardly believe that two men so unlike were both raised in the same township, taught at the same school, instructed in the same religious assembly, and presented with the same Gospel; and yet see how

manifestly the one is saved and the other damned. Each bears the sign beforehand the palpable, unmistakable evidence of the destiny that awaits him.

**5.** Is it not full time that each one of you who has any spiritual life should stand out before the world and put on your beautiful garments? Let all the world see that there is a power and a glory in the Gospel, such as human philosophy never has even approached. Show that the Gospel begets purity and peace. Show that it enlarges the heart and opens the hand for the good of all human kind. Show that it conquers selfishness and transforms the soul from hate to love.

Sinners, ye who have earthly hunger and thirst enough, let your ears be opened to hear the glad tidings of real salvation. Ye whose hearts have never known solid peace ye who are forever desiring, yet never satisfied ye who cry in your inmost souls; O for office! O for honor! O for wealth!

See, here is that which is better far than all you seek. Here are durable riches and righteousness. Here are the first installments of pleasures that flow forever at God's right hand. Here is heaven proffered and even pressed upon your regard and your choice. Choose life before death, as you would be wise for your eternal well-being.



# BREAKING UP THE FALLOW GROUND

*Break up your fallow ground for it is time to seek the Lord till He come and rain righteousness upon you. Hosea 10:12.*

The Jews were a nation of farmers, and it is therefore a common thing in the scriptures to refer for illustrations to their occupation, and to the scenes with which farmers and shepherds are familiar. The prophet Hosea addresses them as a nation of backsliders; he reproves them for their idolatry, and threatens them with the judgments of God. My design in this Lecture is to show how a revival is to be promoted.

A revival consists of two parts: as it applies the Church, and as it applies the ungodly. I will speak on this occasion of a revival in the Church. Fallow ground is ground which has once been tilled, but which now lies waste, and needs to be broken up and mellowed, before it is ready to receive grain. I will show, as it applies to a revival in the Church

- 1. WHAT IT IS TO BREAK UP THE FALLOW GROUND, IN THE SENSE OF THE TEXT.**
- 2. HOW IT IS TO BE PERFORMED.**

## I. WHAT IT MEANS TO BREAK UP THE FALLOW GROUND

To break up the fallow ground, is to break up your hearts, to prepare your minds to bring forth fruit unto God. The mind of man is often compared to the ground in the bible. The word of God is the seed sown there, the fruit representing the actions and emotions of those who receive it. To break up the fallow ground therefore, is to bring the mind into such a state that it is fitted to receive the Word of God. Sometimes your hearts get matted down, hard and dry, until there is no such thing as getting fruit from them until they are broken up, and mellowed down, and fitted to the Word. It is

this softening of the heart, so as to make it feel the truth, which the prophet calls break up your fallow ground.

## II. HOW IS THE FALLOW GROUND TO BE BROKEN?

It is not by any direct efforts to feel. There are great errors on the subject of the laws which govern the mind. People talk about religious feeling as if they could by direct effort, call forth religious affection. But this is not the way the mind acts. No man can make himself feel in this way, simply by trying to feel. The feelings of the mind are not directly under our control. We cannot just will or decide to have religious feelings. They are purely involuntary states of mind. They naturally and necessarily exist in the mind under certain circumstances calculated to excite them. But they can be controlled indirectly otherwise there would be no moral character. In our feelings, if there were not a way to control them. We cannot say, "Now I will feel so-and-so toward such an object." But we can command our attention to it, and look at it intently, until the proper feeling arises. Let a man who is away from his family bring them up before his mind and will he not feel? But it is not by saying to himself, "Now I will feel deeply for family." A man can direct his attention to any object about which he ought to feel and wishes to feel, and in that way he will call into existence the proper emotions. Let a man call up his enemy before his mind, and his feelings of enmity will rise. So if a man thinks of God, and fastens his mind on any of God's character, he will feel, emotions will come up by the very laws of mind. If he is a friend of God, let him contemplate God as a gracious and holy being, and he will have emotions of friendship kindled in his mind. If he is an enemy of God, only let him get the true character of God before his mind, and look at it, and fasten his attention on it, and then his bitter enmity will rise against God, or he will break down and give his heart to God.

If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, and make your minds feel on the subject of religion, you must go to work just as you would to feel on any other subject.

Instead of keeping your thoughts on everything else, and then imagining that by going to a few meetings you will get your feelings started, go the common-sense way to work, as you would on any other subject. It is just as easy to make your minds feel on the subject of religion as it is on any other. God has put these states of mind under your control. If people were as unphilosophical about moving their limbs as they are about regulating their emotions, you would never have reached this meeting.

If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, you must begin by looking at your hearts: examine and note the state of your minds, and see where you are. Many never seem to think about this. They pay no attention to their own hearts, and never know whether they are doing well in religion or not; whether they are gaining ground or going back; whether they are fruitful, or lying waste. Now you must draw off your attention from other things, and look into this. Make a business of it. Do not be in a hurry. Examine thoroughly the state of your hearts, and see where you are: whether you are walking with God every day, or with the devil; whether you are serving God or serving the devil most; whether you are under the dominion or the prince of darkness, or of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To do all this, you must set yourself to work to consider your sins. You must examine yourselves. And by this I do not mean you must stop and look directly within to see what is the present state of your feelings. That is the very way to put a stop to all feeling. That is just as absurd as it would be for a man to shut his eyes on the lamp, and try to turn his eyes inward to find whether there was any image painted on the retina. The man complains that he does not see anything! And why? Because he has turned his eyes away from the objects of sight. The truth is, our moral feelings are as much an object of consciousness as our senses. And the way to find them out is to on acting, and using our minds. Then we can tell our moral feelings by consciousness, just as I could tell my natural feelings by consciousness if I should put my hand in the fire.

Self-examination consists in looking at your lives, in considering your actions, in calling up the past, and learning its true character. Look back over your past history. Take up your individual sins one by one, and look at them. I do not mean that you should just cast a glance at your past life, and see that it has been full of sins, and then go to God and make a sort of

general confession, and ask for pardon. That is not the way. You must take them up one by one. Get a pen and paper and write them down as you remember them. Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books and as often as a sin comes before your memory, add it the list. General confessions of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one; and as they come to you, review and repent of them one by one. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you your past sins. Now begin, and take up first what are commonly, but improperly, called Sins of Omission.

**1. Ingratitude.** Take this sin and write down under that heading all the times you can remember where you have received favors from God and others for which you have never expressed gratitude or thankfulness. How many cases can you remember? Some remarkable change of events, that saved you from ruin. Write down the instances of God's goodness to you when you were in sin, before your conversion, for which you have never been half thankful enough; and the numerous mercies you have received since. How long the list of instances, where your ingratitude has been so black that you are forced to hide your face in confusion! Go on your knees and confess them one by one to God, and ask forgiveness. The very act of confession, by the laws of suggestion, will bring up others to your memory. Put these down. Go over them three or four times in this way, and see what an astonishing number of mercies there are for which you have never thanked God.

**2. Lack of love to God.** Think how grieved and alarmed you would be if you discovered any lack of affection for you in your wife, husband, or children; if you saw another absorbing their hearts, and thoughts, and time. Perhaps in such a case you would nearly die with a just and virtuous jealousy. Now, God calls Himself a jealous God; and have you not given your heart to other loves and infinitely offended Him?

**3. Neglect of the Bible.** Put down the cases when for perhaps weeks, or longer, God's Word was not a pleasure. Some people, indeed, read over whole chapters in such a way that they could not tell what they had been reading. If so, no wonder that your life is spent at random, and that your religion is such a miserable failure.

**4. Unbelief.** Recall the instances in which you have virtually charged the God of truth with lying, by your unbelief of His express promises and

declarations. God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Now, have you believed this? Have you expected Him to answer? Have you not virtually said in your hearts, when you prayed for the Holy Spirit: "I do not believe that I shall receive"? If you have not believed nor expected to receive the blessing which God has expressly promised, you have charged Him with lying.

**5.** Neglect of prayer. Think of the times when you have neglected secret prayer, family prayer, and prayer meetings; or have prayed in such a way as more grievously to offend God than to have omitted it altogether.

**6.** Neglect of the means of grace. When you have made stupid and meaningless excuses to prevent your attending meetings, have neglected and poured contempt upon the methods of salvation, simply because you dislike spiritual duties?

**7.** The manner in which you have performed those duties. That is, with lack of feeling and lack of faith in a worldly frame of mind, so that your words were nothing but the mere chattering of a wretch who did not deserve that God should feel the least care for him. When you have fallen down upon your knees and "said your prayers" in such an unfeeling and careless manner that if you had been put under oath five minutes after, you could not have said for what you had been praying.

**8.** Lack of love for the souls of your fellow-men. Look around upon your friends and relatives, and remember how little compassion you have felt for them. You have stood by and seen them going right to hell, and it seems as though you did not care if they did go. How many days have there been, in which you did not make their condition the subject of a single fervent prayer, or display a glowing and devoted desire for their salvation?

**9.** Lack of care for the lost. Perhaps you have not cared enough for them to attempt to learn their condition; perhaps not even to take a missionary magazine. Look at this, and see how much you really care for the lost, and write down honestly the real amount of your feelings for them, and your desire for their salvation. Measure your desire for their salvation by the self-denial you practice, in giving of your substance to send them the Gospel. Do you deny yourself even the hurtful and unnecessary desires of life, such as tea, coffee, and tobacco? Do you cut back on your style of

living, and hesitate not to deny yourself any inconvenience to save them? Do you daily pray for them in private? Are you putting money aside to put into the treasury of the Lord when you go up to pray? If you are not doing these things, and if your soul is not agonized for the poor benighted heathen, why are you such a hypocrite to pretend to be a Christian? Why saying you are a Christian is an insult to Jesus Christ!

**10.** Neglect of family duties. Think how you have prayed before your family, how you have prayed, what an example you have set before them. What direct efforts do you habitually make for their spiritual good? What duty have you not neglected?

**11.** Neglect of social duties.

**12.** Neglect of watchfulness over your own life. In how many instances you have hurried over your private duties, and have not been fully responsible in performing your duties, nor honestly made up your accounts with God; how often have you entirely neglected to watch your conduct, and, having been off your guard, have sinned before the world, and before the Church, and before God!

**13.** Neglect to watch over your brethren. How often have you broken your covenant that you would watch over them in the Lord ! How little do you know or care about the state of their souls! And yet you are under a solemn oath to watch over them. What have you done to make yourself acquainted with them? In how many of them have you interested yourself to know their spiritual state? Go over the list, and wherever you find there has been a neglect, write it down. How many times have you seen your brethren growing cold in religion, and have not spoken to them about it? You have seen them beginning to neglect one duty after another, and you did not reprove them, in a brotherly way. You have seen them falling into sin, and you let them go on. And yet you pretend to love them. What a hypocrite I Would you see your wife or child going into disgrace, or into the fire, and hold your peace? No, you would not. What do you think of yourself, then, to pretend to love Christians, and to love Christ, while you can see them going into disgrace, and say nothing to them?

**14.** Neglect of self-denial There are many professors who are willing to do almost anything in religion, that does not require self-denial. But when

they are required to do anything that requires them to deny themselves-oh, that is too much! They think they are doing a great deal for God, and doing about as much as He ought in reason to ask, if they only doing what they do just as well as not; but they are not willing to deny themselves any comfort or convenience whatever for the sake of serving the Lord. They will not willingly suffer reproach for the name of Christ. Nor will they deny themselves the luxuries of life, to save a world from hell. So far are they from remembering that self-denial is a condition of discipleship that they do not know what self-denial is. They never have really denied themselves a ribbon or a pin for Christ and the Gospel. Oh, how soon such people will be in hell! Some are giving of their abundance and are giving much, and are ready to complain that others do not give more; when, in truth, they do not themselves give anything that they need, anything that they could enjoy if they kept it. They only give of their surplus wealth; and perhaps that poor woman who puts in her mite, has exercised more self-denial than they have in giving thousands.

From these we now turn to Sins of Commission.

**1.** Wordily mindedness. What has been the state of your heart in regard to your worldly possessions? Have you looked at them as really yours-as if you had a right to dispose of them as your own, according to your own will? If you have, write that down. If you have loved property, and sought after it for its own sake, or to gratify lust or ambition, or a worldly spirit or to lay it up for your families, you have sinned, and must repent.

**2.** Pride. Recall all the times you can, in which you have detected yourself in the exercise of pride. Vanity is a particular form of pride. How many times have you detected yourself in consulting vanity about your dress and appearance? How many times have you thought more, and taken more pains, and spent more time about decorating your body to go to Church, than you have about preparing your mind for the worship of God?

You have gone caring more as to how you appeared outwardly in the sight of mortal man, than how your soul appeared in the sight of the heart-searching God. You have, in fact, set up yourself to be worshiped by them, rather than prepared to worship God yourself. You sought to divide the worship of God's house, to draw off the attention of God's people to look at your pretty appearance. It is in vain to pretend flow, that you do

not care anything about having people look at you. Be honest about it would you take all this pains about your looks if every person were blind?

**3. Envy.** Look at the cases in which you were envious of those whom you thought were above you in any respect. Or perhaps you have envied those who have been more talented or more useful than yourself. Have you not so envied some, that you have been pained to bear them praised? It has been more pleasant for to you to dwell upon their faults than upon their virtues, upon their failures than upon their success. Be honest with yourself; and if you have harbored this spirit of hell, repent deeply before God, or He will never forgive you.

**4. Censoriousness and bitterness.** Instances in which you have had a bitter spirit or harbored a grudge toward someone? How many times have you spoken of Christians in a manner completely lacking charity and love? Love always hopes for the best but count the time in which you suspected the worst.

**5. Slander and gossip.** The times you have spoken behind people's backs of the faults, real or supposed, of members of the Church or others, unnecessarily, or without good reason. This is slander. You need not lie to be guilty of slander: to tell the truth with the design to injure is to slander.

**6. Levity.** How often have you joked before God as you would not have dared to joke in the presence of an important official? You have either been an atheist, and forgotten that there was a God, or have had less respect for Him, and His presence, than you would have had for an earthly judge.

**7. Lying.** Understand now what lying is. Any form of designed deception. If the deception be not designed, it is not lying. But if you design to make an oppression contrary to the naked truth, you lie. Put down all those cases you can recollect. Do not call them by any soft name. God call them LIES, and charges you with LYING, and you had better charge yourself correctly How innumerable are the falsehoods perpetrated every day in business, and in social intercourse, by words and looks, and actions, designed to make an impression on others, for selfish reasons that is contrary to the truth.

**8. Cheating.** Set down all the cases in which you have dealt with an individual, and done to him that which you would not like to have done to



you. That is cheating. God has laid down a rule in the case : “All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them.” That is the rule. And if you have not done so you are a cheat. Mind, the rule is not that you should do “what you might reasonably expect them to do to you: for that is a rule which would admit of every degree of wickedness. But it is : “As you WOULD they should do to you.

**9.** Hypocrisy. For instance, in your prayers and confessions to God. Set down the instances in which you have prayed for things you did not really want. And the evidence is, that when you have done praying, you could not tell for what you had prayed. How many times have you confessed sins that you did not mean to break off and when you had no solemn purpose not to repeat them? Yes, have confessed sins when you knew you as much expected to go and repeat them, as you expected to live.

**10.** Robbing God. Think of the instances in which you have misspent your time, squandering the hours which God gave you to serve Him and save souls, in vain amusements or foolish conversation, in reading novels or doing nothing; cases where you have misapplied your talents and powers of mind; where you have squandered money on your lusts, or spent it for things which you did not need, and which did not contribute to your health comfort, or usefulness. Perhaps some of you have laid out God’s money for tobacco. I will not speak of intoxicating drink for I presume there is no professor religion here that would drink it, and I hope there is n one that uses that filthy poison, tobacco. Think of teachers, of religion using God’s money to poison themselves with tobacco!

**11.** Bad temper. Perhaps you have abused your wife, or your children, or your family, or employees, or neighbors. Write it all down.

**12.** Hindering others from being useful. Perhaps you have, weakened their influence by mslnuahons against them. You have not only robbed God of your own talents, but tied the hands of somebody else. What a wicked servant is he who not only loiters himself but hinders the rest! This is done sometimes by taking their time needlessly; sometimes by destroying Christian confidence in them. Thus you have played into the hands of Satan, and not only showed yourself an idle vagabond, but prevented others from working.

If you find you have committed a fault against an individual, and that individual is within your reach, go and confess it immediately, and get that out of the way. If the individual you have injured is too far off for you to go and see him, sit down and write him a letter and confess the injury. If you have defrauded anybody, send the money, the full amount and the interest.

Go thoroughly to work in all this. Go now. Do not put it off; that will only make the matter worse. Confess to God those sins that have been committed against God, and to man those sins that have been committed against man. Do not think of getting off by going around the stumbling-blocks. Take them up out of the way. In breaking up your fallow ground, you must remove every obstruction. Things may be left that you think little things, and you may wonder why you do not feel as you wish to feel in religion, when the reason is that your proud and carnal mind has covered up something which God required you to confess and remove. Break up all the ground and turn it over. Do not “balk” it, as the farmers say; do not turn aside for little difficulties; drive the plough right through them, dig deep, and turn the ground up, so that it may all be mellow and soft, and fit to receive the seed and bear fruit ‘an hundredfold.’”

When you have gone over your whole history in this way, thoroughly, if you will then go over the ground the second time, and give your solemn and fixed attention to it, you will feel that the things you have put down will suggest other things of which you have been guilty, connected with them, or near them. Then go over it a third time, and you will recollect other things connected with these. And you will find in the end that you can remember an amount of history, and particular actions even in this life, which you did not think you would remember in eternity. Unless you take up your sins in this way, and consider them in detail, one by one, you can form no idea of the amount of them. You should go over the list as thoroughly, and as carefully, and as solemnly, as you would if you were just preparing yourself for the Judgment.

As you go over the history of your sins, be sure to decide upon present and entire reformation. Wherever you find anything wrong, take care of it at once, in the strength of God, to sin no more in that way. It will be of no

benefit to examine yourself, unless you determine to change in every particular that which you find wrong in heart, temper, or conduct.

If you find, as you go on with this duty, that your mind is still all dark, cast about you, and you will find there is some reason for the Spirit of God to depart from you. You have not been faithful and thorough. In the progress of such a work you have got to do violence to yourself and bring yourself as a rational being up to this work, with the Bible before you, and try your heart till you do feel. You need not expect that God will work a miracle for you to break up your fallow ground. It is to be done by means. Fasten your attention to the subject of your sins. You cannot look at your sins long and thoroughly and see how bad they are, without feeling, and feeling deeply. Experience fully proves the benefit of going over our history in this way. Set yourself to work now; decide that you never will stop until you find you can pray. You never will have the Spirit of God dwelling in you until you have unraveled this whole mystery of iniquity, and spread out your sins before God. Let there be this deep work of repentance and full confession, this breaking down before God, and you will have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can bear up under. The reason why so few Christians know anything about the Spirit of prayer is because they never would take the pains to examine themselves properly, and so never knew what it was to have the hearts all broken up in this way. You see I have only begun to lay open this subject I want to lay it out before you, in the course of these Lectures, so that if you will begin and go on to do as I say, the results will be just as certain as they are when a farmer breaks up a fallow field, and mellows it, and sows his grain. It will be so, if you will only begin in this way and bold it on till all your hardened and callous hearts break up.

## REMARKS

**1.** It will do no good to preach to you while your hearts are in this hardened, and waste, and fallow state. The farmer might just as well sow his grain on the rock. It will bring forth no fruit. This is the reason why there are so many fruitless ministers in the Church, and why there is so much organization and so little deep-toned feeling. Look at the Sunday school, for instance, and see many tools there are and how little of the

power of godliness. If you go on in this way the Word of God will continue to harden you, and you will grow worse and worse, just as the rain and snow on an old fallow field make the turf thicker and the clods stronger.

**2.** See why so much preaching is wasted, and worse than wasted. It is because the Church will not break up their fallow ground. A preacher may wear out his life, and do very little good, while there are so many “stony ground” hearers, who have never had their fallow ground broken up. They are only half converted, and their religion is rather a change of opinion than a change of the feeling of their hearts. There is mechanical religion enough, but very little that looks like deep heart-work.

**3.** Preachers should never satisfy themselves, or expect a revival, just by starting out of their slumbers, and blustering about, and talking to sinners. They must get their fallow ground broken up. It is utterly unphilosophical to think of getting engaged in religion in this way. If your fallow ground is broke up, then the way to get more feeling is to go out and see sinners on the road to hell, and talk to them, and guide inquiring souls, and you will get more feeling. You may get into an excitement without this breaking up; you may show a kind of zeal, but it will not last long, and it will not take hold of sinners, unless you hearts are broken up. The reason is, that you go about it mechanically, and have not broken up you fallow ground.

**4.** And now, finally, will you break up your fallow ground? Will you enter upon the course now pointed out and persevere till you are thoroughly awake? If you fail here, if you do not do this, and get prepared, you can go no farther with me. I have gone with you as far as it is of any use to go until your fallow ground is broken up. Now, you must make thorough work upon this point, or all I have further to say will do you little good. No, it will only harden, and make you worse. If, when next Lecture-night arrives it finds you with unbroken hearts, you need not expect to be benefited by what I shall say. If you do not set about this work immediately I shall take it for granted that you do not mean to be revived, that you have forsaken your minister, and mean to let him go up to battle alone. If you do not do this, I charge you with having forsaken Christ, with refusing to repent and do your first works. But if you will be prepared to

enter upon the work propose, God willing, in the next Lecture, to lead you into the work of saving sinners.

# THE WAY OF SALVATION

## PREFACE

THE continued interest manifested by the Christian public in the sermons of President Finney, which were first published now nearly sixty years ago, bears testimony to the vigor of his reasoning and to the grace and unction of his expression. During this century at least, he has had no equal as an interpreter and preacher of the Gospel. The audiences which he moved and guided to the acceptance of the truth, always included many persons of the highest intellectual order. So clear was his conception of the truth, that he was unable to utter an obscure sentence. So profound was his conviction of the justice and love of God, and of the unreasonableness and folly of sin, that he could not but speak with inspiring eloquence when beseeching men to be reconciled to their Lord and Savior.

Many of the sermons collected in this volume we remember to have heard from the preacher's own lips. It is, of course, impossible through the medium of the printed page to reproduce all the marvelous power attending the sermons in their original delivery. But Professor Cowles was a sympathetic reporter, and had long practice in writing out the discourses of the great preacher he so much admired, and thus was able to present a remarkably correct report. As an additional guarantee of faithful representation, the reports were read by Professor Cowles to President Finney before their original publication in the Oberlin Evangelist, and so have upon them the stamp of the preacher's own approval.

The sermons of the present volume were selected by Professor Cowles and arranged for publication before his death, and they are now given to the public under the conviction that they present with unrivaled clearness phases of truth in need of special emphasis at the present time, and that they have permanent value both as models for the preacher and as sound philosophical discussions of many of the central themes of the Gospel. President Finney had the rare ability of so interpreting the divine plan of salvation as at once to instruct the theologian and to bring its moving

thoughts to bear with all their power upon the hearts of the common people. We rejoice in the larger circulation which the present form of publication will give to this selection of sermons. Through the columns of the Oberlin Evangelist they reached a highly appreciative circle of readers in their day. It augurs well that in their present form they are likely to reach many thousand more, and to have a larger share in molding the theological thought of the present generation.

***G. FREDERICK WRIGHT. OBERLIN, OHIO, SEPTEMBER, 1891.***

# MEN INVITED TO REASON TOGETHER WITH GOD

*“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” — Isaiah 1:18.*

GOD is a moral agent. If he was not, he could not have moral character. That he has moral character is sufficiently manifest from the revealed fact that man is made in his image. Every man knows himself to have a moral constitution, and to be a moral being. It is also a fact that we necessarily conceive of God as a moral agent, and cannot rationally think otherwise.

God is also a good being not only moral, but holy and wise. He always acts upon good and sufficient reasons, and never irrationally and without reasons for his conduct.

Hence if we would appeal to God on any subject, we must address him as a good being, and must make our appeal through his intelligence, expecting him to be influenced more or less according as we present good and sufficient reasons.

God is always influenced by good reasons. Good reasons are more sure to have their due and full weight on, his mind than on the mind of any other being in the universe. Nothing can be more certain than this, that if we present to him good reasons and such as ought to influence Him, he will be influenced as much as he ought to be. Upon this we may rest with unlimited confidence.

**1.** Entering now upon the direct consideration of our text, let us first inquire, What is that to which this text invites us?

“Come now, and let us reason together.” But what are we to “reason” about? The passage proceeds to say, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” In the previous context God makes grievous and terrible charges against men. Their sins and hypocrisies and apostasies have been provoking beyond measure. Now, therefore, he comes down to look into



their case, and see if there be any hope of repentance, and proceeds to make a proposal. Come now, he says, let us reason together. Come near if ye will reason with me. Produce your strong reasons why your God should forgive your great sin.

**2.** The invitation, coupled with the promises annexed, implies that there are good and sufficient reasons why God should forgive the penitent. Hence the case is fair for practical results. The way is open for salvation. Sinners may so present their reasons before God as to ensure success.

**3.** The nature of the case shows that we are to address our reasons and make our appeal, not to justice, but to mercy. We are to present reasons which will sanction the exercise of mercy. We have no hope from any appeal that we can make to justice. We must not come to demand the blessing we need; for it is assumed that our sins are as scarlet, and hence that there can be no such thing as a justification for them. Hence our inquiry is brought within fixed limits. We have only to search for those considerations which may induce the Lord to exercise mercy in our case.

Now since sinners need two great blessings, viz.) pardon and sanctification, our subject naturally embraces two points

- I. THE REASONS WHICH MAY BE OFFERED WHY GOD SHOULD PARDON OUR SIN;**
- II. THE CORRESPONDING REASONS WHY HE SHOULD SANCTIFY OUR HEARTS.**

## **I WHAT REASONS HAVE WE TO PRESENT BEFORE GOD WHY HE SHOULD FORGIVE SIN?**

I enter upon this inquiry, and bring up these reasons before your mind, in order to show you what reasons you may present before God, and to encourage you to present them.

**1.** You may plead that you entirely justify God in all his course. You must certainly take this position, for he cannot forgive you so long as you persist in self-justification. You know there is a breach of friendship between your soul and God. You have broken his laws. You either have

good reason for your sin or you have not. If you have, God is wrong; if you have not, then you are wrong. You know how this case stands. You know beyond all question, with a force of reason that ought to silence all cavil, that all the wrong is on your side and all the right on God's side. You might and should know also that you must confess this. You need not expect God to forgive you till you do. He ought not to publish to the universe that he is wrong and you are right, when there is no truth in such a proclamation. Hence you see that you must confess what your conscience affirms to be truth in the case.

Now, therefore, will you honestly say, not as the decision of your conscience merely, but as the utterance of your heart, that you do accept the punishment of your iniquities as just, and do honor and acquit your God in all the precepts of his law, and in all the course of his providence? Can you present this reason? So far as it goes, it is a good reason, and will certainly have its weight.

- 2.** You may come to God and acknowledge that you have no apology whatever to make for your sin. You renounce the very idea of apology. The case, you deeply feel, admits of none.
- 3.** You must also be ready to renounce all sin, and be able in all honesty to say this before God; you must utterly cease from all rebellion against God, and be able to say so from your very heart, else you can not reasonably expect to be forgiven.
- 4.** You must unconditionally submit to his discretion. Nothing less than this is the fitting moral position for a sinner towards God. You must unqualifiedly surrender yourself to his will and utterly renounce your own. This will be an important element in your plea before God for pardon whenever you can honestly make it.
- 5.** You may plead the life and death of Jesus Christ as sufficient to honor the law and justify God in showing mercy. It is plain that our reasons must reach other points besides our own state of mind. They must also refer to the penalty of law, and show that such arrangements are made as will insure the honor and sustain the dignity of the law, though sin be forgiven. Hence we see how much it is worth to us that we are able to plead before God that Christ has fully honored the law, so that God can

forgive sin without the danger of seeming to connive at it. It is everything to the purpose of a returning sinner that he may plead that forgiveness through Christ's death is safe to the government of God. Pardon must not put in peril the holiness or justice of Jehovah. The utmost expression he could make, or need to make, of his holiness and justice, as touching the sins of man, is already made in the death of Christ, "whom God did himself set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past . . . that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

Now, therefore, can you say that you are willing to accept the sacrifice which he has made, and receive the gift of salvation through his blood as all of boundless grace, and in no sense or measure of meritorious works? If you can truly say this, it will become a strong reason before God why he should forgive you.

**6.** You may also urge his professed love for sinners. God has professed the greatest love for lost men; has even spoken of loving them "with an everlasting love," and you are at liberty to urge this when you come to reason together with God. You may plead that he has manifested this love in the gift of his dear Son, and hence you must be sure that you understand his language, and there cannot be any mistake in the matter. All your life long, too, he has been manifesting his love towards you in his kind providence; so that he has not ever left himself without witness to both the fact and the greatness of this love for the lost of our race.

**7.** He has also invited you to come and reason with him. Therefore he has fully opened the way for the freest and fullest communion on this point. With amazing condescension he suffers you to come before him and plead, filling your mouth with arguments. You may speak of all his promises, and of that solemn oath in which he swore by himself, to the end that they all "might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us in the gospel."

You may also plead his honor; that, seeing he is under oath, and stands committed before the universe, you may ask him what he will do for his great name if he refuses to forgive a repentant and believing sinner. You may plead all the relations and work of Christ. You may say to him, Lord, will it not induce other sinners to come to thee? Will it not encourage thy

church to labor and pray more for salvation? Will not thy mercy shown to me prove a blessing to thousands?

You may urge the influence of refusing to do so. You may suggest that his refusal is liable to be greatly misapprehended; that it may be a scandal to many; and that the wicked will be emboldened to say that God has made no such exceeding great and precious promises.

You may urge that there is joy in heaven, and on earth also, over every sinner pardoned and saved; that the saints everywhere will be delighted, and will exceedingly rejoice in the Lord their God. The Psalmist represents the young convert as saying, "The humble shall hear thereof and be glad." You may urge, that, since God loves to make saints happy in this world, he surely will not be averse to giving you his Spirit and putting away your sins it will cause such joy in the hearts of his dear people.

You may also plead the great abhorrence you have of living in sin, as you surely will unless he forgives you. You may also plead that God hates sin, and therefore must be more than willing to turn your heart away from sinning, and make it wholly pure before his eyes. You may urge on him the worth of your soul, a thing which he understands far better than you do, and which he shows that he appreciates, inasmuch as he gave up his only Son to die that souls might not perish. Ask him if he does not know what it is for a soul to be saved, and what it is for a soul to be lost, and tell him that the great question between these two momentous states is now pending in your case and must be soon decided for eternity! Ask him, if, after all he has done and said about salvation, he can refuse to save your perishing soul. Say, O my God, dost thou not know how much my soul is worth, and how certainly it is lost for ever unless thou interpose to save it?

You may mention before him your lost estate, that you are entirely dependent on his grace and mercy; that you are utterly lost to God, to happiness, and to heaven, unless he has mercy on you, and you may conjure him by the love of his dear Son to take all these things into consideration.

You may also allude to his merciful disposition, and suggest how often his word has affirmed that "the Lord delighteth in mercy," and that while

“judgment is his strange work, mercy is his delight.” Ask him if he will not gratify his own love of showing mercy, and give you the salvation you so much need. Remind him that here is a great opportunity to magnify his mercy, and display the riches of his grace, and make an impression on the minds of both saints and sinners greatly to his own honor and to their good. Tell him that to save one so lost and so vile as you cannot but glorify his great mercy far as the case is known in earth, or hell, or heaven, Tell him how he has said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” and ask him if he will not take advantage of this opportunity to show all men how he loves to act on this divine law of benevolence.

Tell him, moreover, how wretched you are, and must be in your sins, if you cannot find salvation, and what mischief you will be likely to do everywhere, on earth and in hell, if you are not forgiven and renewed in holiness. Tell him that it is awful, and makes your soul shudder, to think of going on in sin, and of becoming hardened past all repentance. Remind him that he has invited you to come and reason with him, and that he has virtually promised to hear and to consider your case. You do not come to justify yourself, but only to plead his great mercy and what Christ has done for you. With these very strong reasons you come before him, on his own invitation, not to complain against his justice, but to intercede for his mercy; that you must beg of him to consider the awful ruin of hell, and that you cannot escape without his help, and cannot endure its everlasting horrors. He has himself said, “Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?” Tell him your heart cannot endure this, and that this should be a strong reason why he should have mercy on your soul.

You also commit yourself entirely to his hands, and resign everything to his discretion and to his supreme disposal. Tell him you believe he will do the very best thing possible to him, all things considered, and that you shall by no means shrink from confiding your whole case to his disposal. You are not disposed to dictate or control what God shall do, but are willing to submit all to his wisdom and love. In fact, you have such confidence in him that you expect he will give you salvation, for you believe he has intended to encourage you to expect this great blessing, and on this ground you do expect to find mercy. You will therefore, at any rate, renounce all your sin henceforth and for ever. Say, “O Lord, thou

knowest that I am purposed to renounce all sinning, and in this purpose I will persist, and die in it, if die I must, yea, go to hell, if so it must be, renouncing all my sin, and trusting in thy promised grace.”

Let this be the manner of your reasoning together with God on this great question of the salvation of your soul.

## II. THE REASONS WHY HE SHOULD SANCTIFY OUR HEARTS

We must now notice a few reasons which may be urged by the pardoned sinner who pleads for entire sanctification.

- 1.** You may plead your present justification. You have already found grace in his sight. This is a good reason to be used in your plea that he would fulfil all his promises to you, and not leave his great work, already begun, unfinished.
- 2.** You may plead your relation to him, to the church, and to the world that, having now been justified and adopted into his family, you are known as a Christian and a child of God, and it therefore becomes of the utmost consequence that you should have grace to live so as to adorn your profession, and honor the name by which you are called.

You may also plead your great responsibilities, and the weight of those interests that are depending upon your spiritual progress. Tell him you have publicly committed yourself to his faithfulness; that you have trusted that he would keep you blameless and hence-forward make his grace sufficient for you. You have professed to rely upon sanctifying grace, and how can you bear now to fail of finding all you need and all you have professed to expect?

You should notice, also, the matter of your influence over others, especially the influence of your example. If it is known that you frequently fall into sin, how sad must be the influence! On the other hand, if God enables you to stand up and testify continually to his sustaining grace, what a testimony is this to his praise, and what a blessing to your Christian acquaintances!

Plead the desire you feel to be completely delivered from sin. Ask him if he has not given you this very desire himself, and inquire if he intends to sharpen your thirst and yet withhold the waters of life. Ask him if you must suppose that he means to enkindle the burning desire and yet leave it for ever unsatisfied.

Plead also his expressed will. Revert to that explicit avowal, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Ask if he did not intend you should understand this as applicable to deliverance from all sin, and therefore as an unqualified expression of his desire and will that you should be altogether free from sin, even now. Ask if he has not so revealed his will on this point that you do not come to him in any uncertainty as to his will. Has he not in many forms, and in forms most clear and decisive, signified his wish that you should "perfect holiness," and rise quite above all the power of temptation? Remind him how he has pledged his word of grace and held out before you most encouraging promises.

Tell him, also, how the church needs such witnesses to testify what grace has done, and what they have themselves experienced. Refer to what the world is saying because the church is not sanctified, and show how great a scandal unsanctified professors are to their brethren, because they testify falsely to the rich provisions of gospel grace. Plead that the church has many of them fallen almost out of sight of God's great grace, and so that they have become a sad stumbling-block to the world. Consider how much scandal and unbelief exist everywhere, and ask how these great evils can be removed and ever more prevented.

Appeal to his great love for you, as manifested in what Christ has done, and in his present office as your Advocate on high; as evinced, also, in the gift of the Spirit. Tell him you must and will confide in his love. Say, "I understand it; I must and will assume it, I cannot doubt, I must not disbelieve. I do not make my appeal to one who is an alien and a stranger, but to a kind and loving Father; and I come in simple confidence as his child." Say, "I dread to offend thee, and I long to live worthy of my vocation, and cannot endure to misrepresent that great and blessed grace on which my hope reposes."

So you must come to reason with your Heavenly Father. By no means forget to urge the love he has professed, and to throw yourself upon his

faithfulness, pleading that he will fulfil to you all that he has promised and gloriously finish the work he has begun. Tell him how you have stumbled many by your falls into sin and have given great occasion of reproach to the cause you love; tell him you cannot live so that you are ready to die under this awful burden.

Cry out before him, “How have I given thine enemies occasion to doubt thy sanctifying grace and to disbelieve thy words of promise! O my Savior! didst thou not give thyself to die for such a sinner as I am, to redeem me from all iniquity? and now, art thou willing that thy servants should be stumbled by me and fall over me into the depths of hell?”

Remind him, also, of your dependence on him, and that you set out in the Christian life with the understanding that without his grace to help, you could do nothing. Tell him you have consecrated yourself to him in distinct reliance upon his promised aid, and that you cannot endure to fall so far short of what you had hoped, and what you have promised and expected. Tell him of your willingness to make any sacrifice; that there is nothing you are unwilling to give up; that you are willing to forego your good name, and to, lay your reputation wholly upon his altar; that there is not one sacrifice you are not willing to make; and you beg of him, if he sees a single thing held so dear to your heart that you are not willing to sacrifice it for his sake, to show you what it is, and press you to forsake it. Assure him that if self-denial comes in his service you are willing to meet all the consequences. You are ready to confess his grace to you, and not conceal it from the great congregation. Can you say this? If so, do it. Tell him you are ready to die to the world ready to give it all up and renounce it utterly and for ever. You are determined you will have no more fellowship with the works of darkness to have the world become dead to you and you to the world. You are ready to meet all and bear all that the service of Christ may impose and involve. No matter if the world disowns you, and casts you out from its regard and fellowship. You have counted the cost and are ready to meet it all.

Urge, as a further reason, that you are willing to become dead to a worldly and unbelieving church; that you are ready to die even to their good opinion to be excommunicated if they will do it, to be cast out if they will cast you out. You shrink not from being reputed a heretic, if you may only



have grace to overcome all sin and every temptation. You wish to please but one; and you are quite satisfied with pleasing God only. This shall be your object, and this, attained, shall fully satisfy your soul. You are willing to give up all idols and live to him alone. No matter if your name be cast out as evil and trodden down as vile, by the church, by her ministry, by all men, if you may only live to please God. Tell him you are willing to renounce all creature help and all earthly reliances, with only one great inquiry, How can I most and best please God?

Be sure to remind him that you intend to be wholly disinterested and unselfish in this matter; you ask these things not for your own present selfish interest; you are aware that a really holy life may subject you to much persecution; you know that “if any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution;” and you are well aware that if you receive this cleansing, it may bring on you much persecution. You come not therefore to ask for present personal good, for you expect only greater trials; but you will consent to endure anything that does not involve sin. You want to represent him truly. You want to encourage all Christians, and all sinners too, to seek abounding grace by showing them how you have found mercy.

Then tell him of your great weakness, and how you entirely distrust yourself; how, oftentimes, you are covered with confusion and filled with shame, so that you cannot lift up your head, and you are constrained to cry, O my God! dost thou not pity thy child? Tell him you loathe yourself; that you would fain spue yourself out of your own mouth, because you so much dishonor him. Tell him you despair utterly of saving yourself, but that you still have unshaken confidence in him. Remind him, moreover, of his promises, and say that you are encouraged because you know that you are asking mercy of a most gracious God. Tell him you shall go away greatly disappointed if you do not receive the grace you ask and need.

As said a dear sister in a great struggle of her soul for spiritual blessings, “O my God, thou hast made me exceeding great and precious promises; now if thou dost not give me these blessings, what can I say any more for thee? How can I plead for thee if thou dost shut me up in my desolations?”

How can I ever again present thy strong claims to be believed and trusted as to all thy words of gracious promise?"

Thus making your strong issue, you come pleading not your goodness, but your badness; appealing not to God's justice, but to his mercy; telling him how poor you are and how rich he is, and that therefore you cannot bear to go away empty.

## REMARKS

- 1.** Whenever we have considered the reasons for God's actions till they have really moved and persuaded us, they will surely move him. God is not slow never slower than we, to see the reasons for showing mercy and for leading us to holiness.
- 2.** Many fail in coming to God because they do not treat him as a rational being. Instead of considering him as a rational being, they come without ever considering the reasons why he should and will forgive and sanctify. Of course, failing to have faith, and having views altogether dishonoring to God, they fail to get the blessing they seek.
- 3.** Many do not present these reasons, because in honesty they cannot. Now God assumes that we ought to be in a state of mind to present all these reasons honestly. If we are not in such a state, we ought not to expect blessings.
- 4.** When we want anything of God, we should always consider whether we can present good reasons why it should be granted. If you were to apply to any other being, e.g., your Governor, you would of course ask in the outset, Can I give any good reasons? If you are to appeal to justice, you must ask, Have I any good reasons to offer? So if you want favors on the score of mercy, what reasons have you to offer why they should be granted? If you have reasons, be sure to offer them, and by no means assume that you shall get your case without reasons.
- 5.** All who are in any want are invited to come and bring forward their strong reasons. If in sorrow, distress, affliction, come and present your plea. If you are a sinner, oppressed with a sense of sin, fear not to

unbosom your heart before your God. All those who are under any afflictive dispensation should come, like job, and tell God how deeply you are afflicted. Why not? Did not saints of old say to God, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not?"

Christian parents, you are invited to come and present your strong reasons why your children should be converted. Come and tell God how much you need this blessing. Tell him you cannot endure that all your prayers in their behalf should come to naught, that the great labor of your life should fail, and worse than fail, as it must if your children of the covenant should disgrace religion and press their way through throngs of offered mercies down to hell.

Backsliders should come and tell God all their case. Ask him if he will not break your chains, and bring you back, and put a new song into your mouth, even of praise for recovering grace.

**6.** Of all beings, God is most easily influenced to save. He is by his very nature disposed to save the lost. He loves to let his mercies flow. You have only to bring forth your strong reasons, indeed you have only to come in the spirit of a child, trustful and lowly, and your case is gained. You need not come with a bribe; you need not come and offer pay.

No; you have only to come and say, I want to serve God; for this end I need spiritual blessings. Tell him how much he has loved you, and how often and richly he has manifested this love; and plead that he would still show forth this same love yet more abundantly, that you may still follow on in his service, and nevermore be confounded and put to shame and sorrow for your own grievous sins.

**7.** We, of Oberlin, have peculiar reasons to urge why God should appear for the conversion and salvation of sinners among us. Just look here, brethren, you who have come here to embosom this institution with your influence and your prayers, have you no special reasons to urge why God should bless this place and sanctify this school, and convert to himself these precious souls? Oh, come and ask God if the growing people of this great nation, already outstripping the progress of the means of grace, must not become almost heathen, if his infinite mercy does not descend on all

our schools and colleges and mold these young minds to himself! These young women, what shall their influence be when they become wives and mothers, and are scattered over the breadth of the land? And these young men, destined to stand on the high places of social and moral power, shall the Great West feel their influence? and the distant South, shall it and its peculiar institutions feel the touch of their power? and the East, shall it know the weight of their principle and of their educated and sanctified talent? Oh, have we not reason to plead mightily with God! Oh, how many young palpitating hearts are here which need to be drawn into God's work and into the spirit of full consecration to the Lord of Hosts! Christians, have you no plea, no special, peculiar plea, to urge in behalf of interests so great and so pressing?

Sinners in Oberlin, have you not some plea to urge? O my stony heart, go not down to ruin from this Oberlin! Say rather, O my God, wash all my sins away! Oh fulfil thy promise and make me white as snow! Let me not die, but live and declare the high praises of my God for evermore!

## CONSCIENCE AND THE BIBLE IN HARMONY

*“By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.” 2 Corinthians 4:2.*

THE context shows that these words of Paul refer to his manner of preaching, and to the aim which he had in those labors.

Conscience is a moral function of the reason, or intellect. It is that department of our natural faculties which has to do with moral subjects with morality and religion. This faculty gives us moral law and obligation; it has the idea of right and wrong, of praise or blame-worthiness, of desert, of retribution. It comprehends all the intuitions of the intellect on moral questions. The term is sometimes used to include those states of the sensibility which are occasioned by, and connected with, the action of conscience; yet, strictly speaking, the term is confined to the intellect, and does not embrace the sensibility.

Every man has a conscience. This is implied in our text. How could Paul commend himself in presenting the truth to every man's conscience if

every man had not a conscience that is, if some men had no conscience at all? The existence of a conscience in every man is a fact of consciousness and one of facts. Every man knows that he has a conscience, and it is impossible he should know any fact with higher evidence, or with greater certainty, than he knows this. If he had no conscience, it would be impossible he should have the ideas of right and wrong, of good or ill desert, of virtue and of vice. No being could convey these ideas to his mind if he had not a conscience. No language could be of any use to convey such ideas if man had no conscience wherewith to apprehend and appreciate them.

These ideas of God, duty, right, and desert of retribution, belong to man to all men; are found in all men, and cannot be expelled from the human mind.

This faculty distinguishes man from the lower animals. Obviously they have some intellect; but whether they know by direct intuition, or in some other way, it seems impossible for us to determine. For example, we cannot ascertain whether the bee, in constructing his cells on the most perfect mathematical principles, gets his knowledge of this most perfect method by intuition or in some other process. Be this as it may, neither the bee nor any other of the lower animals has any moral law, or any ideas of moral character, of right and wrong, of good or ill desert, or of retribution. This is the great characteristic difference between these animals and man. Hence, if any man sets up the claim that he has no conscience, he claims to be a brute, for he denies of himself the great distinction between the man and the brute.

Metaphysicians are not agreed whether brutes have sensibility and will, or not; they do agree that brutes have no conscience and no moral responsibility; so that those men who claim this distinction for themselves, put themselves at once by that claim on a level with the lower animals.

The Bible and the human conscience are at one, and entirely agree in all their moral decisions and teachings. This fact proves conclusively that they both come from the same author.

Beginning with our text, I ask, what can Paul mean in saying that, by manifestation of the truth, he commends himself to every man's

conscience? Obviously this that by exhibiting to men the great truths of the gospel and of the law, he made his appeal to every man's conscience in a way and with sentiments that enforced each man's approval.

The truth commended itself as truth; the claims of duty, as right. No man who understood this truth could doubt its evidence; none who understood its moral claims could dispute those claims.

But this point is so important that it should be examined in detail. I therefore remark, that conscience reveals the same rules of duty and the same measure of obligation as God's revealed law does. Conscience imposes the same law of love as God's law does love supreme towards God, love equal and impartial towards our neighbor. Conscience never fails to affirm that each man is bound to love his neighbor as himself. There never was a human being of developed and sane powers, whose conscience did not impose this obligation upon him.

Conscience also postulates this law as binding on all moral beings, and as extending to all the activities of every moral being. In fact, conscience and reason show that this is the only possible law or rule of duty for moral beings; and the Bible teaches the very same in every particular. Both are entirely at one in all their teachings on this great subject.

Both conscience and the Bible harmonize, also, in this that man, in his natural state, has entirely fallen from duty. Conscience universally affirms that men do not, apart from grace, love God with all their heart, nor their neighbors as themselves. The human conscience proclaims man in a state of total moral depravity; so does the Bible. Conscience affirms that nothing, short of full obedience to God's law of love, is real virtue; and so does the Bible. Conscience presses the sinner with a sense of guilt, and holds him condemned; and so does the Bible. And each decides by the same rule in every respect. You may take each individual precept you find in the law and the gospel; go into the examination ever so minutely; canvass all the teachings of Jesus Christ, all those of the apostles and of the prophets, you will find that conscience says amen to them all.

What a remarkable fact is this! Here is a book containing myriads of precepts that is, if you enumerate all the specific applications; yet they are comprised under two great principles supreme love to God, and equal love

to our fellow-man. But in all these countless specific applications of these great principles, whatever the Bible affirms, conscience endorses. This is a most remarkable fact. It never has been true of any other book, that all its moral precepts without exception are approved and endorsed by the human conscience. This book so endorsed, must be inspired of God. It is impossible to suppose that a book so accredited of conscience can be uninspired. It is the greatest absurdity to deny its inspiration. A book so perfectly in harmony with conscience must come from the author of conscience.

Men said of Christ when he taught, "Never" man spake like this man so wonderfully did the truths taught commend themselves to every man's conscience. He spake "with authority," and "not as the scribes," for every word went home to man's conscience, and every precept revealing duty, was recognized and endorsed as right by the hearer's own convictions. This striking feature characterized all his teachings.

Both the Bible and conscience harmonize in respect to the requisition of repentance. Each affirms this to be every man's duty. Each rests this claim on the same ground, to wit, that God is right and the sinner wrong; and, therefore, that the sinner ought to turn to God in submission, and not God turn to the sinner in a change of his course.

In like manner, both conscience and the Bible harmonize in the requisition of faith and of entire holiness. On all these great gospel precepts, the Bible affirms and conscience responds most fully.

As to the demand of entire holiness, it is a clear dictate of our moral sense that we cannot enjoy God without being like him. When our intelligence apprehends the true character of God and of man, it recognizes at once the necessity that man should be like God in moral character, in order to enjoy his presence. Beings possessed of a moral nature can never be happy together unless their spirits are congenial.

Conscience affirms man's position as a sinner to be wrong; so does the Bible. It is impossible for a sinner to believe that his sin is right and pleasing to God. This, also, is the doctrine of the Bible.

Conscience affirms the necessity of an atonement. Mankind have always felt this necessity, and have manifested this feeling in many ways.

Through all ages they have been devising and practicing some form of sacrifice to render it proper for God to forgive the sinner. The idea has been in their mind that God must demand some sacrifice that would honor his law and sustain its injured majesty. That the law has been dishonored by the sinner, all have fully admitted. And obviously the idea has been in the minds of men that it would be dishonorable, degrading, and injurious to God, to forgive sin without some atonement. They seem to have apprehended the great truth that, before God can forgive sin, he must demand some demonstration which shall sustain law and evince his own position and feelings as a lawgiver. How, but from these universal affirmations of conscience, can you account for the fact that all mankind have felt the necessity for some mediator between God and man? So universal is this felt necessary that when men have had their conscience aroused, and have been in doubt or in darkness as to Christ, the Mediator, they have plunged into despair. If conscience sleeps, the sinner may pass along with little concern; but when it arouses itself like a mighty man, and puts forth its emphatic announcements, then no sinner can resist. It is a well-known fact that Unitarians, when thoroughly convicted of sin, can find no rest in their system of religious belief. I am well aware that so long as their conscience is not aroused to its functions, and they are in great darkness, they can say, "Man is pretty good by nature, and I see no need of a vicarious atonement. I accept Christ as a good man, an excellent teacher, and a fine example; but what do I want of an atoning sacrifice?" So he can say, till conscience wakes up its voice of seven thunders. Then he cries out, "I am undone. How can I live if there be not some atoning sacrifice for my sins?"

There never was a sinner, awakened to see his sins truly, who did not go into despair unless he saw the atonement. I could give you many cases of this sort which have fallen under my own observation, in which persons, long denying the need of any atonement, have at length had conscience fully aroused, and have then invariably felt that God could not forgive unless in some way his insulted majesty were vindicated.

Indeed, God might be perfectly ready to forgive, so far as his feelings are concerned; for he is not vindictive; neither is he implacable; but he is a moral governor, and has a character, as such, to sustain. The interests of



his created universe rest on his administration, and he must take care what impression he makes on the minds of beings who can sin.

In this light we can appreciate the propensity, always felt by the human mind, to put some mediator between a holy God and itself. Catholics interpose saints and the Virgin supposing that these will have a kind of access to God which they, in their guilt, cannot have. Thus conscience recognizes the universal need of an atonement.

The Bible everywhere reveals the adequacy of the atonement made by Christ; and it is remarkable that the human conscience also promptly accepts it as sufficient.

You may arouse the conscience as deeply as you please may set it all on fire, and yet, as soon as the atonement of Christ is revealed, and the mind understands what it is, and what relations it sustains to law and government, suddenly conscience is quiet; the sense of condemnation is gone; the assurance of an adequate atonement restores peace to the troubled soul.

Conscience fully accepts this atonement as amply sufficient, even as the Bible also does.

But nothing else than this atonement can satisfy conscience: not good works, ever so many or so costly; not penance, not any amount of self-imposed suffering and sacrifice. Let a sinner attempt to substitute ever so much prayer and fasting, in place of Christ, as an atoning sacrifice, it is all of no avail. The more he tries the more he is dissatisfied. Conscience will not accept it. Neither will the Bible. Most wonderfully, we find it still true, to whatever point we turn, that conscience and the Bible bear the same testimony, take the same positions.

But how does this happen? Whence comes this universal harmony? This is a problem for those to solve who deny the inspiration of God's word. Those who admit its inspiration have only to refer both to the same Author. It is no strange thing on their theory, that God's voice in the Bible, and God's voice in the bosom of man, should utter the same notes, each responsive to the other, and each affirming or denying in perpetual unison.

Both the human conscience and the Bible teach justification by faith. I do not suppose the human conscience could have revealed to us the fact of the death of Christ; but the Bible having revealed it, the conscience can and does appreciate its fitness and adequacy, and, therefore, can and does accept this sacrifice as a ground of justification before God. It recognizes the sinner as brought into a state of acceptance with God on the ground of what Christ has suffered and done. What can be the reason that faith in Christ has such wonderful power to extract the smart of sin, take away the sense of condemnation, and give the consciousness of being accepted of God? The fact we see developed every day. You cannot make the mind afraid of punishment when once it rests in Christ Jesus. You cannot create a sense of condemnation while your heart has an active faith in the blood of Christ. By no methods you can employ, can you force it upon the soul. With faith there will be hope and peace, despite of all your efforts to dislodge them. When the soul really embraces Christ, peace will ensue. The truth is, the provisions of the gospel for the pardon of sin meet the demands of conscience. It affirms that God is just, and therefore is satisfied, while he justifies the penitent believer in Jesus. It is the province of conscience to affirm the propriety or impropriety of God's moral conduct, as well as man's; and hence, it moves only within its sphere when it affirms that God can rightly accept such a satisfaction as that made in the atonement of Christ for sin.

Conscience affirms that there can be no other conceivable way of justifying the sinner except by faith in Christ. You may try ever so much to devise some other scheme, yet you cannot. You may try to get peace of mind on any other scheme than this as some of you have but all is of no avail. I once said to a Roman Catholic, "When you went to confession you hoped to be accepted and to get peace?" "Yes." "But did you find it to your full satisfaction?" "Not certainly. I cannot say that I knew I was accepted."

There never was a Catholic who had been through all their ceremonies, and afterwards, being converted to faith in Christ alone, experienced the deep peace of the gospel, who did not see the wide difference between his experience as a Papist and his experience as a gospel believer. His conscience so completely accepts his faith in the latter case and gives him

such deep, assured peace; while in the former case there could be nothing of this sort.

The Bible and conscience agree in affirming the doctrine of endless punishment. Conscience could teach nothing else. At what period in the lapse of future ages of suffering would conscience say, "He has suffered enough. The law of God is satisfied; his desert of punishment for sin is now exhausted, and he deserves no more?" Those who know anything about the decisions of conscience on this point, know very well that it can conceive of no limitations of ill-desert for sin. It can see no end to the punishment which sin deserves. It can conceive of the man who has once thus sinned, as being nothing else but a sinner before God, since the fact of his having sinned can never cease to be a fact. If you have been a thief, that fact will always be true, and in that sense you must always be a thief in the eye of law. You cannot make it otherwise. Your suffering can make no sort of satisfaction to an offended law. Conscience will see more and more guilt in your course of sin, and your sense of guilt must increase to all eternity. You can never reach the point where conscience will say, "This suffering is enough; this sinner ought to suffer no longer." The Bible teaches the same.

Yet each agree in teaching that God can forgive the penitent through faith in Christ, but can extend forgiveness to no sinner on any other ground.

## REMARKS

- 1.** We see why the Bible is so readily received as from God. Few have ever read any treatise of argument on this subject; but as soon as one reads those parts which relate to morals, conscience at once affirms and endorses all. You need no higher evidence that he who speaks in the Bible is very God. The truth commends itself to every man's conscience, and needs no other endorser of its divine origin. Probably in all this congregation not one in fifty ever sat down to read through a treatise on the evidences of a divine revelation; and you can give perhaps no other reason for your belief in the Bible than the fact that it commends itself to your conscience.
- 2.** You see why one who has seen this harmony between conscience and the Bible, cannot be reasoned out of his belief in the Bible by any amount

of subtle sophistry. Perhaps he will say to his opponent, "I cannot meet your sophistries; I have never speculated in that direction; but I know the Bible is true, and the whole gospel is from God. I know it by the affirmations of my own mind. I know it by its perfect fitness to meet my wants. I know it has told me all I ever felt, or have ever needed, and it has brought a perfect supply for all my need." This he can say in reply to sophistry which he may have no other logic to withstand. But this is amply sufficient.

In my own case, I know it was the beauty and intrinsic evidence of the Bible which kept me from being an infidel. I should have been an infidel if I could, and I should have been a Universalist if I could have been, for I was wicked enough to have been either. But I knew the Bible to be true; and when I set myself to make out an argument against it, I could not divest myself of an ever-present conviction that this was the wrong side. Just as a lawyer who sits down to examine a case, and finds at every turn that his evidence is weak or irrelevant, and is troubled with a growing conviction that he is on the wrong side; and the more he examines his case and his law books, the more he sees that he must be wrong so I found it in my investigations into the evidences of revelation, and in my readings of the Bible. In those times I was wicked enough for anything, and used to go out among the plain Christian people and talk to them about the Bible, and puzzle them with my questions and hard points. I could confound, even though I could not convince them, and then I would try to enjoy my sport at their expense. Sometimes afterwards, I would go and tell them I could show them how they settled this question of the divine authority of the Bible, although they could not tell me.

I don't believe there ever was, or ever can be, a candid man who shall candidly examine the Bible, compare its teachings with the affirmations of his own conscience, and then deny its authority.

**3.** Neither Paul nor Jesus Christ preached sermons on the evidences of a revelation from God; how was it, then, that Christ brought out the truth in such a way as to reach the conscience, wake up its energies, and make it speak out in fearful tones? He manifested the truth in such a way as to commend it to every man's conscience.

**4.** Just in proportion as a man fails to develop his conscience, or blinds, abuses, or silences it, can he become skeptical. It will always be so far only as his conscience becomes seared and blind; while, on the other hand, as his conscience has free scope and speaks out truthfully, will his conviction become irresistible that the Bible is true and from God.

**5.** The Bible is sometimes rejected because misunderstood. I once fell in with an infidel who had read much (not in the Bible) and who, after his much reading, settled down upon infidelity. I inquired of him as to his views of the inspiration of the Bible, when he promptly replied, "I know it is not true, and is not from God, for it teaches things contrary to my conscience." "Ah," said I, "and pray tell me in what particulars! What are these things, taught in the Bible, that are contrary to your conscience?"

He began thus:

**(1)** "It teaches the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity." "But stop," said I, "is that Bible, or is it only catechism?" He soon found that he had to look in his catechism to find it, for it was not in his Bible.

**(2)** "It teaches that human nature, as made by God, is itself sinful." I soon showed him that the Bible said no such thing. He declared that this doctrine was contrary to his conscience; I admitted it, but vindicated the Bible from such impiety as ascribing the creation of sin to God.

**(3)** "But," said he, "the Bible certainly does teach that men are naturally unable to obey God, and, especially, are unable to repent and believe the gospel." I replied, "That is neither taught nor implied in the Bible, in the sense in which you urge it; but, on the contrary, the Bible both teaches and implies that sinners can obey God, and are for that very reason responsible, and guilty if they refuse."

**(4)** There was one other point on which all the books were clear and strong, but which was utterly against his conscience, namely, "that Christ was punished for our sins. This punishing the innocent instead of the guilty," he said, "was one of the most unjust things that could be imagined." "Well," said I, "that is just what the Bible does not teach. It nowhere holds the doctrine that Christ was punished as a criminal.

Punishment implies guilt, and is inflicted as penalty for crime, neither of which is true in the case of Christ. He only suffered as an innocent being, and of his own free accord. You cannot say that this is wrong. If one man in his benevolence chooses to suffer for another, no principle of justice is violated.” This he conceded.

**(5)** “According to the Bible,” said he, “none can be saved without having their natures constitutionally changed. But no man can be held responsible for changing his own constitution.” Here, too, I showed him his misapprehension of the Bible. The change is only that which pertains primarily to the voluntary powers, and of course is just that which man is made capable of doing, and which he must do himself.

**(6)** He urged, I think, but one point more, namely, “that God has elected some to be saved, and some to be damned, and that none can escape their foreordained destiny.” To this you know I would rely that the Bible did not teach such an election, nor authorize such an inference, but everywhere implied the opposite. Such was our discussion.

You doubtless all know that such mistakes as these have led some men to reject the Bible. It is not strange that they should. I could never have received the Bible as from God if I had believed it to teach these things. I had to learn first that those things were not in the Bible, and then I was prepared to accept it in accordance with my conscience and reason, and from God.

**6.** Scepticism always evinces either great wickedness, or great ignorance as to what the Bible teaches, and as to the evidence on which its claims rest. Both the nature of the case and the testimony of observation conspire, to prove this.

**7.** All the truths of natural religion are taught and affirmed both in the conscience and in the Bible. This is a most remarkable fact; yet easily shown in the fullest detail.

**8.** The conscience recognizes the Bible as its own book the book of the heart a sort of supplement to its own imperfect system readily answering those questions which lie beyond the range of vision, which conscience enjoys. There are questions which conscience must ask, but cannot

answer. It must ask whether there is any way in which God can forgive sin, and, if so, what is it. Such questions conscience cannot answer without help from revelation. It is striking to observe how conscience grasps these glorious truths when they are presented, and the heart has come to feel its need of God's light and love. Mark how, when the moral nature of man has sent forth its voice abroad over the universe, far as its notes can reach, imploring light, and crying aloud for help, and listening to learn if any response is made; then when it catches these responsive notes from God's written revelation, it shouts amen! AMEN! that brings me salvation! Let God be praised!

**9.** The sceptic is obliged to ignore the teachings of his own nature and the voice of his conscience. All those moral affirmations must be kept out of sight, or he could not remain an infidel. It will not do for him to commune with his own heart, and ask what testimony conscience bears as to duty, truth, and his God. All he can do to smother the spontaneous utterance of his conscience, he must needs do, for the sake of peace in his sin and scepticism.

**10.** But these efforts must be ultimately vain, for, sooner or later, conscience will speak out. Its voice, long smothered, will break forth with redoubled force, as if in retribution for being abused so long. Many may live sceptics; few can die such. To that few you cannot hope to belong; you already know too much on this subject. You cannot satisfy yourself that the Bible is false, and make yourself disbelieve its divine authority, so that it will stay disbelieved. Such a notion, resting on no valid evidence, but starting up under the stimulus of a corrupt heart, will disappear when moral realities shall begin to press hard on your soul. I am aware that in these latter times some young men make the discovery that they know more and are wiser than all the greatest and best men that have ever lived. They think so, but they may, in divine mercy, live long enough to unlearn this folly, and to lay off this self-conceit. One thing I must tell you, You cannot die sceptics, you cannot die believing that God can accept you without faith in Christ. Do you ask, Why? Because you have heard too much truth. Even this afternoon you have heard too much to allow you to carry such a delusion to your graves. No! you cannot die in darkness and delusion. I beg you to remember when you come to die, that I told you, you could not die a sceptic. Mark my words, then and prove them false if

you can. Write it down for a memorandum, and treasure it for a test in the trying hour that I told you solemnly, you could not die a sceptic. It will do you no hurt to remember this one thing from me; for if you should in that hour find me mistaken, you can have none the less comfort of your infidelity. It is not improbable that I shall be at the death-bed of some of you this very summer. Not a summer has passed yet since I have been here that I have not stood by the dying bed of some dear young man. And shall I find you happy in the dark discomfort of infidelity? There is no happiness in it; and if there were, you cannot have it, for not one of you can die an infidel! Dr. Nelson once informed me that he said this same thing to a young infidel. Not long after, this infidel was sick, and thought himself dying, yet his infidelity remained unshaken; and when he saw the Doctor next, he cast into his teeth that prediction, which he thought had been triumphantly disproved. "Dr. N.," said he, "I was dying last month; and, contrary to your strange prediction, my infidelity did not forsake me." "Ah!" said the Doctor, "but you were not dying then! And you never can die an infidel!" When that young man came to die, he did not die an infidel. His conscience spake out in awful thunders, and his soul trembled exceedingly as it passed from this to another world.

But such fears may come too late! The door perhaps is shut, and the soul is lost! Alas, that you should lose eternal life for a reason so poor, for a compensation so insignificant!



# SALVATION DIFFICULT TO THE CHRISTIAN, IMPOSSIBLE TO THE SINNER

*“If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly  
and the sinner appear?”-1 Peter. 4:18.*

FROM the connection of this passage, some have inferred that the apostle had his eye immediately upon the destruction of Jerusalem. They suppose this great and fearful event to be alluded to in the language,

For the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? This may refer to the destruction of the city and temple of God’s ancient people, yet the evidence for the opinion does not seem to be decisive. A reference to the event is possible and even probable. We know that when Jerusalem was destroyed, not one Christian perished. They had timely notice in the signs Christ had already given them, and perceiving those signs in season, they all fled to Pella, on the east of the Jordan, and hence were not involved in the general destruction.

But whether Peter refers to this particular event or not, one thing is plain: he recognizes a principle in the government of God, namely, that the righteous will be saved, though with difficulty, but the wicked will not be saved at all. It is plain throughout this whole chapter that Peter had his mind upon the broad distinction between the righteous and the wicked a distinction which was strikingly illustrated in the destruction of Jerusalem, and which can never lack illustrations under the moral and providential government of a holy God.

The salvation of the righteous, though certain, is difficult. Though saved, they will be scarcely saved. On this basis rests the argument of the apostle, that if their salvation be so difficult, the sinner cannot be saved at all. His salvation is utterly impossible. This is plainly the doctrine of the text. It had a striking exemplification in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the passage, as I have said, may or may not have reference to that event.

All students of the Bible know that this great destruction is often held up as a type or model of the final judgment of the world. It was a great event on the page of Jewish history, and certainly had great significance as an illustration of God's dealings towards our sinning race.

In pursuing this subject, I purpose to show,

- I. WHY THE SALVATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS IS DIFFICULT;**
- II. WHY THE SALVATION OF THE SINNER IS IMPOSSIBLE;**
- III. ANSWER THE QUESTION OF THE TEXT, WHERE SHALL THE UNGODLY AND THE SINNER APPEAR?**

The difficulty in the salvation of either the righteous or the wicked turns not on any want of mercy in the heart of God. It is not because God is implacable and hard to be appeased: this is not the reason why the salvation of even the sinner is impossible.

Again, it is not in any lack of provision in the atonement to cover all the wants of sinners, and, even to make propitiation for the sins of the world. The Bible nowhere raises the question as to the entire sufficiency of the atonement to do all that an atonement can do or need do for the salvation of our race.

But, positively, one difficulty is found in the nature of God's government, and in the nature of free agency in this world. God has so constituted man as to limit himself to one mode of government over him.

This must be moral, and not physical. It must be done by action upon mind as mind, and not by such force as applies legitimately to move matter. If the nature of the case admitted the use of physical force, it would be infinitely easy for God to move and sway such puny creatures as we are. That physical omnipotence which sweeps the heavens and upholds the universe could find no difficulty in moving lumps of clay so small and insignificant as we. But mind cannot be moved as God moves the planets. Physical force can have no direct application to mind for the purpose of determining its moral action. If it should act upon mind as it does upon matter, we certainly know there could be neither moral action

nor moral character in such beings as we are. We could not have even a conception of moral conduct. How then could the thing itself possibly exist?

Men are placed under God's government with such a created constitution and such established relations to it that they must act freely. God has made them capable of controlling their own moral conduct by the free action of their own wills, and now he expects and requires them to choose between his service and rebellion. Such being the case, the great difficulty is to persuade sinners to choose right. God is infinitely ready to forgive them if they will repent; but the great problem is to persuade them to do so. They are to be prepared for heaven. For this, an entire change of moral character is requisite. This could be done with the utmost ease, if nothing more were needful than to take them into some Jordan stream and wash them, physically, as if from some external pollution, and God should be pleased to employ physical power for this purpose. But the change needed being in its nature moral, the means employed must be moral. All the influence must be of a moral character.

Now everybody knows that a moral agent must be able, in the proper sense of this term, to resist every degree of moral influence. Else he cannot be a moral agent. His action must be responsible action, and therefore must be performed of his own free will and accord, no power interposing of such a sort or in such measure as to overbear or interfere with his own responsible agency. Hence the necessity of moral means to convert sinners, to gain their voluntary consent in this great change from sin to holiness, from disobeying to obeying God. And hence the need that this change be wrought, ultimately, by moral means alone.

God may and does employ physical agencies to act morally, but never to act physically. He may send sickness, to reach the heart, but not to purge away any sort of physical sin.

There are a great many difficulties in the way of converting sinners, and saving them when once converted: many which people are prone to overlook. Hence we must go into some detail, in order to make this matter plain.

One class of these difficulties is the result of an abused constitution. When Adam and Eve were created, their appetites were doubtless mild and moderate. They did not live to please themselves and gratify their own appetites. Their deep and all-engrossing desire and purpose to please God was the law of their entire activities. For a time, therefore, they walked in holy obedience, until temptation came in a particular form, and they sinned. Sin introduced another law the law of self-indulgence. Every one knows how terribly this law tends to perpetuate and strengthen itself. Every one knows the fearful sway it gains so rapidly over the whole being when once enthroned in power. Now, therefore, the beautiful order and subordination which in holiness obtained throughout all their active powers, was broken up and subverted under the reign of sin. Their appetites lost their proper balance. No longer subordinate to reason and to God, they became inordinate, clamorous, despotic.

Precisely in this does sin consist in the irrational gratification of the appetites and passions. This is the form in which it appeared in our first parents. Such are its developments in all the race.

Now in order to save men, they must be brought back from this, and restored to a state in which God and reason control the free action of the mind, and appetite is held in due subjection.

Now here let me be understood. The want of balance, the moral disorder of which I speak, is not this, that the will has become enslaved, and has lost its inherent power of free moral action. This is not the difficulty, but the thing is, that the sensibility has been enormously developed, and the mind accustoms itself to yield to the demands it makes for indulgence.

Here is the difficulty. Some have formed habits and have confirmed them until they have become immensely strong, and it becomes exceedingly difficult to induce them to break away. The rescue must be effected by moral, not by physical means, and the problem is to make the moral means powerful enough for the purpose.

Again, we must notice, among the difficulties in question, the entanglements of a multitude of circumstances. I have often thought it well for Christians that they do not see all their difficulties at first. If they did, its discouraging effect might be disastrous. Coming upon the mind while it

is poisoning the elements of the great question a life of sin or a life of holiness; or, after conversion, falling in their power upon the mind while yet its purpose to serve God is but little confirmed, the result might be not only greatly trying, but perhaps fatal. But the ways of God in this, as in all things, are admirable. He does not let them see all their future difficulties at first, but lets them come up from time to time in succession, as they have strength to meet them and overcome.

The great difficulty is, living to please self rather than God. It is wonderful to see how much this difficulty is enhanced by the agency Satan and sin have had in the framework of society. It would seem that a bait is held before every man, whatever his position and circumstances may be. One cannot but be astonished at the number of baits provided and laid in the habits and usages, we might perhaps say, in the very construction and constitution, of society. See how men are interlocked in the relations of life, partners in business, associates in pleasure; attached in the more endearing and permanent relations of life, husbands and wives, lovers and loved, parents and children. How many influences of a moral sort, and often tempting to sin, grow out of each, and, oh, how many out of all these complicated and various relations! Youth of both sexes are educated perhaps together, perhaps apart; yet in either case there arises a host of social attractions, and in the history of the race, who does not know that often the resulting influences are evil? The troubles and cares of business how often do they “like a wild deluge come,” and overwhelm the soul that else would “consider its ways and turn its feet unto God’s testimonies”! How complicated are the sources of irritation that provoke men’s spirits to ill-temper, and ensnare them thus into sin! Many times we marvel and say, What amazing grace is needful here! What power, less than Almighty, could pluck God’s children from such a network of snares and toils, and plant them at last on the high ground of established holiness!

There is a man chained to a wife who is a constant source of temptation and trial to him. There is a wife who sees scarce a peaceful moment in all her life with her husband, all is vexation and sorrow of spirit.

Many parents have children who are a constant trial to them. They are indolent, or they are reckless, or they are self-willed and obstinate. Their own tempers perhaps are chafed, and they become a sore temptation to a

similar state of chafed and fretted temper in their parents. On the other hand, children may have equal trials in their parents. Where can you find a family in which the several members are not in some way a source of trial to each other! Sometimes the temptation comes in an appeal to their ambition and pride. Their children have some qualities for the parents to be proud of and this becomes a snare to parents and children both.

Oh, how complicated are the temptations which cross and re-cross every pathway of human life! Who but God can save against the power of such temptations?

Many children have been brought up in error. Their parents have held erroneous opinions, and they have had their moral constitution saturated with this influence from their cradle and upwards. How terrible such an influence must inevitably be!

Or, the business of their parents may have been such as to miseducate them as the business of rum-selling, for example, and who does not know how terribly this kind of influence cleaves to a man, even as his skin, and seems to become a part of him by pervading the very tissues of his soul!

When the mind gives itself up to self-indulgence, and a host of appetites became clamorous and impetuous, what a labor it must be to bring the soul into harmony with God! How many impulses must be withstood and overcome; how great the change that must be wrought in both the physical and moral state of the man! No wonder that the devil flatters himself that he has got the race of depraved men into his snares and can lead them captive at his will. Think how many thousand years he has been planning and scheming, studying human nature and the laws of depravity, that he may make himself fully master of the hellish art of seducing moral agents away from God and holiness. The truth is, we scarcely begin to realize how artful a devil we have to encounter. We scarcely begin to see how potent an adversary is he who, "like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour," and who must be resisted and overcome, or we are not saved.

Many are not aware of the labor necessary to get rid of the influence of a bad education. I speak now of education in the broad, comprehensive sense embracing all that molds the habits, the temper, the affections, as well as

develops the intellect. Ofttimes the affections become unhappily attached, yet the attachment is exceedingly strong, and it shall seem like the sundering of the very heart-strings to break it off. This attachment may fasten upon friends, wives, husbands, or children; it may make gold its god, and bow down to such an image. Sometimes we are quite inadequate to judge of the strength of this attachment, except as we may see what strange and terrible means God is compelled to use to sever it. Oh, how does he look with careful, tearful pity upon his entangled and endangered children, marking the bands that are coiled around their hearts to bind them to earth, and contriving how he can best sunder those bands and draw back their wandering hearts to himself! We know he never does afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men never his people but for their profit, that they may partake of his holiness; yet who does not know how often he is compelled to bring tears from their eyes; to wring their hearts with many sorrows; to tear from them many a fond and loved object of their affections else he could not save them from their propensities towards sin and self-indulgence! Oh, what a work is this which Christ undertakes that he may save his people from their sins! How strange and how complicated are the difficulties! Who could overcome them but God!

Again, the darkness of nature is so great and so gross, that it must be an exceedingly great work to save them from its influence, and pour the true light of God through their intelligence. It is by no means sufficient to know the mere theory of religion, or to know all of religion that the human mind, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, can know. Indeed, Christians never know themselves except as they see themselves in God's own light. They need to see God's character in its real nature, and then, in view of what God is, they can see and estimate themselves rightly. This is one important part of the truth on this subject; and another point is, that God himself by his Spirit becomes the teacher of the humble and trustful, and so enlightens the understanding that divine truth can be seen in its real colors and just proportions. And now do you say, O God, show me what I am, and make me know my own heart thoroughly?

Did you ever find yourself in doubt and perplexity about your own state, and then, crying for help and light unto God, has he not answered your prayer by first revealing himself and his own character, so that in the light reflected from his character you saw your own, and in the light of his

principles of action you saw your own, and in the light shown you as to his heart you also saw your own? You do not see your own state of mind by simply inverting your mental eye and looking within, but by being drawn so near to God that you come into real and deep sympathy with him. Then, seeing and knowing God, you see and know yourself. You cannot help seeing whether your heart responds in sympathy and aim with his, and this very fact reveals your own heart to yourself. It is wonderful how much the Christian learns of himself by truly learning God; and it is not less a matter of wonder and admiration that Christians should experience such moral transformations by simply knowing God, and by being drawn into sympathy with him the more as the more they know him. The great difficulty is that Christians are shy of God shy, especially as soon as they relapse into the spirit of the world. Then they find an almost resistless inclination to keep off, to hold themselves aloof from anything like close communion with God. Hence God is compelled to draw them back, to discipline them with afflictions, to spoil their idols, and dash in pieces their graven images. Always awake and on the alert so the Bible represents it: "He that keepeth Israel shall never slumber or sleep." By day and by night he watcheth, and "keepeth them as the apple of his eye!" How wonderful is such condescension and loving kindness!

Finally, the greatness of the change requisite in passing from sin to real holiness from Satan's kingdom into full fitness for Christ's, creates no small difficulty in the way of saving even the converted. It is difficult, nay impossible, to make men see this all at once; and, indeed, if the Christian were to see it all at once, it would not unlikely overwhelm him in despair. Hence God wisely lets him see enough to impress strongly his need of divine aid, and enough to make him cry out, "Who then can be saved?"

## REMARKS

But I must make some remarks in application of the subject so far discussed, and reserve the consideration of our remaining points to another time.

We see why the Scriptures are so full of exhortations to Christians to run, RUN, and especially to run by rule. "He that striveth for the mastery



must by all means strive lawfully," I. e., according to the rules in such cases made and provided. So let the Christian be careful not only that he runs, but that he runs the right way and in the right manner.

We see, also, why the Christian is exhorted in like manner to fight, grasping the sword, buckling on the shield, putting on the helmet of salvation, preparing himself in all points for a warlike march through an enemy's country, where fighting must be looked for day and night.

Coupled with this is the fitting exhortation to stand fast to plant his feet firmly and brace himself with all his strength, as if the enemies' hosts were about to charge with the deadly bayonet. Stand fast, their Captain shouteth; play the man for your king and for yourselves, for the enemy are down upon you in strength and in wrath!

Agonize too, struggle; for fierce will the conflict be. It is no contemptible foe whom you must face. The Scriptures represent that only the violent take this kingdom of God, and they do it "by force." What could be more expressive of the energy to be put forth by Christ's people if they would win the victory and wear the crown?

We see why Christians are represented as wrestling, like men in personal struggle for the mastery. They have a personal enemy to fight and to subdue.

They must, however, give all diligence. A lazy man cannot get to heaven. To get there costs toil and labor. For his will must be sanctified. The entire voluntary department of his being must be renovated. It is remarkable how the Christian warfare develops the will. Not an obstinate will not a self-will, do I mean, but a strong and firm will. The man, disciplined in the Christian conflict, cries out, I must and I will believe; I will trust.

The Christian is also commanded to watch not to close his eyes for a little more sleep and a little more slumber. His condition is one of hourly peril, and therefore, what Christ says to one, he says to all WATCH. We can see the reason for this in the light revealed from our subject.

We see, also, why the Christian is to pray always, as well as to agonize and watch. It is not all to be done by his own unaided exertions. In fact, one of his chief exertions should turn upon this very point that he pray

always, “watching thereunto,” lest anything draw his heart down from the throne of his Great Helper.

We may also see why Christians are exhorted to separate themselves from the world. They are told they must hang the old man upon the cross. To this there are no exceptions. Whoever would be saved must be crucified that is, as to “the old man and his deeds.” The crucifixion of Christ is an emblem of this, and serves, therefore, in a measure, to show what this must and should be.

Does any one suppose that the whole intent of Christ’s crucifixion is to meet the demands of the violated law? Not so; but it was also to be an emblem of the work to be wrought upon and within the Christian’s soul. Its old selfish habitudes must be broken up and its powerful tendencies to evil be slain.

Mark, also, why Christians are exhorted to spend the time of their sojourning here in fear, and to walk softly and carefully, as before God, through all the meanderings of their pilgrimage; in all holy conversation so reads his book of counsel being steadfast, immovable, always abounding in work the work, too, of the Lord, as knowing that so his labor will not be in vain in the Lord. Every weight must he lay aside; must not encumber himself with many cares; must not overload himself with gold, nor even with care and effort to get it; must be watchful most diligently on this side and on that, remembering, for both his quickening and his comfort, that Christ, too, with his holy angels, watches evermore over him, saying, I am determined to save you if I can, but I cannot unless I can first gain and then retain your attention, and then rouse up your hearts to the utmost diligence, coupled with the most simple-hearted faith. Oh, what a conflict there must be to rescue each saved sinner from the jaws of Satan and from the thralldom of his own lusts, and finally bring him home, washed and holy, to his home in the heavens! No wonder the Bible should speak of the Christian as being saved only through much difficulty.

Again, sinners, if they will only exercise a little common sense and philosophy, can readily account for the faults of Christians. See that husband with a pious wife. He treats her badly, and day after day annoys her by his ill-temper and little abuses. The children, too, trouble her, and all the more for the example her husband sets before them. Now he may

very likely, in some of his moods of mind and temper, drop some reflections upon her piety, and upon the gospel she professes; but in his more rational moments he will be compelled to say, "No wonder my wife has these faults: I have never helped her at all; I have only hindered her in all her Christian course, and I know I have been a continual source of vexation and irritation to her. No wonder she has had faults. I am ashamed that I have done so much to create and multiply them, and so very little ever in any way to improve her character."

When candid men come to consider all these things, the human constitution, the tendency to unbelief, the impulses towards self-indulgence, and the strength of temptation, they cannot but see that there is abundant occasion for all those faults in Christian character and conduct which they are wont to criticize so stringently. Yet often, perhaps commonly, wicked men make no allowance for the faults of Christians, but assume that every Christian ought to be spotless, while every sinner may make so much apology for his sin as quite to shield his conscience from conviction of guilt. Nothing, therefore, is more common than for impenitent men to triumph, devil-like, over any instance of stumbling in a professed Christian. Why don't they rather sympathize with their difficulties and their great work as real philanthropists? That brother who has a Christian sister does not help her at all, but, on the contrary, tries to ensnare her into sin. He should rather say, "I will not be a stumbling block to my sister. If I cannot directly help her on in her Christian course, at least I will not hinder her." Let the impenitent husband say, "My dear Christian wife! I know something about her difficulties; God forbid that I should play into the devil's hands, and try to help the devil on in his devilish work." Sinner, why don't you abstain from ensnaring your Christian friend? There is One above who cares for him, who patiently toils for his salvation, and watches day and night over his progress, and who is pledged to save him at last. And can you hope to gain the favor of that Holy and just Being by trying to ensnare and offend any of his little ones?

# THE SALVATION OF SINNERS IMPOSSIBLE

*“If the righteous scarcely be saved,  
where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” 1 Peter 4:18.*

I SAID in a former sermon, that the doctrine of the text is that the salvation of the righteous is difficult and that of the sinner impossible. In that sermon I discussed at length the first part of this subject, showing how and why the salvation of the righteous is difficult. I am now to take up the remaining part and show how and why the salvation of the wicked is impossible.

Here let me premise in general that by the righteous is not meant those who have never sinned. It could not be difficult to save such as had not sinned against God. They are, in fact, already saved. But these righteous ones are those, who, having been sinners, now come to exercise faith in Christ, and of course become “heirs of that righteousness which is by faith.” Vitally important to be considered here is the fact that the governmental difficulty in the way of being saved, growing out of your having sinned, even greatly, is all removed by Christ’s atonement. No matter now how great your guilt, if you will only have faith in Jesus, and accept of his atonement as the ground of pardon for your sins.

Hence the difficulty in the way of saving sinners is not simply that they have sinned, but that they will not now cease from sinning and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The salvation of sinners is therefore impossible.

**1.** Because it is impossible for God by any means he can wisely employ, to persuade them to desist from sinning. They are so wicked and so perverse that they abuse to greater sin the very best means God employs to bring them to repentance. Hence God cannot wisely save them.

When I say it is impossible for God to convert them, I do not imply that God lacks physical power to do anything which is the proper subject of

such power. On this point there can be no question. But how can physical omnipotence be brought to bear directly upon mind and upon the heart?

Again, let us consider, that it may not be wise for God to bring all the moral power of his universe to bear upon the sinner in this world. If this were wise and practicable, it might avail for aught we can know; but since he does not do it, we infer that he refrains for some wise reason.

Certain limitations are fixed in the divine wisdom to the amount of moral influence which God shall employ in the case of a sinner. It is in view of this fact that I say, God finds it impossible to gain the sinner's consent to the gospel by any means that he can wisely employ. He goes as far as is really wise and as far as is on the whole good. This is undoubtedly the fact in the case. Yet all this does not avail. Hence it becomes impossible that the sinner should be saved.

**2.** Again, the sinner cannot be saved, because salvation from sin is an indispensable condition of salvation from hell. The being saved from sin must come first in order. Every sinner knows, and on reflection and self-inspection he must see, that his state of mind is such that he cannot respect himself. The elements of blessedness are not therefore in him, and cannot be until he meets the demands of his own moral nature.

He knows, also, that he does not want to have anything to do with God is afraid of God both dreads and hates his presence is afraid to die and go so near to God as death bears all men. He knows that all his relations to God are unpleasant in the extreme. How certainly, then, may he know that he is utterly unprepared for heaven.

Now the sinner must be saved from this guilty and abominable state of mind. No change is needed in God neither in his character, government, or position towards sin; but the utmost possible change and all the needed change is requisite on the part of the sinner. If salvation implies fitness for heaven, and if this implies ceasing from sin, then, of course, it is naturally and for ever impossible that any sinner can be saved without holiness.

**3.** The peace of heaven forbids that you should go there in your sins. I know you think of going to heaven; you rather expect you shall go there at last; your parents are there, as you hope and believe, and for this reason you the more want to go, that you may behold them in their glory. Oh, say

you, should I not like to be where my father and mother are? And do you think you can follow them, in your sins? What could you do in heaven if you were there? What could you say? What kind of songs could you sing there? What sort of happiness, congenial to your heart, could you hope to find there?

Your pious mother in heaven oh, how changed you heard her last words on earth for they were words of prayer for your poor guilty soul; but now she shines and sings above, all holy and pure. What sympathy could there be between you and her in heaven? Remember what Christ said when some one told him that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to see him. "Who," said he, "is my mother? and who are my brethren? He that doth the will of my Father, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The law of sympathy, therefore, in heaven turns not on earthly relationship, but on oneness of heart on the common and mutual spirit of love and obedience towards their great common Father.

Do you then expect that your mother would be glad to see you that she would spread her mantle over you and take you up to heaven? Oh, if she were told that you were at the gate, she would hasten down to say, O my sinning child! you cannot enter heaven. Into this holy place nothing can by any means enter that "worketh abomination or maketh a lie." You cannot no, you cannot come!

If it were left to your own mother to decide the question of your admission, you could not come in. She would not open heaven's gate for your admission. She knows you would disturb the bliss of heaven. She knows you would mar its purity and be an element of discord in its sympathies and in its songs.

You know it need not have been so. You might have given your heart to God in season, and then he would have shed his love abroad in your soul, and given you the Holy Ghost, and made you ripe for heaven. But you would not. All was done for you that God could wisely do; all that Christ could do; all that the spirit of God could consistently do. But all was vain: all came to naught and availed nothing, because you would not forego your sins would not renounce them, even for everlasting life. And now will heaven let you in? No. Nothing that worketh abomination can by any means go in there.

**4.** Besides, it would not be for your own comfort to be there. You were never quite comfortable in spiritual society on earth; in the prayer meeting you were unhappy. As one individual said here: “Oh, what a place this is! I cannot go across the street without being spoken to about my soul. How can I live here?”

Let me tell you, it will be just as bad, nay, much worse, for you in heaven. That can be no place for you, sinner, since you hate, worst of all things on earth, those places and scenes which are most like heaven.

**5.** The justice of God will not allow you to participate in the joys of the saints. His relations to the universe make it indispensable that he should protect his saints from such society as you.

They have had their discipline of trial in such society long enough: the scenes of their eternal reward will bring everlasting relief from this torture of their holy sympathies. Oh, how will God, their Infinite Father, throw around them the shield of his protection upon the mountains of paradise, that lift their heads eternally under the sunlight of his glory!

His sense of propriety forbids that he should give you a place among his pure and trustful children. It would be so unfitting so unsuitable! It would throw such discord into the sweet songs and sympathies of the holy!

Besides, as already hinted, it could be no kindness to you. It could not soothe, but only chafe and fret your spirit. Oh, if you were obliged to be there, how would it torment and irritate your soul!

If, then, the sinner cannot be saved and go to heaven, where shall he appear?

The question is a strong negation. They shall not appear among the righteous and the saved. This is a common form of speaking. Nehemiah said, “Shall such a man as I flee?” No, indeed. This form of question is one of the strongest forms of negation that can be expressed in our language.

Where, then, shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? In no desirable place or position certainly. Not with the righteous in the judgment, for so God’s word has often and most solemnly affirmed. Christ himself affirms that, when all nations shall be gathered before him for judgment, he will separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

This separation, as the description shows, brings the righteous on the right hand and the wicked on the left. And it should be considered that this statement is made by Christ himself, and that if any being in the universe knows, it must be he to whom is “given authority to execute judgment.” He says he will separate them one from another according not to their national relations, or their family connections, but according to their character as friends or enemies to God.

Oh, what a separation must this be in families and among dear earthly friends! On this side will be a husband on that a wife; here a brother and there a sister; here one of two friends and there the other parted for ever for ever! If this great division were to be struck between you today according to present character, how fearful the line of separation it would draw! Ask yourselves where it would pass through your own families and among the friends you love. How would it divide College classes and oh, how would it smite many hearts with terror and consternation!

It is asked, where shall the ungodly appear? I answer, certainly not in heaven, nor on the heavenly side. But they must be in the judgment, for God has said, he would bring all the race into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. All are to be there, but some are on the right hand and some on the left.

The ungodly and the sinner will appear in that day among the damned among lost angels, doomed to the place prepared of old for their eternal abode. So Jesus has himself told us. The very words of their sentence are on record: “Then will he say to them on his left hand, Depart, from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” This is indeed the only place for which they are prepared; and this the only society to which their hearts are congenial. They have of choice belonged to Satan’s government on earth: at least, in the sense of doing precisely what he would have them do. Now, therefore, after such a training in selfishness and sin, they are manifestly fit for no other and better society than that of Satan and his angels.

Let it not surprise any of you to be told that the amiable sinners of earth are preparing themselves (remaining enemies to God and radically selfish) for the society of the arch spirit of evil. Just observe what restraints are thrown around sinners here.



Mark how obviously they feel restrained, and show that they are restive and ill at ease. It may be read out of their very hearts that they would be glad to be vastly more wicked and selfish, that is, in their external life if they might. It is wonderful to see in how many ways God's providence has walled around the sinner's pathway and hedged him in from out breaking sin.

But let these walls be torn away; let all regard to his reputation among the good perish for ever from his soul; let despair of ever gaining God's favor take full possession of his heart, and rivet its iron grasp upon him, then what will he become? Take away all the restraints of civil society of laws and customs of Christian example, and of Christian society; let there be no more prayer made for him by pitying Christian friends, no more counsel given, or entreaty used to persuade him towards the good, then tell me, where is the sinner? How terribly will sin work out its dreadful power to corrupt and madden the soul! Bring together myriads of desperate wretches, in the madness of their despair and rage and wrath against God and all the good, and Oh what a fearful world would they make! What can be conceived more awful! Yet this is the very world for which sinners are now preparing, and the only one for which they will be found in the judgment to be prepared.

As this is the only world for which the sinner is prepared, so is it the only one which is appropriate and fitting, the case being viewed in respect to his influence for mischief. Here only, here in this prison house of woe and despair, can sinners be effectually prevented from doing any further mischief in God's kingdom. Here they are cut off from all possibility of doing any more harm in God's universe.

In this earthly state one sinner destroys much good each and every sinner does much evil. God looks on, not unconcerned, but with amazing patience. He suffers a great deal of evil to be done, for the sake of securing an opportunity to try the power of forbearance and love upon the sinner's heart. You are abusing his love and defeating all its kind designs, but still God waits, till the point is reached where forbearance ceases to be virtue. Beyond this point, how can God wait longer?

Here you find ample room for doing mischief. Many are around you whom you influence to evil and urge on towards hell. Some of them would be

converted but for your influence to hold them back and ensnare their souls. If this were the place, I could name and call out some of you who are exerting a deadly influence upon your associates. Ah, to think of the souls you may ruin for ever! God sees them, and sees how you are playing into the devil's hands to drag them down with you to an eternal hell. But ere long he will take you away from this sphere of doing evil. He will for ever cut off your connection with those who can be influenced to evil, and leave around you only those associates who are ruined, despairing, and maddened in sin, like yourself. There he will lock you up, throw away the key, and let you rave on, and swear on, and curse on, and madden your guilty soul more and more for ever! Oh! what inmates are those in this prison-house of the guilty and the lost! Why should not God fit up such a place for such beings, so lost to all good, and so given up to all the madness and guilt of rebellion?

There alone can sinners be made useful. They refused to make themselves useful by their voluntary agency on earth; now God will make use of them in hell for some good. Do you ask me if I talk about sin being made useful? Yes, to be sure I do. God never permits anything to occur in his universe but he extracts some good from it, overruling its influence, or making the correction and punishment of it a means of good. This is a great consolation to the holy, that no sinner can exist from whom God will not bring out some good. This principle is partially developed in society here, under civil government. The gallows is not the greatest evil in the world, nor the most unmixed evil. Murder is much worse. States' prisons are not the greatest earthly evils. Government can make great use of those men who will not obey law. It can make them examples and lift them up as beacons of warning, to show the evil of disobeying wholesome laws.

A great many men have had strong and useful impressions made on their minds, as, riding through Auburn on the railroad, they have marked those lofty frowning walls and battlements which enclose and guard the culprits immured within. Many a hard heart has quailed before those walls, and the terrors of those cells behind. If the outside view does not avail to awe the spirit of transgression, give them the inside view and some of its heart-desolating experience. These things do good. They tame the passion for evil-doing, and impress a salutary fear on the hardened and reckless. If so

under all the imperfections of human government, how much more under the perfect administration of the divine!

God cannot afford to lose your influence in his universe. He will rejoice to use you for the glory of his mercy, if you will; Oh yes! He will put away your sins far as the East is from the West, and will put a robe of beauty and glory upon you, and a sweet harp in your hands, and a song of praise on your lips, and the melody of heaven's love in your heart, all these, if you will. But if you will not, then he has other attributes besides mercy that need to be illustrated. Justice will come in for its claim, and to illustrate this he will make you an example of the bitter misery of sinning. He will put you deep in hell; and the holy, beholding you there, will see that God's kingdom is safe and pure, and in their everlasting song they will shout, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thy judgments are made manifest."

This is the only way in which God can make you useful in his kingdom, if you will not repent. He has tried every means of bringing you to repentance, but all in vain; he cannot get your consent. Of course there is no alternative but to make you an example to deter all other moral agents from sinning.

There is no other way for God to meet the demands of the public weal, but to make you an example to show his abhorrence of sin. God is most thoroughly economical of his resources. He husbands everything to the very best account. Everything must, under his hand, be made conducive in some way to the general good. Even of your misery he will be as economical as he can, and will carefully turn it all to the very best account. Every groan and every throb and pang of your agonized soul will be turned to use. Yes, rely upon it; all this agony, which does you no good, but is to you only unmingled and unalleviated woe, will be a warning beacon, under God's hand, crying out in tones of thunder, Stand away! stand away! lest you come into this place of torment; stand afar from sin fear this awful sin watch against it, for it is an awful thing to sin against Jehovah. I have tried it and here I am in woe unutterable! Oh what a testimony, when all hell shall roll up one mighty accumulated groan! a groan whose awful voice

shall be, stand in awe and sin not, for God is terrible in his judgments upon the guilty.

O sinner, think of it. God wants you now to cry out to every fellow sinner, and warn him away from the brink of hell. Will you do it? What are you in fact doing? Are you preparing yourself to go out as a missionary of light and love and mercy to the benighted? Are you pluming your wings, as an angel of mercy, to bear the messages of salvation? Oh no! you refuse to do this, or anything of the sort. You disdain to preach such a gospel and to preach it so! But God will make you preach it in another way; for, as I said, he is thoroughly economical of the resources of his kingdom, and all must do something in some way for his glory. He will have everything preach saints preach and sinners preach; yea, sinners in hell must preach for God and for his truth. He will make your very groans and tears those "tears that ever fall, but not in Mercy's sight" they will preach, and will tell over and over the dreadful story of mercy abused and sin persisted in, and waxing worse and worse, till the bolts of vengeance broke at last upon your guilty head! Over and over will those groans, and tears repeat the fearful story, so that when the angels shall come from the remotest regions of the universe, they shall cry out, What is here? What mean those groans? What mean those flames, wreathing around their miserable victims?

Ah! the story told then will make them cry aloud, Why will God's creatures sin against his throne? Can there be such madness in beings gifted with reason's light?

These angels know that the only thing that can secure public confidence in a ruler is fidelity in the execution of his law. Hence it is to them no wonder that, there being sin to punish, God should punish it with most exemplary severity. They expect this and seeing its awful demonstrations before their eyes only serves to impress the more deeply on their souls the holiness and justice of the great and blessed God.

## REMARKS

**1.** From this standpoint we can easily see what we are to understand by the doctrine of election a doctrine often misstated, and often perverted to a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The simple and plain view of it

is, that God, foreseeing all the future of your existence as perfectly as if all were in fact present, determined to deal with you according to your voluntary course; determined to offer you the gospel, and, on your refusal of it, to give you over to the doom of those who deny the Lord that bought them. Election is no new or different plan of divine administration, aside from and unlike what the Bible reveals as the plan of saving men through the gospel. It is this very plan of which the Bible is full, only that it contemplates this plan as framed by the divine Mind “before the world began.”

**2.** If you will now consent to give your heart to God, you can be saved. No election will hinder you. The doctrine of election is simply the fact that God sends forth his Spirit to save as many as by the best system of influences he wisely can save; and surely this never can hinder any sinner from repenting and gaining salvation, for the very good reason that this plan contemplates saving and not damning men, as its object, and is in fact the sinner’s only hope.

Come then, repent and believe the gospel, if you would be saved. No election will hinder you, and neither will it save you without your own repentance unto life.

How then shall the case turn with you? Almost all who are ever converted are brought in, early in life. Not one in a hundred is converted after the age of forty. The old among the converts are always few only one among a host one in a long space of time; like scattering beacon lights upon the mountain tops, that the aged may not quite despair of salvation. But God is intensely interested in saving the young, for he needs and loves to use them in his service. Oh how his heart goes forth after the young! How often has my soul been affected as I have thought of his parental interest for the salvation of this great multitude of youth! They come here from pious homes, freighted with the prayers of pious fathers and mothers, and what shall be the result? What has been the result, as thus far developed, with you? Has anything been really secured as yet? Is anything fixed and done for eternity? How many times have you been called to decide, but have decided wrong all wrong? You have been pressed earnestly with God’s claims, and many a time have prayers and groans gone forth from the Christian heart of this whole community; but ah! where are you still?

Not yet safe; ah, in greater peril than ever! Often reprov'd, hardening your neck; and what next? Suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. Suppose even now the curtain should drop, you are dead! And whither, then, goes the undying, guilty soul?

**3.** How great the mistake made by Universalists, that all men will be saved, when the Bible holds that even the salvation of the righteous is difficult, and that of the sinner, impossible. How strangely they misread the whole Bible! Go not in their ways, O ye youth of Oberlin!

But what are you doing? Do you flatter yourselves that the work of salvation is all so easy that it may be safely and surely done during a few of life's last moments?

Will you presume, as the man did who said he should need but five minutes to prepare to die? Hear his story. What was the result of his system? Disease came on. It smote him with its strong hand. Delirium set in. Reason tottered and fell from her throne, and so he died! Go on, thou young man; drive on, headlong and reckless; make a bold business of sinning, and bear it on with bold front and high hand; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Consider what tidings we hear of our former pupils who once sat as you now sit, and once heard the gospel as you may hear it now. There, one is dead; and now another and now another. In rapid succession they drop from the stage of mortal life and what next? What more? Soon we shall meet them in the fearful judgment!

Brethren, what will the universe say of us, if we neglect to labor for the salvation of these precious youth? What will the parents of these dear youth say to us when we shall meet them at the Savior's bar?

I have spoken to you of the difficulties and the struggles of the Christian more and greater far than the ungodly are usually aware of; those agonies of prayer, those conflicts against temptation; out of all which it is only great grace that can bring him forth, conqueror and more than conqueror. If he is saved with so much difficulty, how does it become you to strive to enter in at the strait gate? Are you aware that the smooth sea of temptation bears you on to the breakers of death? Were you ever at Niagara? How smooth and deceitful those waters, as they move along quite

up above the draft of the suction from below! But lower down, see how those same waters roar, and dash, and foam, and send up their thick mists to the heavens above you. Yet in the upper stream you glide gently and noiselessly along, dreaming of no danger, and making no effort to escape. In a moment you are in the awful current, dashing headlong down; and where are you now?

And what should you do? Like Bunyan's Christian pilgrim, put your fingers in both ears, and run, shouting, Life! life! eternal LIFE! How many of you are sliding along on the smooth, deceitful stream, above, yet only just above, the awful rapids and the dreadful cataract of death! What if, this night, delirium should seize upon you? Or what if the Spirit should leave you for ever, and it should be said of you, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone?"

What do you say? Do I hear you saying, "If salvation is possible for me if by putting forth the whole energy of my will I can ensure it, Oh let me do so! Help me, O ye ministers of Christ's gospel! Help me, ye Christians, who pray between the porch and the altar! Help me, O ye heavens, of heavens for this is a thing of life and death, and the redemption of the soul is most precious!"

Surely, O ye sinners, it is time that you should set down your foot in most fixed determination, and say, "I must and I will have heaven! How can I ever bear the doom of the damned!"

# ANY ONE FORM OF SIN PERSISTED IN IS FATAL TO THE SOUL

*“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point is guilty of all.” — James 2:10.*

*“He that is unjust in the least, is also unjust in much.” — Luke 16:10*

In speaking from these words, I inquire,

## I. WHAT IS IT TO PERSIST IN SIN?

**1.** To persist in sin is not to abandon it. If a person should only occasionally, under the force of temptation, fall into a sin, any form of sin, and should repent and abandon it for a time, and should only occasionally be overcome by a temptation to commit that form of sin, it would not be proper to say that he persisted in it; for, according to this supposition, he is not wilful, or obstinate, or habitual in the commission of this sin, but it is rather accidental, in the sense that the temptation sometimes overtakes and overcomes him, notwithstanding his habitual abandonment of it and resistance to it. But if the commission be habitual, a thing allowed, a thing indulged in habitually, such a sin is persisted in.

**2.** A sin is persisted in, although it may not be outwardly repeated, if it be not duly confessed. An individual may be guilty of a great sin, which he may not repeat in the act; nevertheless, while he neglects or refuses to confess it, it is still on his conscience unrepented of and in that sense, is still persisted in. If the sin has been committed to the injury of some person or persons, and be not duly confessed to the parties injured, it is still persisted in.

If any of you had slandered his neighbor to his great injury, it would not do for you to merely abstain from repeating that offence. The sin is not abandoned until it is confessed, and reparation made, so far as confession



can make it. If not confessed, the injury is allowed to work; and therefore the sin is virtually repeated, and therefore persisted in.

Again,

**3.** A sin is persisted in when due reparation has not been made. If you have wronged a person, and it is in your power to make him restitution and satisfaction, then, so long as you persist in neglecting or refusing to do so, you do not forsake the sin, but persist in it. Suppose one who had stolen your property, resolved never to repeat the act, and never to commit the like again; and yet he refuses to make restitution and restore the stolen property as far as is in his power; of course he still persists in that sin, and the wrong is permitted to remain.

I once had a conversation with a young man to this effect. He had been in the habit of stealing. He was connected with a business in which it was possible for him to steal money in small sums, which he had repeatedly done. He afterwards professed to become a Christian, but he made no restitution. He found in the Bible this text, "Let him that stole steal no more." He resolved not to steal any more, and there let the matter rest. Of course he had no evidence of acceptance with God, for he could not have been accepted. However, he flattered himself that he was a Christian for a long time, until he heard a sermon on confession and restitution, which woke him up. He then came to me for the conversation of which I have spoken.

He was told that, if it was in his power, he must make restitution and give back the stolen money, or he could not be forgiven. But observe his perversion of Scripture. To be sure it is the duty of those who have stolen property to steal no more; but this is not all. He is bound to restore that which he has stolen, as well as to steal no more. This is a plain doctrine of Scripture, as well as of reason and conscience.

## II. ANY ONE FORM OF SIN PERSISTED IN IS FATAL TO THE SOUL

I now come to the main doctrine of our texts That is, it is impossible for a person to be saved who continues to commit any form of known sin.

**1.** It is fatal to the soul because any one form of sin persisted in is a violation of the spirit of the whole law. The text in James settles that: “Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.” The law requires supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellow men.

Now sin is selfishness; and always assumes the preference of self-interest and self-gratification to obedience to God, or to our duty to our fellow men.

Whosoever, therefore, habitually prefers himself to God, or is selfish in regard to his, fellow men, cannot be a Christian. If in any one thing he violates the law of love, he breaks the spirit of the whole law, and is living in sin.

**2.** Persistence in any form of sin cannot consist with supreme love to God or equal love to our fellow men. If we love God more than ourselves, we cannot disoblige him for the sake of obliging ourselves. We cannot displease him, knowingly and habitually, for the sake of pleasing ourselves.

For we supremely love whom we supremely desire to please. If we supremely desire to please ourselves, we love ourselves supremely. If we love God supremely, we desire supremely to please him; and cannot, consistently with the existence of this love in the soul, consent to displease him.

Under the force of a powerful temptation that diverts and partially distracts the mind, one who loves God may be induced to commit an occasional sin, and occasionally to displease God.

But if he love God supremely, he will consent to displease him only under the pressure of a present and powerful temptation that diverts attention and partially distracts the mind. So that his sin cannot be habitual; and no form of sin can habitually have dominion over him if he is truly a Christian.

**3.** The text in James affirms the impossibility of real obedience in one thing, and of persistent disobedience in another, at the same time. It seems to me a great and common error to suppose that persons can really obey

God in the spirit of obedience in some things, while at the same time there are certain other things in which they withhold obedience; in other words, that they can obey one commandment and disobey another at the same time that they can perform one duty acceptably, and at the same time refuse to perform other duties.

Now the text in James is designed flatly to contradict this view of the subject. It asserts as plainly as possible, that disobedience in any one point is wholly inconsistent with true obedience, for the time being, in any other respect; that the neglect of one duty renders it impossible, for the time being, to perform any other duty with acceptance; in other words, no one can obey in one thing and disobey in another at the same time.

But

**4.** Real obedience to God involves and implies supreme regard for his authority.

Now if any one has a supreme regard for God's authority in any one thing, he will yield to his authority in everything.

But if he can consent to act against the authority of God in any one thing for the time being, he cannot be accepted in anything; for it must be that, while in one thing he rejects the authority of God, he does not properly accept it in any other. Hence, if obedience to God be real in anything, it extends for the time being, and must extend, to everything known to be the will of God.

Again,

**5.** One sin persisted in is fatal to the soul, because it is a real rejection of God's whole authority. If a man violates knowingly any one of God's commandments as such, he rejects the authority of God; and if in this he rejects the authority of God, he rejects his whole authority, for the time being, on every subject. So that if he appears to obey in other things while in one thing he sets aside and condemns God's authority, it is only the appearance of obedience, and not real obedience. He acts from a wrong motive in the case in which he appears to obey. He certainly does not act out of supreme respect to God's authority; and therefore he does not truly

obey him. But surely one who rejects the whole authority of God cannot be saved.

I fear it is very common for persons to make a fatal mistake here; and really to suppose that they are accepted in their obedience in general, although in some things or thing they habitually neglect or refuse to do their duty.

They live, and know that they live, in the omission of some duty habitually, or in the violation of their own consciences on some point habitually; and yet they keep up so much of the form of religion, and do so many things that they call duties, that they seem to think that these will compensate for the sin in which they persist. Or rather, so many duties are performed, and so much of religion is kept up, as will show, they think, that upon the whole they are Christians; will afford them ground for hope, and give them reasons to think that they are accepted while they are indulging, and know that they are, in some known sin.

They say, To be sure, I know that I neglect that duty; I know that I violate my conscience in that thing; but I do so many other things that are my duty, that I have good reason to believe that I am a Christian.

Now this is a fatal delusion. Such persons are totally deceived in supposing that they really obey God in anything. "He that is unjust in the least, is really unjust also in much;" and "whosoever will keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all."

Again,

**6.** Any form of sin persisted in is fatal to the soul, because it is inconsistent with true repentance. Sin, however great, will be forgiven if repented of. But what is repentance? Repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, but it is the heart-renunciation of sin; it is the giving up of sin from the heart, and of all sin as sin; it is the rejection of it because it is that abominable thing which God hates; it is the turning of the heart from self-seeking to supreme love to God and equal love to our fellow men; it is heart-reformation; it is heart-rejection of sin; it is heart turning to God.

Now, while any one sin is persisted in and not given up, there can be no true repentance; for, after all, this form of sin is preferred to the will of

God the indulgence of sense in this particular is preferred to pleasing God. There can, therefore, be no true repentance unless all known sin be for the time utterly abandoned.

**7.** Persistence in any form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it is utterly inconsistent with saving faith. That faith is saving which actually does save from sin and no other faith is saving or can be that faith is justifying which is sanctifying. True faith works by love; it purifies the heart; it overcomes the world.

These are expressly affirmed to be the characteristics of saving faith. Let no one suppose that his faith is justifying, when, in fact, it does not save him from the commission of sin; for he cannot be justified while he persists in the commission of any known sin. If his faith does not purify his heart, if it does not overcome the world and overcome his sins, it can never save him.

Again,

**8.** Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because it withstands the power of the gospel. The gospel does not save whom it does not sanctify. If sin in any form withstands the saving power of the gospel; if sin does not yield under the influence of the gospel; if it be persisted in, in spite of all the power of the gospel on the soul; of course the gospel does not, cannot, save that soul. Such sin is fatal.

But again,

**9.** Persistence in any one form of sin is fatal to the soul, because the grace of the gospel cannot pardon what it cannot eradicate.

As I have already said, a sin cannot be pardoned while it is persisted in. Some persons seem to suppose that, although they persist in many forms of sin, yet the grace of God will pardon sins that it has not power to eradicate and subdue. But this is a great mistake. The Bible everywhere expressly teaches this that if the gospel fails to eradicate sin, it can never save the soul from the consequences of that sin.

But again,

**10.** If the gospel should pardon sin which it did not eradicate, this would not save the soul.

Suppose God should not punish sin; still, if the soul be left to the self-condemnation of sin, its salvation is naturally impossible. It were of no use to the sinner to be pardoned, if left under this self-condemnation. This is plain. Let no one, therefore, think that, if his sins are not subdued by the grace of the gospel, he can be saved.

But again,

**11.** and lastly. Sin is a unit in its spirit and root. It consists in preferring self to God.

Hence, if any form of preferring self to God be persisted in, no sin has been truly abandoned; God is not supremely loved; and the soul cannot, by any possibility, in such a case, be saved.

## REMARKS

**1.** What a delusion the self-righteous are under.

Every man is aware that he has sinned at some time, and that he is a sinner. But there are many who think that, upon the whole, they perform so many good deeds, that they are safe. They are aware that they are habitually neglecting God and neglecting duty, that they neither love God supremely nor their neighbor as themselves; yet they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. Now let them understand that there is no particle of righteousness in them, nor of true goodness, while they live in neglect of any known duty to man while they are constantly prone to give themselves credit for a great deal of goodness. But they seem to think that they have a balance of good deeds.

**2.** How many persons indulge in little sins, as they call them; but they are too honest, they think, to indulge in great crimes. Now both these texts contradict this view. "He that is unjust in that which is least, is unjust also in much." If a man yields to a slight temptation to commit what he calls a small sin, it cannot be a regard for God that keeps him from committing

great sins. He may abstain from committing great sins through fear of disgrace or of punishment, but not because he loves God.

If he does not love God well enough to keep from yielding to slight temptations to commit small sins, surely he does not love him well enough to keep from yielding to great temptations to commit great sins.

Again,

**3.** We see the delusion of those who are guilty of habitual dishonesties, tricks of trade for example, and yet profess to be Christians.

How many are there who are continually allowing themselves to practice little dishonesties, little deceptions, and to tell little lies in trade; and yet think themselves Christians! Now this delusion is awful; it is fatal. Let all such be on their guard, and understand it.

But again,

**4.** We see the delusion of those professors of religion who allow themselves habitually to neglect some known duty, and yet think themselves Christians. They shun some cross; there is something that they know they ought to do which they do not, and this is habitual with them. Perhaps all their Christian lives they have shunned some cross, or neglected the performance of some duty, and yet they think themselves Christians. Now let them know assuredly that they are self-deceived.

**5.** Many, I am sorry to say, preach a gospel that is a dishonor to Christ. They really maintain, at least they make this impression, though they may not teach it in words and form, that Christ really justifies men while they are living in the habitual indulgence of known sin.

Many preachers seem not to be aware of the impression which they really leave upon their people. Probably, if they were asked whether they hold and preach that any sin is forgiven which is not repented of; whether men are really justified while they persist in known sin, they would say, No. But, after all, in their preaching, they leave a very different impression. For example, how common it is to find ministers who are in this position: You ask them how many members they have in their church. Perhaps they will tell you, Five hundred. How many, do you think, are living up to the best light which they have? How many of them are living from day to day with

a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, and are not indulging in any known sin either of omission or commission? who are living and aiming to discharge punctually and fully every duty of heart to God and to all their fellow men? Push the inquiry, and ask, How many of your church can you honestly say, before God, you think are endeavoring to live without sin? who do not indulge themselves in any form of transgression or omission?

They will tell you, perhaps, that they do not know a member of their church, or at least they know but very few, of whom they can say this. Now ask them further, How many of your church do you suppose to be in a state of justification? and you will find that they have the impression that the great mass of their church are in a state of justification with God; in a state of acceptance with him; in a state in which they are prepared to die; and if they should die just in this state by any sudden stroke of Providence, and they should be called upon to preach their funeral sermon, they would assume that they had gone to heaven.

While they will tell you that they know of but very few of their church of whom they can conscientiously say, I do not believe he indulges himself in any known sin; yet, let one of that great majority, of whom he cannot say this, suddenly die, and this pastor be called to attend his funeral, would he not comfort the mourners by holding out the conviction that he was a Christian, and had gone to heaven? Now this shows that the pastor himself, whatever be his theoretical views of being justified while indulging in any known sin, is yet, after all, practically an antinomian; and practically holds, believes, and teaches that Christ justifies people while they are living in the neglect of known duty, while they are knowingly shunning some cross, while they persist in known sin.

Ministers, indeed, often leave this impression upon their churches (and I fear Calvinistic ministers quite generally), that if they are converted, or ever were, they are justified, although they may be living habitually and always in the indulgence of more or less known sin, living in the habitual neglect of known duty, indulging various forms of selfishness. And yet they are regarded as justified Christians: and get the impression, even from the preaching of their ministers, that all is well with them; that they really believe the gospel and are saved by Christ.



Now this is really antinomianism. It is a faith without law; it is a Savior that saves in and not from sin. It is presenting Christ as really setting aside the moral law and introducing another rule of life; as forgiving sin while it is persisted in, instead of saving from sin.

**6.** Many profess to be Christians, and are indulging the hope of eternal life, who know that they never have forsaken all forms of sin; that in some things they have always fallen short of complying with the demands of their own consciences. They have indulged in what they call little sins; they have allowed themselves in practices, and in forms of self-indulgence, that they cannot justify; they have never reformed all their bad habits, and have never lived up to what they have regarded as their whole duty. They have never really intended to do this; have never resolutely set themselves in the strength of Christ, to give up every form of sin, both of omission and commission; but, on the contrary, they know that they have always indulged themselves in what they condemn. And yet they call themselves Christian! But this is as contrary to the teaching of the Bible as possible. The Bible teaches, not only that men are condemned by God if they indulge themselves in what they condemn; but, also, that God condemns them if they indulge in that the lawfulness of which they so much as doubt. If they indulge in any one thing the lawfulness of which is in their own estimation doubtful, God condemns them. This is the express teaching of the Bible. But how different is this from the common ideas that many professors of religion have!

**7.** Especially is this true of those who habitually indulge in the neglect of known duties, and who habitually shun the cross of Christ. Many persons neglect family prayer, and yet admit that they ought to perform it How many females will even stay away from the female prayer meeting to avoid performing the duty of taking a part in those meetings! How many indulge the hope that they are saved, while they know that they are neglecting, and always have neglected, some things, and even many things, that they admit to be their duty. They continue to live on in those omissions; but they think they are Christians because they do not engage in anything that is openly disgraceful, or, as they suppose, very bad.

Now there are many that entirely overlook the real nature of sin. The law of God is positive. It commands us to consecrate all our powers to his

service and glory; to love him with all our heart and our neighbor as yourself. Now to neglect to do this is sin; it is positive transgression; it is an omission which always involves a refusal to do what God requires us to do. In other words, sin is the refusal to do what God requires us to do. It is the neglect to fulfil our obligations. If one neglects to pay you what he owes you, do you not call that sin, especially if the neglect involves necessarily the refusal to pay when he has the means of payment?

Sin really consists in withholding from God and man that love and service which we owe them a withholding from God and man their due.

Now, where any one withholds from God and man what is their due, is this honest? is this Christian? And while this withholding is persisted in, can an individual be in a justified state? No, indeed!

The Bible teaches that sin is forgiven when it is repented of, but never while it is persisted in. The Bible teaches that the grace of God can save us from sin from the commission of sin, or can pardon when we repent and put away sin; but it never teaches that sin can be forgiven while it is persisted in.

Let me ask you who are here present, Do you think you are Christians? Do you think, if you should die in your present state, that you are prepared to go to heaven? that you are already justified in Christ?

Well now, let me further ask, Are you so much as seriously and solemnly intending to perform to Christ, from day to day, your whole duty, and to omit nothing that you regard as your duty either to God or man? Are you not habitually shunning some cross? omitting something because it is a trial to perform that duty? Are you not avoiding the performance of disagreeable duties, and things that are trying to flesh and blood? Are you not neglecting the souls of those around you? Are you not failing to love your neighbor as yourself? Are you not neglecting something that you yourself confess to be your duty? and is not this habitual with you?

And now, do you suppose that you are really to be saved while guilty of these neglects habitually and persistently? I beg of you, be not deceived.

**8.** The impression of many seems to be, that grace will pardon what it cannot Prevent; in other words, that if the grace of the gospel fails to save

people from the commission of sin in this life, it will nevertheless pardon them and save them in sin, if it cannot save from sin.

Now, really, I understand the gospel as teaching that men are saved from sin first, and, as a consequence, from hell; and not that they are saved from hell while they are not saved from sin. Christ sanctifies when he saves. And this is the very first element or idea of salvation, saving from sin. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus," said the angel, "for he shall save his people from their sins." "Having raised up his Son Jesus," said the apostle, "he hath sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from his iniquities."

Let no one expect to be saved from hell, unless the grace of the gospel saves him first from sin.

Again,

**9.** There are many who think that they truly obey God in most things, while they know that they habitually disobey Him in some things. They seem to suppose that they render acceptable obedience to most of the commandments of God, while they are aware that some of the commandments they habitually disregard. Now the texts upon which I am speaking expressly deny this position, and plainly teach that if in any one thing obedience is refused, if any one commandment is disobeyed, no other commandment is acceptably obeyed, or can be for the time being.

Do let me ask you who are here present, Is not this impression in your minds that, upon the whole, you have evidence that you are Christians?

You perform so many duties and avoid so many out breaking sins; you think that there is so great a balance in your favor, that you obey so many more commands than you disobey, that you call yourselves Christians, although you are aware that some of the commandments you never seriously intended to comply with, and that in some things you have always allowed yourself to fall short of known duty. Now, if this impression is in your minds, remember that it is not authorized at all by the texts upon which I am speaking, nor by any part of the Bible. You are really disobeying the spirit of the whole law.

You do not truly embrace the gospel; your faith does not purify your heart and overcome the world; it does not work by love, and therefore it is a spurious faith, and you are yet in your sins. Will you consider this? Will you take home this truth to your inmost soul?

**10.** There are many who are deceiving themselves by indulging the belief that they are forgiven, while they have not made that confession and restitution which is demanded by the gospel. In other words, they have not truly repented; they have not given up their sin. They do not outwardly repeat it; neither do they in heart forsake it.

They have not made restitution; and therefore they hold on to their sin, supposing all is right if they do not repeat it; that Christ will forgive them while they make no satisfaction, even while satisfaction is in their power. This is a great delusion, and is greatly dishonoring to Christ. As if Christ would disgrace himself by forgiving you while you persist in doing your neighbor wrong!

This he cannot do; this he will not, must not do. He loves your neighbor as really as he loves you. He is infinitely willing to forgive provided you repent and make the restitution in your power; but until then, he cannot, will not.

I must remark again,

**11.** That from the teachings of these texts it is evident that no one truly obeys in any one thing, while he allows himself to disobey in any other thing. To obey God truly in anything, we must settle the question of universal obedience; else all our pretended obedience is vain. If we do not yield the whole to God; if we do not go the whole length of seriously giving up all, and renouncing in heart every form of sin, and make up our minds to obey him in everything, we do not truly obey him in anything.

Again,

**12.** From this subject we can see why there are so many professors of religion that get no peace, and have no evidence of their acceptance. They are full of doubts and fears. They have no religious enjoyment, but are groping on in darkness and doubt; are perhaps praying for evidence and trying to get peace of mind, but fall utterly short of doing so.

Now, in such cases you will often find that some known sin is indulged; some known duty continually neglected; some known cross shunned; something avoided which they know to be their duty, because it is trying to them to fulfil their obligation. It is amazing to see to what an extent this is true.

Some time since, an aged gentleman visited me, who came from a distance as an inquirer. He had been a preacher, and indeed was then a minister of the gospel; but he had given up preaching because of the many doubts that he had of his acceptance with Christ. He was in great darkness and trouble of mind; had been seeking religion, as he said, a great part of his life; and had done everything, as he supposed, in his power, to obtain evidence of his acceptance.

When I came to converse with him, I found that there were sins on his conscience that had been there for many years; plain cases of known transgression, of known neglect of duty indulged all this while. Here he was, striving to get peace, striving to get evidence, and even abandoning preaching because he could not get evidence; while all the time these sins lay upon his conscience. Amazing! amazing!

Again,

**13.** I remark, That total abstinence from all known sin is the only practicable rule of life. To sin in one thing and obey in another at the same time is utterly impossible. We must give up, in heart and purpose, all sin, or we in reality give up none. It is utterly impossible for a man to be truly religious at all, unless in the purpose of his heart he is wholly so and universally so. He cannot be a Christian at home and a sinner abroad; or a sinner at home and a Christian abroad.

He cannot be a Christian on the Sabbath, and a selfish man in his business or during the week. A man must be one or the other; he must yield everything to God, or in fact he yields nothing to God.

He cannot serve God and mammon. Many are trying to do so, but it is impossible. They cannot love both God and the world; they cannot serve two masters; they cannot please God and the world. It is the greatest, and yet the most common, I fear, of all mistakes, that men can be truly but knowingly only partially religious; that in some things, they can truly

yield to God, while in other things they refuse to obey him. How common is this mistake! If it is not, what shall we make of the state of the churches?

How are we to understand the great mass of professors? How are we to understand the great body of religious teachers, if they do not leave the impression, after all, on the churches, that they can be accepted of God while their habitual obedience is only very partial; while, in fact, they pick and choose among the commandments of God, professing to obey some, while they allow themselves in known disobedience of others. Now, if in this respect the church has not a false standard; if the mass of religious instruction is not making a false impression on the churches and on the world in this respect, I am mistaken. I am sorry to be obliged to entertain this opinion, and to express it; but what else can I think? How else can the state of the churches be accounted for? How else is it that ministers hope that the great mass of their churches are in a safe state? How else is it that the great mass of professors of religion can have any hope of eternal life in them, if this is not the principle practically adopted by them, that they are justified while only rendering habitually but a very partial obedience to God; that they are really forgiven and justified while they only pick and choose among the commandments, obeying those which it costs them little to obey, and are not disagreeable and not unpopular; while they do not hesitate habitually to disobey where obedience would subject them to any inconvenience, require self-denial, or expose them to any persecution?

Again,

**14.** From what has been said, it will be seen that partial reformation is no evidence of real conversion. Many are deceiving themselves on this point. Now we should never allow ourselves to believe that a person is converted if we perceive that his reformation extends to certain things only, while in certain other things he is not reformed; especially when, in the case of those things in which he is not reformed, he admits that he ought to perform those duties, or to relinquish those practices. If we find him still persisting in what he himself admits to be wrong, we are bound to assume and take it for granted that his conversion is not real.

Again,

**15.** Inquirers can see what they must do.

They must abandon all sin; they must give up all for Christ: they must turn with their whole heart and soul to him; and must make up their minds to yield a full and hearty obedience as long as they live. They must settle this in their minds; and must cast themselves upon Christ for forgiveness for all the past, and grace to help in every time of need for the future. Only let it be settled in your mind fully that you will submit yourself to the whole will of God; and then you may expect, and are bound to expect, him to forgive all the past, however great your sins may have been.

You can see, Inquirer, why you have not already obtained peace. You have prayed for pardon; you have prayed for peace; you have endeavored to get peace, while, in fact, you have not given up all; you have kept something back. It is a perfectly common thing to find that the inquirer has not given up all. And if you do not find peace, it is because you have not given up all.

Some idol is still retained; some sin persisted in perhaps some neglect perhaps some confession is not made that ought to have been made, or some act of restitution. You have not renounced the world, and do not, in fact, renounce it, and renounce everything, and flee to Christ.

# THE WRATH OF GOD AGAINST THOSE WHO WITHSTAND HIS TRUTH

*“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”*

— *Romans 1:18.*

THE following context shows that in these words the apostle has his eye especially on those who, not having a written revelation from God, might yet know him in his works of nature. Paul’s view is that God’s invisible attributes become apparent to the human mind, ever since the creation of our world being revealed by the things he has made. In and by means of these works, we may learn his eternal power and his real divinity. Hence all men have some means of knowing the great truths that pertain to God, our infinite Creator. And hence God may, with the utmost propriety, hold men responsible for accepting this truth reverently, and rendering to their Creator the homage due. For withholding this, they are utterly without excuse.

In discussing the subject presented in our text, let us inquire, first

## I. WHAT IS THE TRUE IDEA OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS?

Beyond question, it cannot be less than the negation of righteousness, and may imply more or less of positive wickedness. Here the question will arise, What is righteousness? To which I answer, rightness moral rightness, the original term being used in regard to material things, to denote what is straight; as, for example, a straight line. Unrighteousness, the opposite of this, must mean what is morally crooked, distorted not in harmony with the rightness of God’s law. To denote sin, the Scriptures employ some terms which properly signify a negation, or utter absence of what should be. Some theologians have maintained that the true idea of sin is simply



negative, supposing sin to consist in not doing and not being what one ought to do and to be. This idea is strongly implied in our text. Sin is, indeed, a neglect to do known duty and a refusal to comply with known obligation. Inasmuch as love is required always and of all men, this must be a state of real disobedience. Suffice it, then, to say, that unrighteousness is an omission a known omission a refusal to be what we should, and to do what we should. Of course it is only and wholly voluntary. The mind's refusal to obey God is a matter of its own free choice.

## II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN “HOLDING THE TRUTH IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS?”

The meaning of the original term “hold” is to hold back, to restrain. The idea here is that the man restrains the legitimate influence of the truth, and will not let it have its proper sway over his will.

The human mind is so constituted that truth is its natural stimulus. This stimulus of truth would, if not restrained and held back, lead the mind naturally to obey God. The man holds back the truth through his own unrighteousness, when, for selfish reasons, he overrules and restrains its natural influence, and will not suffer it to take possession and hold sway over his mind.

## III. WHAT IS INTENDED BY “THE WRATH OF GOD REVEALED FROM HEAVEN?”

and Why is it thus revealed against all such unrighteousness?

The obvious sense is that God, manifesting himself from heaven, has revealed his high and just displeasure against all restraining of the truth and withstanding of its influence.

Before I proceed to show why this is, I must be permitted to come very near to some of you whom I see before me this day, and talk to you in great frankness and faithfulness. I do not charge on you that you have been

outwardly immoral, but you have restrained the truth, you have withstood its influence.

You are therefore the very persons against whom the wrath of God is said to be revealed. This is true of every one of you who has not given himself up to the influence of truth. You have restrained that natural influence; therefore, against you God has revealed his wrath.

This is a terrible thing. The wrath of a king is terrible; how much more so is the wrath of God! Ah, who can stand before him when once he shall arise in his wrath to avenge his truth and his own glorious name!

Why does God's wrath wax hot against this sin? Comprehensively, the reason is this, Withstanding the truth is resisting God's revealed claims of love and obedience, and is therefore the whole of sin. All is comprised in it. This is the very essence the true idea of sin; it is deliberate, intelligent, and intentional rebellion against God. There could be no obligation until your conscience affirms it to yourself. The conscience cannot thus affirm obligation until there is some knowledge of God revealed to the mind; but when this knowledge is revealed, then conscience must and will affirm obligation. Subsequently to this point, the more conscience is developed, the more it unfolds, and the more strongly it affirms your obligation to obey God. Suppose a person were created asleep. Until he awakes, there could be in his mind no knowledge of God not one idea of God, and consequently no sense of obligation to obey him. But as soon as the moral functions of the reason and the conscience create a sense of obligation, then the mind is brought to a decision. It must then either choose to obey or to disobey God. It must elect either to take God's law as its rule of duty or to reject it.

The alternative of rejecting God makes it necessary to hold back the truth and withstand its claims. We might almost say that these processes are substantially identical resisting the natural influence of God's truth on the mind, and withstanding the known claims of God. When you know the truth concerning God, the great question being whether or not you will obey it, if your heart says No! you do of course resist the claims of truth. You hold it back through your own unrighteousness.

The very apprehending of moral truth concerning God renders it impossible to be indifferent. Once seeing God's claims you cannot avoid acting upon them one way or the other. Hence to stop there after your duty is made known, and hold your minds aloof from obedience, is being just as wicked as you can be. You disown your whole obligation towards God, and practically say unto him, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Is not this as wicked as you can be, with the light you may have at the time? What more wicked thing could you do?

Let us look at this matter a little farther. Holding back the truth through unrighteousness implies the total rejection of the moral law as a rule of duty. This must be the case, because, when light concerning the meaning of this law comes before the man, he repels it and resists its claims, thus virtually saying, That law is no rule of duty to me. Thus resisting the influence of truth, he practically denies all obligations to God. Truth coming before his mind, he perceives his obligation, but he withholds his mind from its sway.

You may probably have observed that some persons seem to have no sense of any other obligation save that created by human law. Legal obligation can reach them, but not moral. They will not pay an honest debt unless it is in such a shape that the strong hand of the law can take hold of them. Others have no sensibility to any claims save those that minister to their business reputation. Take away their fear of losing this; remove all the inducements to do right, save those that pertain to moral obligation, and see if they will ever do anything.

Now such men practically reject and deny God's rights altogether, and, equally so, their own obligations to God. Their conduct, put into words, would read, I have some respect for human law and some fear of human penalty; but, for God's law or penalty either, I care nothing!

It is easy to see that to hold back the truth thus is the perfection of wickedness. For suppose a man refrains from sinning, only because of his obligations to human laws. Then he shows that he fears human penalties only, and has no fear of God before his eyes.

Again, this holding the truth in unrighteousness settles all questions as to the moral character. You may know the man with unerring certainty. His

position is taken; his course is fixed; as to moral obligation, he cares nothing. The fact perceived, moral obligation does not decide his course at all. He becomes totally dishonest. This settles the question of his character.

Until he reveres God's authority, there is not a particle of moral goodness in him. He does not act with even common honesty. Of course his moral character towards God is formed and is easily known. If he had any moral honesty, the perceived fact of his own moral obligation would influence his mind. But we see it does, not at all; he shuts down the gate on all the claims of truth, and will not allow them to sway his will. Hence it must be that his heart is fully committed to wickedness.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all who thus hold back the truth, because this attitude of the will shows that you are reckless of your obligations towards God. It shows that, with you, a moral claim on your heart and conscience goes for nothing. If you restrain the truth from influencing your mind, this very fact proves that you do not mean to serve God. Some of you know that you are not doing what you see to be your duty. You are conscious that the presence of known duty does not move you. You have not done one act of obedience to God's claims because they are God's.

Again, not only does this settle the question of moral character which is of itself a good reason for God's wrath; but it also settles the question of moral relations. Because it shows that your moral character is altogether corrupt and wrong, it also shows that, in regard to moral relations, you are really God's enemy. From that moment when you resist the claims of moral truth, God must regard you as his enemy, and not by any means as his obedient subject. Not in any figurative sense, but in its most literal sense, you are his enemy, and therefore he must be highly displeased with you. If he were not, his own conscience would condemn him. You must know that it must be his duty to reveal to you this displeasure. Since he must feel it, he ought to be open and honest with you. You could not, in reason, wish him to be otherwise. All of you who know moral truth, yet obey it not; who admit obligation which yet you refuse to obey, you are the men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Let this be settled in every one of your minds, that if you restrain the influence of any truth known

concerning God and your duty, then against you is his wrath revealed from heaven.

## IV. WE MUST NEXT INQUIRE, WHEREIN AND HOW IS THIS WRATH REVEALED?

Perhaps some of you are already making this inquiry. Moralists are wont to make it, and to say, “We do not see any wrath coming. If we are as good as professors of religion, why shall we not be saved as well as they?”

Wherein then is God’s wrath revealed against this great wickedness?

- 1.** Your conscience affirms that God must be displeased with you. It certifies to you beforehand that you are guilty, and that God cannot accept you.
- 2.** The remorse which will sometimes visit such sinners yet more confirms God’s displeasure. True, the feeling of remorse belongs to the sensibility; but none the less does it give admonitory warning.

Its voice must be accounted as the voice of God in the human soul. He who made that sensibility so that it will sometimes recoil under a sense of guilt, and turn back to consume the life and joy of the soul, did not make it a lie. It is strange that any should suppose this remorse to be itself the punishment threatened of God against sin, and the whole of it. Far from it. This is not that punishment which God has threatened; it is only a premonition of it.

The very fears men feel are often to be taken as an indication that the thing they dread is a reality. Why is it that men in their sins are so often greatly afraid to die? It is no other than a trumpet-tone of the voice of God, sounding up from the depths of their very nature. How can they overlook the fact that these grim forebodings of coming doom are indeed a revelation of wrath, made in the very nature God has given them!

Another revelation of God’s wrath he makes in his juridical abandonment of sinners. God manifests his despair of doing anything more for their salvation when he manifestly withdraws his Spirit and gives them over to hopeless abandonment. Withdrawing his Spirit, he leaves them in great

moral blindness. They may have been able to see and to discriminate spiritual things somewhat before, but, after God forsakes them, they seem almost utterly void of this power. Everything is dark; all is confused. The light of the Holy Spirit being withdrawn, it were practically vain for the sinner himself, or for his sympathizing friends, to expect his salvation. This mental darkness over all spiritual things is God's curse on his rejection of truth, and significantly forebodes his speedy doom.

Analogous to this is the indication given in a moral paralysis of the conscience. Strangely it seems to have lost its sensibility; its ready tact in moral discrimination is gone; its perceptions seem unaccountably obtuse, and the tone of its voice waxes feeble and almost inaudible. Practically, one might almost as well have no conscience at all.

What does this paralysis of conscience indicate? Plainly, that God has abandoned that soul. The conscience, so long overborne by a perverse will, gives way, and God ceases longer to sustain its vitality.

It is painful to see how persons in this condition strain their endeavors, but such debility comes down upon them they become so indifferent; diverting influences are so potent they drop their endeavors, powerless. Once their conscience had some activity; truth fell on their mind with appreciable force, and they were aware of resisting it; but, by-and-by, there ensued a state of moral feeling in which the mind is no longer conscious of refusing; indeed, it seems scarcely conscious of anything whatever. He has restrained the influence of truth until conscience has mainly suspended its functions. Like the drunkard, who has lost all perception of the moral wrong of intemperance, and who has brought this insensibility on himself by incessant violations of his better judgment, so the sinner has refused to hear the truth, until the truth now refuses to move him. What is the meaning of this strange phenomenon? It is one of the ways in which God reveals his indignation at man's great wickedness.

An ungodly student, put on the intellectual racecourse alongside of his class-mates, soon becomes ambitious and jealous. At first, he will probably have some sense of this sin; but he soon loses this sense, and passes on as if unconscious of any sin. What is this but a revelation of God's displeasure?

Again, this wrath against those who hold back the truth in unrighteousness is abundantly revealed in God's word. Think of what Christ said to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, "Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers." What did he mean by that? Their fathers had filled their cup of sin till God could bear with them no longer, and then he filled up his cup of wrath and poured it forth on the nation, and "there was no remedy."

So Christ intimates it shall be with the scribes and Pharisees. And what is this but to reveal his wrath against them for holding back the truth through unrighteousness?

Again, he lets such sinners die in their sins. Observe how, step by step, God gave them one revelation after another of his wrath against their sin; remorse, moral blindness, decay of moral sensibility, and the plain assertions of his word. All these failing, he gives them up to some strong delusion, that they may believe a lie. God himself says, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." It is painfully instructive to study the workings of modern delusions, especially spiritualism; to notice how it has come in following the track of those great revivals that blessed our country a few years since. Do not I know scores of persons who passed through those revivals unblessed, and now they are mad with this delusion? They saw the glory of God in those scenes of revival power; but they turned away, and now they are mad on their idols, and crazy under their delusions. God has given them up to die in their sins, and it will be an awful death! Draw near them gently, and ask a few kind questions; you will soon see that they make no just moral discriminations. All is dark which needs to be light, ere they can find the gate of life.

## REMARKS

**1.** You may notice the exact difference between saints and sinners, including among sinners all professors of religion who are not in an obedient state of mind. The exact difference is this, saints have adopted God's will as their law of activity, the rule that shall govern all their life and all their heart. You reveal to them God's will; this settles all further

controversy. The very opposite of this is true of the sinner. With him, the fact of God's supposed will has no such influence at all; usually no influence of any sort, unless it be to excite his opposition. Again, the Christian, instead of restraining the influence of truth, acts up to his convictions. If the question of oughtness is settled, all is settled. Suppose I go to Deacon A. or Deacon B. and I say, "I want you to do a certain thing; I think you must give so much of your money to this object." He replies, "I don't know about that, my money costs me great labor and pains." But I resume, and say, "Let us look calmly at this question;" and then I proceed to show him that the thing I ask of him is, beyond a doubt, his duty to God and to man. He interposes at once, "You need not say another word; that is enough. If it is my duty to Christ and to his people, I ask no more." But the sinner is not moved so. He knows his duty beforehand, but he has long been regardless of its claims on him. You must appeal to his selfish interests, if you would reach his heart. With the Christian, you need not appeal to his hopes or his fears. You only need show his duty to God. The sinner you can hope to move only by appeals to his interests. The reason of this is that his adopted course of life is to serve his own interests, nothing higher.

**2.** With sinners the question of religion is one of loss and gain. But with Christians, it is only a question of right and duty towards God. This makes truth to him all important, and duty imperative. But the sinner only asks, What shall I gain? or What shall I lose? It is wholly a question of danger. Indeed, so true is this, that ministers often assume that the only availing motive with a sinner must be an appeal to his hopes and fears. They have mostly dropped out the consideration of right as between the sinner and God. They seem to have forgotten that so far forth as they stop short of the idea of right, and appeal only to the sinner's selfishness, their influence tends to make spurious converts. For if men enter upon the Christian life only for gain in the line of their hopes and fears, you must keep up the influence of these considerations, and must expect to work upon these only; that is, you must expect to have selfish Christians and a selfish church. If you say to them, "This is duty," they will reply, "What have we ever cared for duty? We were never converted to the doctrine of doing our duty. We became Christians at all, only for the sake of



promoting our own interests, and we have nothing to do in the Christian life on any other motive.”

Now observe, they may modify this language a little if it seems too repugnant to the general convictions of decent people; but none the less is this their real meaning? They modify its language only on the same general principle of making everything subservient to self.

**3.** Again, we see how great a mistake is made by those selfish Christians who say, “Am I not honest towards my fellow men? And is not this a proof of piety?”

What do you mean by “honest”? Are you really honest towards God? Do you regard God’s rights as much as you wish him to regard yours? But perhaps you ask as many do, What is my crime? I answer, Is it not enough for you to do nothing, really nothing, towards obedience to God? Is it not something serious that you refuse to do God’s will and hold back the claims of his truth? What’s the use of talking about your morality, while you disregard the greatest of all moral claims and obligations those that bind you to love and obey God? What can it avail you to say perpetually, Am I not moral and decent towards men?

Why is God not satisfied with this?

**4.** Ye who think you are almost as good as Christians; in fact, it is much nearer the truth to say that you are almost as bad as devils! Indeed you are fully as bad, save that you do not know as much, and therefore cannot be so wicked. You say, “We are kind to each other.” So are devils. Their common purpose to war against God compels them to act in concert. They went in concert into the man possessed with a legion of devils, as we learn in the gospel history. Very likely they are as kind toward each other, in their league against God and goodness, as you are towards your neighbors. So that selfish men have small ground to compliment themselves on being kind and good to each other, while they withstand God, since, in both these respects, they are only like devils in hell.

**5.** And now, my impenitent hearers what do you say? Putting your conduct towards God into plain language, it would run thus: “Thou, Lord, callest on me to repent; I shall refuse. Thou dost strive to enforce my obligation to repent by various truths; I hold back those truths from their

legitimate influence on my mind. Thou dost insist on my submission to thy authority; I shall do no such thing.”

This, you will see, is only translating your current life and bearing towards God into plain words. If you were really to lift your face toward heaven and utter these words, it would be blasphemy. What do you think of it now? Do you not admit, and often assert, that actions speak louder than words? Do they not also speak more truthfully?

**6.** To those of you who are business men, let me make this appeal. What would you think of men who should treat you as you treat God? You take your account to your customer and you say to him, This account, sir, has been lying a long time past due; will you be so good as to settle it? You cannot deny that it is a fair account of value received, and I understand you have abundant means to pay it. He very coldly refuses. You suggest the propriety of his giving some reasons for this refusal; and he tells you it is a fine time to get large interest on his money, and he therefore finds it more profitable to loan it out than to pay his debts. That is all. He is only selfish; all there is of it is simply this, that he cares for his own interests supremely, and cares little or nothing for yours when the two classes of interests his and yours come into competition.

When you shall treat God as well as you want your creditors to treat you, then you may hold up your head as, so far, an honest man; but, so long as you do the very thing towards God which you condemn as infinitely mean from your fellow men towards yourself, you have little ground for self-complacent pride.

All this would be true and forcible, even if God were no greater, no better, and had no higher and no more sacred rights than your own. How much more, then, are they weighty beyond expression, since God is so much greater, better, and holier than mortals!

# ON BELIEVING WITH THE HEART

*“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” — Romans 10:10.*

THE subject brought to view in this passage requires of us that we should,

## I. DISTINGUISH CAREFULLY BETWEEN INTELLECTUAL AND HEART-FAITH

There are several different states of mind which are currently called faith, this term being obviously used in various senses. So, also, is the term heart used in various senses, and, indeed, there are but few terms which are not used with some variety of signification. Hence it becomes very important to discriminate.

Thus, in regard to faith, the Scriptures affirm that the “devils also believe and tremble,” but it surely cannot be meant that they have heart-faith. They do not believe unto righteousness.

Faith in the intellect is a judgment an opinion. The mind so judges, and is convinced that the facts are so. Whatever the nature of the things believed, this is an involuntary state of mind. Those things believed may be truth; they may relate to God and may embrace the great fundamental facts and doctrines of religion; yet this faith may not result in righteousness. It is often true that persons have their judgments convinced, yet this conviction reaches not beyond their intelligence. Or perhaps it may go so much further as to move their feelings and play on their sensibility, and yet may do nothing more. It may produce no change in the will. It may result in no new moral purpose; may utterly fail to reach the voluntary attitude of the mind, and, hence, will make no change in the life.

But heart-faith, on the other hand, is true confidence, and involves an earnest committal of one’s self and interests to the demands of the truth believed. It is precisely such a trust as we have in those to whom we cling in confidence such as children feel in their real friends and true fathers and

mothers. We know they are naturally ready to believe what is said to them, and to commit themselves to the care of those they love.

The heart is in this. It is a voluntary state of mind always substantially and essentially an act of the will. This kind of faith will, of course, always affect the feelings, and will influence the life. Naturally, it tends towards righteousness, and may truly be said to be “unto righteousness.” It implies love, and seems in its very nature to unify itself with the affections. The inspired writers plainly did not hold faith to be so, purely an act of will as to exclude the affections. Obviously, they made it include the affections.

## II. SOME OF THE CONDITIONS OF INTELLECTUAL FAITH

**1.** Sometimes, but not always, faith of the heart is essential to faith of the intellect. Thus, it may be necessary that we have heart-faith in a man before we are duly prepared to investigate the facts that relate to his character. So, in relation to God, if we lack heart-faith in him, we are in no state to deal fairly with the evidence of his works and ways. Here it is well to notice the vast difference between the irresistible assumptions of the mind respecting God, and those things which we arrive at by study and reasoning. Heart-faith seems essential to any candid investigation.

**2.** It is also essential to our conviction as to the truth. I am not prepared to judge candidly concerning a friend, unless I have some of this heart-faith in him. Suppose I hear a rumor about my best friend, affirming something which is deeply scandalous.

My regard for him forbids my believing this scandalous report, unless it comes most fully sustained by testimony. On the other hand, if I had no heart-confidence in him, my intelligence might be thrown entirely off and I might do both him and myself the greatest injustice.

Many of you have had this experience in regard to faith. Often, in the common walks of life, you have found that, if it had not been for your heart-confidence, you would have been greatly deceived. Your heart held on; at length, the evidence shone out; you were in a condition to judge charitably, and thus you arrived at the truth.

**3.** Heart-faith is specially essential where there is mystery. Of course there are points in religious doctrine which are profoundly mysterious. This fact is not peculiar to religious truth, but is common to every part of God's works which is equivalent to saying, It is common to all real science. Any child can ask me questions which I cannot answer. Without heart-confidence, it would be impossible for society to exist. Happily for us, we can often wisely confide when we cannot, by any means, understand.

In the nature of the case, there must be mysteries about God, for the simple reason that he is infinite and we are finite. Yet he reveals enough of himself to authorize us to cherish the most unbounded confidence in him. Therefore, let no one stumble at this, as though it were some strange thing; for, in fact, the same thing obtains to some extent in all our social relations. In these, we are often compelled to confide in our friends where the case seems altogether suspicious. Yet we confide, and, by-and-by, the truth comes to light, and we are thankful that our heart-faith held us from doing them injustice.

**4.** Again, heart-faith is specially in place where there is contradictory evidence.

Often it may seem to you that God must be partial. Then the mind needs the support of confidence in God. You go on safely if there is, underlying all, the deep conviction that God is and must be right. See that woman, stripped of everything husband, children, all; how can she give any account of this? You may remember the case of a woman who traveled West with her husband and family; there buried her husband and all but two little ones, and then made her weary way back with these on foot. Pinching want and weariness drove her into a stranger's dwelling at nightfall; there a churlish man would have turned her into the street, but his wife had a human heart, and insisted on letting them stay, even if she herself sat up all night. Think on the trying case of that lone widow. She does not sleep; her mingled grief and faith find utterance in the words, "My heart is breaking, but God is good."

How could she make it out that God is good? just as you would in the case of your husband, if one should tell you he had gone for ever, and proved faithless to his vows. You can set this insinuation aside, and let your heart rise above it. You do this on the strength of your heart-faith.

So the Christian does in regard to many mysterious points in God's character and ways. You cannot see how God can exist without even beginning to exist; or how he can exist in three persons, since no other beings known to you exist in more than one. You cannot see how he can be eternally good, and yet suffer sin and misery to befall his creatures. But, with heart-faith, we do not need to have everything explained. The heart says to its Heavenly Father, I do not need to catechize thee, nor ask impertinent questions, for I know it is all right. I know God can never do anything wrong. And so the soul finds a precious joy in trusting, without knowing how the mystery is solved. Just as a wife, long parted from her husband, and, under circumstances that need explanation, yet when he returns, she rushes to meet him with her loving welcome, without waiting for one word of explanation. Suppose she had waited for the explanation before she could speak a kind word. This might savour of the intellect, but certainly it would not do honor to her heart. For her heart-confidence, her husband loves her better than ever, and well he may!

You can understand this; and can you not also apply it to your relations to God? God may appear to your view to be capricious, but you know he is not; may appear unjust, but you know he cannot be. Ah, Christian, when you comprehend the fact of God's wider reach of vision, and of his greater love, then you will cry out, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." When you have trusted so, think you not that your heart will be as dear to Christ as ever?

### III. WHAT ARE NOT, AND WHAT ARE, CONDITIONS OF HEART-FAITH

1. It is not conditioned upon comprehending the facts to be believed. We may know a thing to be a fact, while yet we are entirely unable to explain it. The reasons and the explanations are quite a different thing from the evidence which sustains the fact and commends it to our belief.
2. Let it also be borne in mind that it is not half as necessary to know all the reasons in the case of God's ways as in man's. The ground of the difference is, that we know, in general, that God is always right a knowledge which we cannot have in regard to man. Of God, our deepest

and most resistless convictions assure us that all is right. Our corresponding convictions in the case of man are far from being irresistible. Yet, even in regard to men, we often find that a conviction of their rectitude, which is far less than irresistible, leads us to trust. How much more should our stronger convictions as to God lead us evermore to trust in him!

**3.** Again this heart-faith in God does not rest on our ability to prove even that God exists. Many an earnest Christian has never thought of this, any more than of proving his own existence. An irresistible conviction gives him both, without other proof. But, positively, God must be revealed to your inner being so that you are conscious of his existence and presence. There is not, perhaps, in the universe, a thing of which we can be more certain than of God's existence. The mind may be more deeply acquainted with God than with any other being or thing. Hence this heart-confidence may be based on God's revelations to the inner soul of man. Such revelations may reach the very highest measure of certainty. I do not mean to imply here that we are not certain of the facts of observation. But this is a stronger assurance and certainty. The mind becomes personally acquainted with God, and is conscious of this direct and positive knowledge.

**4.** A further condition is, that the soul be inwardly drawn to God. In our relations to each other, we are sometimes conscious of a peculiar sympathy which draws us towards a friend. This fact is a thing of consciousness, of which we may be quite unable to give any explanation. A similar attraction draws us to God, and seems to be a natural condition of the strongest forms of heart-faith.

**5.** It is quite essential to heart-faith that we have genuine love to God. In the absence of good-will towards God, there never can be this faith of the heart. The wife has no heart-faith in her husband, save as she loves him. Her heart must be drawn to him in real love else his heart-faith will draw back and demand more evidence.

In view of this principle, God takes measures to win our love and draw our hearts to himself. As human beings do towards each other, so he manifests his deep interest in us pours out his blessings on us in lavish profusion, and, in every way, strives to assure us that he is truly our friend. These are

his methods to win the confidence of our hearts. When it becomes real to us that we owe everything to God, our health, gifts, all our comforts, then we can bear many dark and trying things.

Then we know that God loves us, even though he scourges us; just as children know that parents love them, and mean their good, even though they chastise them. Under these broad and general manifestations of love, they confide, even though there be no present manifestations of love. You may remember how Cecil taught his little daughter the meaning of gospel faith. She came to him, one day, with her hands full of little beads, greatly delighted, to show them. He said to her calmly, "You had better throw them all into the fire." She was almost confounded; but, when she saw he was in earnest, she trustfully obeyed, and cast them in. After a few days, he brought home for her a casket of jewels. "There," said he, "my daughter, you had faith in me the other day, and threw your beads into the fire; that was faith; now I can give you, things much more precious. Are not these far better?" So you should always believe in God. He has jewels for those who will believe, and cast away their sins.

#### IV. HEART-FAITH IS UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS REAL OBEDIENCE

This trustful and affectionate state of heart naturally leads us to obey God. I have often admired the faith manifested by the old theologian philosophers who held fast to their confidence in God, despite of the greatest of absurdities. Their faith could laugh at the most absurd principles involved in their philosophy of religious truth. It is a remarkable fact that the greater part of the church has been in their philosophy necessitarians, holding not the freedom, but the bondage, of the will; their doctrine being that the will is determined necessarily by the strongest motive. President Edwards held these philosophical views, but despite of them, he believed that God is supremely good; the absurdities of this philosophy did not shake his faith in God. So all the really Old School theologians hold the absurdities of hyper-Calvinism; as, for example, that God absolutely and supremely controls all the moral actions of all his creatures.



Dr. Beecher, in controversy with Dr. Wilson, some years since, held that obligation implied ability to obey. This Dr. Wilson flatly denied, whereupon Dr. B. remarked that few men could march up and face such a proposition without winking. It is often the case that men have such heart-confidence in God that they will trust him despite of the most flagrant absurdities. There is less superstition in this than I used to suppose, and more faith. Men forget their dogmas and philosophy, and, despite of both, love and confide.

Some men have held monstrous doctrines even that God is the author of sin, and puts forth his divine efficiency to make men sin, as truly as, by his Spirit, to make them holy. This view was held by Dr. Emmons; yet he was eminently a pious man, of childlike, trustful spirit. It is indeed strange how such men could hold these absurdities at all, and, scarcely less so, how they could hold them and yet confide sweetly in God. Their hearts must have been fixed in this faith by some other influence than that of these monstrous notions in philosophy and theology. For these views of God, we absolutely know, were contrary to their reason, though not to their reasonings a very wide and essential distinction, which is sometimes overlooked. The intuitive affirmations of their reason were one thing; the points which they reached by their philosophical reasonings were quite another thing. The former could not lie about God, the latter could. The former laid that sure foundation for heartfaith; the latter went to make up their intellectual notions, the absurdities of which (we notice with admiration), never seemed to shake their Christian faith. While these reasonings pushed them on into the greatest absurdities, their reason held their faith and piety straight.

The faith of the heart is proof against all forms of infidelity. Without this, nothing is proof. For if men without piety drop the affirmations of their intuitive reason, and then attempt, philosophically, to reason out all the difficulties they meet with, they almost inevitably stumble.

Heart-faith carries one over the manifold mysteries and difficulties of God's providence. In this field there must be difficulties, for no human vision can penetrate to the bottom of God's providential plans and purposes.

So, also, does this faith of the heart carry one over the mysteries of the atonement. It is indeed curious to notice how the heart gets overall these. It is generally the case that the atonement is accepted by the heart unto salvation, before its philosophy is understood. It was manifestly so with the apostles; so with their hearers; and so, even with those who heard the Lord Jesus Christ himself. The Bible says but very little indeed on the point of the philosophy of the atonement.

So, also, of the doctrine of the Trinity; and so of other doctrines generally. They were known and taught as practical truths, and were accepted as such, long before their philosophy was specially investigated. If any difficulties arose in minds specially inquisitive, it was overcome by heart-faith, or settled by the intuitive affirmations of the reason, and not by speculative reasoning.

It is in no sense unreasonable that God should require us to have such faith in him. Properly considered, he does not require us to believe what we do not know to be true. He does not ask us to renounce our common sense, and exercise a groundless credulity. When we trust his general character, and accept certain dark dispensations of providence as doubtless right, what is it that we believe? Not the special reason for this mysterious dispensation, but we believe that, despite of its dark aspect to us, God's hand in it is both wise and good, and we believe this because we have abundant ground to confide in his general character. It is as if you were to tell me that a known and tried friend of mine had told a lie. I should say,

I cannot believe it. I know him too well." But you say, "Here is the evidence. It looks very dark against him." "Very likely," I reply, "but yet I cannot believe it. There will be some explanation of this. I cannot believe it."

Now I consider myself fully authorized to reject at once all surmises and rumors against my known friend. I am bound to do so, until the evidence against him becomes absolutely conclusive. This is altogether reasonable. How much more so in the case of dark things in God's doings!

For it should be considered that man may deceive us; God never can. We do not know man's heart always, to the very core; and if we did, it may change; what once was true, becomes false. But not so with God: our

intuitive convictions affirm that God is always good, and always wise; and, moreover, that there can never be any declension in his love, or any revolution in his character.

Consequently Christians are often called on to believe God, not only without, but against, present evidence.

Abraham, called out of his home and country to go into a strange land, obeyed, not knowing whither he went. He might have asked many questions about the reasons; he does not appear to have asked any.

Commanded to offer up Isaac, he might, with apparent propriety, have expostulated earnestly. He might have said, "Lord, that would be murder! It would outrage the natural affection which thou hast planted in my bosom. It would encourage the heathen around us in their horrid abominations of making their children pass through the fire to Moloch." All this, and more, he might have said; but, so far as appears, he said nothing save this: "The Lord commands, and I obey. If he pleases he can raise up my Isaac from the dead." So he went on and virtually offered up his son Isaac, and, "in a figure, received him again from the dead."

And God fixed the seal of his approbation on this act of faith, and held it out before all ages as a model of faith and obedience, despite of darkness and objections.

So Christians are often called to believe without present evidence, other than what comes from their knowledge of God's general character. For a season, God lets everything go against them, yet they believe. Said a woman, passing through great trials, with great confidence in God: "O Lord, I know thou art good, for thou hast shown me this; but, Lord, others do not understand this; they are stumbled at it. Canst thou not show them so that they shall understand this?"

## REMARKS

**1.** The demand for reasons often embarrasses our faith. This is one of the tricks of the devil. He would embarrass our faith by telling us we must understand all God's ways before we believe. Yet we ought to see that this

is impossible and unreasonable. Abraham could not see the reasons for God's command to offer Isaac a bloody sacrifice; he might have expostulated; but he did not. The simplicity and beauty of his faith appears all along in this very thing that he raised no questions. He had a deeper insight into God's character. He knew too much of God to question his wisdom or his love. For, a man might understand all the reasons of God's ways, yet this knowledge might do him no good; his heart might rebel even then.

In this light you may see why so much is said about Abraham's faith. It was gloriously trustful and unquestioning! What a model! No wonder God commends it to the admiring imitation of the world!

**2.** It is indeed true that faith must often go forward in the midst of darkness. Who can read the histories of believing saints, as recorded in Scripture, without seeing that faith often leads the way through trials? It would be but a sorry development of faith, if, at every step, God's people must know everything before they could trust him, and must understand all his reasons. Most ample grounds for faith lie in his general character, so that we do not need to understand the special reasons for his particular acts.

**3.** We are mere infants miserably poor students of God's ways. His dealings on every side of us appear to us mysterious. Hence it should be expected that we shall fail to comprehend his reasons, and consequently we must confide in him without this knowledge. Indeed, just here lies the virtue of faith, that it trusts God on the ground of his general character, while the mind can by no means comprehend his reasons for particular acts. Knowing enough of God to assure us that he must be good, our faith trusts him, although the special evidence of goodness in particular cases may be wanting.

This is a kind of faith which many do not seem to possess or to understand. Plainly they do not confide in God's dealings.

**4.** It is manifestly needful that God should train Christians to exercise faith here and now; since in heaven we shall be equally unable to comprehend all his dealings. The holy in heaven will no doubt believe in God; but they must do it by simple faith not on the ground of a perfect knowledge of

God's plans. What a trial of faith it must have been to the holy in heaven to see sin enter our world! They could see few, perhaps none, of the reasons, before the final judgment, and must have fallen back upon the intuitive affirmations of their own minds. The utmost they could say was, We know God must be good and wise; therefore we must wait to see the results, and humbly trust.

**5.** It is not best for parents to explain everything to their children, and, especially, they should not take the ground of requiring nothing of which they cannot explain all the reasons. Some profess to take this ground. It is, for many reasons, unwise. God does not train his children so.

Faith is really natural to children. Yet some will not believe their children converted until they can be real theologians. This assumes that they must have all the great facts of the gospel system explained so that they can comprehend their philosophy before they believe them. Nothing can be further from the truth.

**6.** It sometimes happens that those who are converted in childhood become students of theology in more advanced years, and then, getting proud of their philosophy and wisdom, lose their simple faith and relapse into infidelity. Now I do not object to their studying the philosophy of every doctrine up to the limits of human knowledge; but I do object to their casting away their faith in God. For there is no lack of substantial testimony to the great doctrines of the gospel. Their philosophy may stagger the wisest man; but the evidence of their truth ought to satisfy all, and alike the child and the philosopher. Last winter I was struck with this fact which I mention because it seems to present one department of the evidences of Christianity in a clear light. One judge of the court said to another, "I come to you with my assertion that I inwardly know Jesus Christ, and as truly and as well as I know you. Can you reject such testimony? What would the people of this State say to you if you rejected such testimony on any other subject? Do you not every day let men testify to their own experience?" The judge replied, "I cannot answer you." "Why, then," replied the other, "do you not believe this testimony? I can bring before you thousands who will testify to the same thing."

**7.** Again I remark, it is of great use to study the truths of the gospel system theologically and philosophically, for thus you may reach a

satisfactory explanation of many things which your heart knew, and clave to, and would have held fast till the hour of your death. It is a satisfaction to you, however, to see the beautiful harmony of these truths with each other, and with the known laws of mind and of all just government.

Yet theological students sometimes decline in their piety, and for a reason which it were well for them to understand. One enters upon this study simple-hearted and confiding; but, by-and-by, study expands his views; he begins to be charmed with the explanations he is able to give of many things not understood before; becomes opinionated and proud; becomes ashamed of his former simple heart-faith, and thus stumbles fearfully, if not fatally. If you will hold on with all your simple heart-confidence to the immutable love and wisdom of God, all will be well. But it never can be well to put your intellectual philosophy in the place of the simplicity of gospel faith.

**8.** Herein is seen one reason why some students do not become pious. They determine that they will understand everything before they become Christians. Of course they are never converted. Quite in point, here, is a case I saw a few years since. Dr. B., an intelligent but not pious man, had a pious wife, who was leading her little daughter to Christ. The Doctor, seeing this, said to her, "Why do you try to lead that child to Christ? I cannot understand these things myself, although I have been trying to understand them these many years; how, then, can she?" But some days after as he was riding out alone, he began to reflect on the matter; the truth flashed upon his mind, and he saw that neither of them could understand God unto perfection not he any more than his child; while yet either of them could know enough to believe unto salvation.

**9.** Again, gospel faith is voluntary a will-trust. I recollect a case in my own circle of friends. I could not satisfy my mind about one of them. At length, after long struggling, I said, I will repel these things from my mind, and rule out these difficulties. My friend is honest and right; I will believe it, and will trust him none the less for these slanders. In this I was right.

Towards God this course is always right. It is always right to cast away from your mind all those dark suspicious about him who can never make mistakes and who is too good to purpose wrong.

I once said to a sister in affliction, Can you not believe all this is for your good, though you cannot see how it is? She brightened up, saying: "I must believe in God, and I will."

Who of you have this heart-faith? Which of you will now commit yourself to Christ? If the thing required were intellectual faith, I could explain to you how it is reached. It must be through searching the evidence in the case. But heart-faith must be reached by simple effort by a voluntary purpose to trust. Ye, who say, I cannot do this, bow your knees before God and commit yourself to his will; say, O my Savior! I take thee at thy word." This is a simple act of will.

# ON BEING HOLY

*“Be ye holy, for I am holy.” — 1 Peter 1:16.*

THIS precept enjoins holiness, and our first business should therefore be to inquire what holiness is. It is plain that the Bible uses the term as synonymous with moral purity; but the question will still return, What is moral purity?

I answer, moral fitness; that which we see to be morally appropriate. It is, in substance, moral propriety; in other words perfect love; such as God requires. It is sympathy with God and likeness to him; the state of mind that God has. Holiness in God is not a part of his nature in such a sense that it is not voluntary in him, but it is a voluntary exercise and state of his mind.

The same is true of all beings. Holiness is not a thing of nature as opposed to free action, but must always be a free and a moral thing. It is not possible to any beings but such as are made in the image of God in the sense of being moral agents. They must have free-will, and then must voluntarily conform themselves to rectitude. Nothing less or other than a voluntary conformity of themselves to the moral law can be holiness. In them all, holiness is that state of mind which is precisely appropriate to their nature and relations. This state is expressed in one word; love, meaning by this, benevolence; good-will to all. When this term is used in its widest sense, it includes all moral duty, Hence this command to be holy requires that we bring ourselves into a moral adjustment to God and our entire moral duty.

## I. WHY SHOULD WE BE HOLY?

God, as in our text, requires it. “It is written, `Be ye holy, for I am holy.’”

The context also combines with the text to enforce the duty by God’s example. “As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” according to the ancient precept, “Be ye holy, for I am holy.” Because I am holy, therefore be ye holy likewise.



Our Lord enforced the same duty by the same reason (Matthew 5:48):

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your  
Father who is in heaven is perfect.”

## II. WHAT ARE THE REASONS OF THIS REQUIREMENT?

**1.** We cannot but require it of ourselves. Our own nature irresistibly demands it of us; (his own individual conscience of every moral agent.) There is no moral agent whose nature does not require holiness of himself. Each one is so constituted that it is impossible he should not require this of himself. Hence there must always be a war in his own bosom unless he yields to this demand. He knows he ought to, and therefore, by a necessity as strong as his own nature, he must become holy, or fail of peace and conscious self-approval.

No moral agent can respect himself unless he is holy. He may be careless and thoughtless, and may thus slide over and pass some of the self-reproach he must otherwise feel for unholiness; but he can never have any honest self-respect unless he behaves himself in a comely and decent way which he believes to be, in his circumstances, right.

Need I urge that self-respect is a thing of very great importance? Few are fully aware how very important self-respect is to themselves and to others. Let a young man lose his self-respect, and what is he? What hope can you have of his stability and manliness? A young woman void of self-respect is no longer herself. Who does not know how completely she falls from her position as a virtuous woman!

This form of self-respect pertains to our relations to this world and to society. But suppose a moral agent in like manner to lose his self-respect towards God. How fearful must be the influence of this loss on his heart! How reckless of moral rectitude he becomes in all that pertains to his Maker!

Or suppose God to lose his self-respect. Suppose he should cease to do what is honorable to himself, and should no longer care to act in a manner

worthy of his own esteem. How fearful must be the consequences first to himself, and next to his whole universe! Suppose him to be morally impure, no longer adjusting his conduct to his own standard of right. It shocks us unutterably to conceive of God as acting in a way unworthy of himself. We know how keenly every sensitive and right-minded being feels the disgrace of having consciously acted in a way unworthy of himself. Those who have been conscious of this pain have often thought how God must feel, if, with his infinite sensibilities, he should act unworthy of himself. You sometimes experience this feeling, and therefore know how you loathe yourself and have no peace or rest in your soul.

It is true that these considerations may have but little weight with those who know nothing of holiness, and who have never cultivated their own right feelings and sentiments; but those of you who have been near to God, and have had your “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,” must appreciate it.

**2.** Another reason why we should be holy is, that God requires it of us. He has made us in his own image; like himself in the attributes of intellect, sensibility, and free-will; and therefore, for the same reasons that make him require holiness of himself, he must require it of us. He must require it of us because it is his duty to do.

He requires us to be holy because he cannot make us happy unless we will become holy. Our nature being what it is, it is for ever impossible that we should be happy without being holy. God is happy, because he is holy; he knows that we exist under the same law of nature and necessity; hence his benevolence prompts, nay compels, him to use this necessary means of securing our happiness.

## REMARKS

**1.** Sinners know they are not holy. All know this, yet many often say, What have I done so very bad? No matter whether very bad (judged by the popular standard), or not; you know you are not holy. Now do not suppose yourself to be holy as God is holy. You know there is none of this character in you. How much soever confused men’s sentiments on this subject may be, it is universally true that they conceive of God as being

holy in a sense in which they are not themselves. Whatever they may say of it, they know this.

**2.** The hope that unconverted people often have that they shall be saved is utterly without foundation. Many try to think they have not done anything so bad that they deserve to be sent to hell!

How strange that such men should think themselves fit for heaven! Christ said, "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again." No marvel that men should need a radical change! Hearts so foreign from love, so full of selfishness; how can such hearts dwell in heaven! The unholy man's hope of heaven; how utterly absurd! What nonsense that men should cherish such hopes without any holiness to fit them for it! just as if heaven were a certain place, of no peculiar character, and to go there would be to ensure one's bliss!

You know better! You know something about the business and the delights of the Christian; you know they are such as you delight not in. The Sabbath is no privilege to you. Rather you exclaim, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" Social worship has no spiritual attractions for you. How, then, can you suppose that heaven would be a world of joy to you?

**3.** Many who know they must become holy, are yet very ignorant of the way in which they are to become so. Having begun in the Spirit, they try to become perfect in the flesh. Their reliance is more on resolutions, than on Christ embraced by faith. A leading minister of the Presbyterian church, not long since, heard a sermon showing that men are sanctified by receiving Christ into the heart by faith. He remarked, "We are just beginning to receive this doctrine. We have a long time been trying to become holy by resolutions."

Of many it is true that all their efforts are by works of law. They seem to know that all the efforts they make without Christ avail nothing, save only sin.

**4.** Pardon without holiness is impossible, in this sense: that the heart must turn from its sins to God before it can be forgiven. Repentance is really nothing more or less than turning from sin to holiness; and who does not know that the Scriptures teach that repentance must precede pardon?

Reversing this order would ruin the sinner. The idea that God can reverse it, works only ruin to those who accept it.

**5.** The command to be holy implies the practicability of becoming so. I meet with some professed Christians who on this subject have really no hope. They feel the need of being holy, but they are in despair of attaining it before they die. Now, these Christians claim to be believers, but they are not. The grand difficulty in their case is, that they do not believe God's word of promise. They have no faith that men can become holy in this life, yet they say they believe in Christ. Yet what is Christ if not a Savior? A Savior from what, if not from sin? Is it not expressly said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins?" What is Christ to do? Does he save his people in their sins? Shall he not rather save them from their sins, and "sanctify them wholly," and "redeem them unto himself as a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" Does it not seem strange that so many profess to be believers in Christ, but yet avow that they do not believe the plainest things said in the Bible of Christ? They claim to be believers! What! are they believers, gospel-believers, and yet do not believe what Christ says? Nay more, they tell you it is dangerous to believe that you can be holy in this world! Said a Unitarian minister, "How strange that the Orthodox should object to sanctification in this life!" He had been reading the views presented here, and said, "Why can they object? If they profess to believe that Jesus is a divine Savior, and that in him all fulness dwells, why should they object? They should either give up their doctrine of a divine Savior, and deny that he is able to save to the uttermost, and abandon their ideas of a divine Redeemer, or admit your views to be true," and certainly there seems to be force in his reasoning.

I have never been more struck with this great idea; salvation from sinning by Jesus Christ than I have during the past winter. I found it everywhere as I read the New Testament, and indeed in the Old Testament also. Oh, how strange that the church should be fighting the idea of becoming holy through Jesus Christ! How strange that they should insist that he will do no such thing! Is it not wonderful?

**6.** Christ's promises and relations to his people imply a pledge of all the help we need. The entire gospel scheme is adapted to men; not in the sense of conniving at their weakness, but of really helping them out of it.

It does not say, “Go on in your sins”; does not smooth this path by saying, “No man can live sinless in this world”; but it says, “Take hold of Christ’s strength, and he will help you.” It does not encourage you to hold on in sinning, but it urges you to take hold of Christ for all the help you need to overcome the practical difficulties in your way. Its language is, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

While you affirm your moral obligation, you are more and more impressed with your moral weakness. But this weakness is what Christ counterbalances with his strength. In the extremist weakness, his strength finds largest scope and fullest development. “As thy day, so shalt thy strength be” when you shalt thoroughly cast thyself on the arm of the Mighty One.

Hence the command to be holy is no apology for despondency, but should really encourage us to take hold of the strength promised to meet human weakness.

**7.** God sympathizes with every honest effort we make to become holy. Of course he does; how can he fail to do so? Wherever he sees a moral struggle in any soul, it interests him exceedingly. He sympathizes infinitely more deeply than we do. And yet some of us know how deeply we sympathize where we see a convert getting hold of the idea of sanctification by Christ. In some such cases I have known the joy of older Christians to be really inexpressible. When I have seen gospel ministers getting hold of the idea of sanctification, and struggling to reach the experience of that idea, I have said to myself, If we can feel so deeply in view of such a struggle, how much more must God feel! Do you not think God feels? Ah, indeed, in every pulse of his infinite and boundless sensibility!

**8.** If we become partakers of his holiness, we are made sure of the river of his pleasures! This comes both of the nature of the case and of the revealed laws of his kingdom. Holiness becomes God’s house for ever. And while it is fearfully true that, wit out holiness, no man shall see the Lord, it is delightfully sure that the holy shall see him and enjoy spiritual blessedness in his presence.

**9.** All men will sometimes feel the necessity of this holiness. In some cases, it is felt most deeply. Last winter I became acquainted with a woman, hopefully a Christian, but who had heard very little on this subject. She had been converted under circumstances where the great desolation and moral darkness became the immediate occasion of her awakening. From such surroundings, she had struggled up into the light. Yet when she came to hear the real gospel, and the way of holiness was opened to her mind, it was wonderful to see how she did grasp and devour this blessed bread of life! It met a great void in her spiritual nature, and her soul exulted in it with exceeding joy.

You often feel these struggles. You know you need something more and higher; you cannot be satisfied with your present state; you are conscious something is wrong between your soul and God, and you have a deep conviction that you need more holiness. Why, then, do you not lay hold of this hope set before you in the gospel?

**10.** There is no rest short of being holy. Many try to find rest in something less, but they are sure to fail. They suspend further efforts, and would fain believe they shall have rest where they are; but all such hope is vain. There can be no rest short of coming into sympathy with God and into spiritual union with Jesus Christ.

**11.** Many insanely suppose that when they come to die, they shall be sanctified and prepared for heaven. Let us sit down by the bedside of such a man; one who expects to be sanctified in death. What is he doing? What progress is he making? Would you speak kindly to him and inquire after his spiritual progress? But you must not allude to religion; the doctor would not like to have you. He says it might retard the man's recovery. He wants his mind to be perfectly quiet and unthinking. It will not do therefore even to whisper the name of Jesus! And is it supposable that this dying man is taking hold vigorously of that blessed name which you may not even whisper in his ear? Is he gaining the victory over the world by faith in the Lamb of God? Do you judge from what you see and hear that his soul is in a mighty struggle with the powers of selfishness and sin, a struggle in which faith in Jesus ensures the victory? Ah! he sinks; he goes down, lower and lower; sometimes all consciousness seems to be lost; and can you think that, in these dying hours, his soul is entering into

sympathy with Christ; is bursting away from the bands of temptation, and taking hold, with a mighty grasp, of those exceeding great and precious promises? I do not ask you what you admit as to the possibility of miracles on a death-bed; but I ask if you think the circumstances are favorable for that mental effort which the nature of the case demands in renouncing sin and in receiving Jesus Christ by faith for sanctification.

**12.** No man has any right to hope unless he is really committed to holiness, and in all honesty and earnestness intends to live so. If he does not intend to live a holy life, let him know that he is not in the way to heaven. If he is in his sins and indulges himself in sinning, by what right or reason can he suppose himself traveling towards the abodes of infinite purity? If he hopes for heaven at the end of such a life, he is egregiously self-deceived.

Is not every person in this house most fully convinced that he must become holy if he would be saved? Notwithstanding all the looseness of your views on this subject, do you not know that you must be holy as you would find a home in heaven?

Do you believe that in any practical sense you really can become holy? Doubtless you do; for where would you be if you knew you must be holy and yet know equally well; that you cannot be? You are not in this dilemma. You cannot bring yourself to think that the ever blessed God has ever shut up his children in a dilemma so hopeless.

The case with you probably is that you know you ought to become holy, but you are not ready to be just now. If I should call on the younger classes, they would say, I have so much to do, how can I? Certainly I am not ready now. The middle-aged also are equally unprepared yet. The great evil is that men will not act on their own convictions. They have convictions; they know what they ought to do, and what it is infinitely wicked for them not to do, yet they do it not. There they stop. They stop, not in the point of gospel rest, but in the point where impenitent sinners often stop, convicted of sin, but not acting up to their convictions of duty. Suppose one should come to you and try to hire you to make no further effort to become more holy; could you be hired to any such committal? It would effect you very much as it would have done when you were first convicted of sin, if some one had tried to hire you to defer all effort to

come to Christ for a score of years longer. You would have cried out, "Get thee behind me, Satan, don't tempt me to sell my soul!" Satan took a more cunning course. He only said, "Waive it just now: let it lie over till you find a convenient season." So offered, the bait took, and you swallowed it; and so thousands are putting off their effort to become holy. You would be horror-stricken with the proposal to put off all effort to become holy for ten years longer; but the thought of putting over for an indefinite time, supposed to be not very long, does not startle you at all.

O my hearers, what shall the end be of such procrastination? May it not be that in your real heart you have no love of holiness, and have never sought it as the pearl of great price? Can it be well for you to go on still in a course that leads you farther every day from God? Will you forget that he is holy, and that, if you would behold his face in peace, you too must become holy.



## ON SELF DENIAL

*“And he said unto them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” — Luke 9:23.*

IN order to understand this solemn declaration of our Lord, the first important point to be ascertained is this, What is the true idea of taking up the cross and denying one’s self?

This question presupposes the existence of appetites and propensities which call for indulgence, and then it means, obviously, that in some cases this indulgence must be refused. This is the precise point of the text; a man who will follow Christ must deny himself in the sense of denying the gratification of all appetites and propensities whenever and how far so-ever such gratifications are forbidden by the law of benevolence. All impulses towards self-indulgence, whether in the line of avoiding things we fear or seeking things we love, must be denied, and ruled down by a determined will, whenever indulgence is not demanded, but is forbidden by the law of love. Within the limits of God’s law, these constitutional appetites may be indulged; beyond those limits, they must be denied. At whatever point they run counter to the law of love to God or love to man, they must be put down.

The thing demanded, therefore, by this law of Christ’s kingdom is that you consult and obey the will of Christ in this whole matter of self-indulgence; that you obey neither desire nor appetite; that you never gratify your love of approbation; never seek any forms of personal enjoyment in disobedience to Christ. You must never do this where duty is known, lest you displease God, for plainly He has rightful control over all your powers.

Under this principle you must do all your duty to your fellowmen; whether to their bodies or to their souls, denying all those worldly desires and propensities which would conflict with this duty, making Jesus Christ Himself your model and his expressed will your perpetual rule.

The question will arise in many minds, Why does Christ demand of us self-denial?

Is it because God loves to see us self-mortified because He takes pleasure in crucifying the sensibilities to enjoyment which He has given us? By no means. But the true answer is to be found in the fact that He has made us rational and moral beings; our rational faculties being intended for the control of our entire voluntary activities, and our moral nature rendering us properly responsible for the self-control which God requires. In the lower orders of creation around us, we see animals void of moral responsibility because they are constituted irrational and incapable of responsible moral action. To them, propensity must be law, because they can know no other. But we have a higher law to obey than they. Their highest good is promoted by their obedience to mere physical law; but not so with us. Our sensibilities are blind, and therefore were never intended to be our rule of life. To supply such a rule, God has given us intelligence and conscience. Appetite, therefore, cannot be our rule, while it can and must be the rule of all the lower, irrational animals.

Now it is a fact that our sensibilities are out of harmony with our conscience, often clamoring for indulgence which both reason and conscience forbid.

If we give ourselves up to the sway of appetite and unguided sensibility, we are surely misled. These appetites grow worse by indulgence; a fact which of itself shows that God never intended them to be our rule. Often artificial appetites are formed; of such a nature, moreover, as to be exceedingly pernicious in their effects.

Hence we are thrown into a state of warfare. Constant appeals are made to us to arouse our propensities to indulgence; and, over against these, constant appeals are made by the law of God and the voice of our reason, urging us to deny ourselves and find our highest good in obeying God. God and reason require us to withstand the claims of appetite sternly and firmly. Note here that God does not require this withstanding, without vouchsafing his aid in the conflict. It is remarkable how the resolute opposition of any appetite, in the name of Christ can hinder the demands of conscience, will readily overcome it. Cases often occur in which the most clamorous and despotic of these artificial appetites are ruled down by the will, under the demands of conscience and with the help of God. At once they lie all subdued, and the mind remains in sweet peace.

Here let us consider more attentively that we are conscious of having a spiritual and moral nature as well as a physical. We have a conscience, and we have affections correlated to God as truly as we have affections correlated to earthly things. There is a beauty in holiness, and there are things correlated to our spiritual tastes as truly as to our physical. Under proper care and effort, our religious nature may be developed towards God, even as our physical nature is towards earthly objects. We are social beings in our earthly relations, and not less so in our spiritual nature. We are social spiritually as well as physically, though we may not be aware of it, because our spiritual sociality may have been utterly uncultivated and undeveloped. But we really need divine communion with God and social fellowship with our Infinite Maker. Prior to regeneration this moral capacity of ours is a waste. All men have a conscience and may be aware of it, but they have no spiritual affections towards God, and hence they assume that religion must be a very dry thing. They cannot see how they can enjoy God's presence and prayer. They are all awake to earthly fellowship and friendship, but dead to fellowship and friendship with God. Their love in the form of affection has been drawn out towards man, but not towards God. They seem not aware that they have a nature capable of being developed in loving affections towards their divine Father. Hence they do not see how they can ever enjoy religion and religious duties. The coldness of death comes over their souls when they think of it.

This spiritual side of our nature needs to be cultivated. It has been so long kept back and crushed down, it greatly needs to be brought up. But, in order to do this and develop the spiritual side of our nature, it is indispensable that the worldly side be crushed and brought under. For flesh is a dangerous foe to grace. There is no harmony, but only repellency and antagonism between the earthly affections and the heavenly. Unless we subdue the flesh we shall die. It is only when, through the Spirit, we mortify the deeds of the body that we can live.

The Roman church has in past ages distinguished itself for its mortifications of the flesh; externally considered. These mortifications have thrown off the Protestant world into the opposite extreme. Among all the Protestant sermons I have heard, I do not recollect one on the subject of bearing the cross and denying one's self. I must think that this subject is exceedingly neglected among our Protestant churches. Papal Rome having

run wild with this idea, Protestants have taken fright and run off into the opposite extreme. Therefore we need a special effort to guard against this tendency and to bring us back to reason, sense, and Scripture.

Until I was converted I never knew that I had any religious affections. I did not even know that I had any capacity for spontaneous, deep, outgushing emotions towards God. This was indeed a dark and fearful ignorance, and you may readily suppose I knew little of real joy while my soul was so perfectly ignorant of the very idea of real spiritual joy. But, I take it, this absence of all right ideas of God is by no means uncommon. If you search, you will find this to be the common experience of unconverted men.

We all know that the gratification of our animal nature is pleasure; not of the highest sort indeed, yet it is a kind of pleasure. How much more must the gratification of our nobler moral affections be joyful! When the soul comes to feast on its spiritual affections, it begins to taste real happiness; a bliss like that of heaven! I fear many have never comprehended what the Bible means by "blessedness."

Now let it be well considered that the spiritual side of our nature can be developed and gratified only by a benevolent crossing of our appetites; a crossing of them, I mean, under the demands of real benevolence towards our fellowmen and towards God. This must be our aim; for if we make our personal happiness the end, we can never attain to the exalted joy of true fellowship with God.

It is curious to see how the sensibility is related to self-denial, so that denying ourselves from right motives becomes the natural and necessary means of developing our spiritual affections. Beginning with taking up the cross, one goes on, from step to step, ruling down self-indulgences and self-gratification, and opening his heart more and more to fellowship with God and to the riper experience of his love.

A further reason why men should deny themselves, is that it is intrinsically right. The lower appetites ought not to govern us; the higher laws of our nature ought to. The evidence of this is simply the evidence which proves it to be the duty of beings created rational to use their reason, and not degrade themselves down to the level of beasts.

Another reason is that we can well afford it, for we are surely the gainers by it. I admit that when we resist and deny the demands of self-indulgence, it goes a short way, and on a small scale, against happiness; but on the spiritual side we gain immensely, and immensely more than we lose. The satisfaction which arises from real self-denial is precious. It is rich in quality and deep and broad as the ocean in amount.

Many think that if they would find pleasure they must seek it directly and make it their direct object, seeking it moreover in the gratification of their appetites. They seem to know no other form of happiness but this. It would seem that they never have conceived the idea that the only way to enjoy themselves really is to deny self, fully up to the demands of right, reason, and of God's revealed will. Yet this is the most essential law of real happiness. Where shunning the cross begins, true religion ends. You may pray in your family, you may sternly rebuke sin wherever it is disagreeable to yourself, and do all this without Christian self-denial; but while living in habits of self-indulgence, you cannot stand up for Christ and do your duty everywhere manfully, and especially you will be all weakness when the path of duty leads you where your feelings will be wounded. And no man can expect to escape such emergencies always. If, then, you would maintain the path of duty without swerving, and enjoy real life and blessedness, you must determine to deny yourself wherever God and reason demand it, and fully up to the extent of those demands. So will you gain more than you can lose. If you are firm and determined, your path will be easy and joyous.

It often happens that the entire drift of a Christian's feelings is towards self-indulgence, so that if he allowed himself to be guided by his feelings he would surely make shipwreck of his soul. God, on his part, shuts him up to simple faith. Then if he follows the Lord's guidance, he will triumph, and all suddenly his "soul is like the chariots of Amminadab." A case in point is now before my mind of a man who once lived here. After a period of Christian life, he went from our place, backslided from God sorely, became almost an infidel, quite a Swedenborgian, became wealthy, and just when you might suppose him to have gained the heights of earthly happiness, and when he supposed so himself, he became, instead, completely wretched.

He was forced to fall back upon himself, and say, I must return to God and do his will; the whole of it, whatever it may be, or shall utterly perish. I will, said he, put an extinguisher upon every worldly affection. Nothing that is hostile to God's will shall be tolerated a moment. No sooner had he done this, than all his religious life and joys came back again. Then his wife and neighbors began to say of him, "He is indeed a new man in Christ Jesus." From that day, the peace of God ruled in his heart, and his cup of joy was full to overflowing. Any man, therefore, can afford to deny himself, since thereby he opens his heart to the joys of immortal life and peace. This is the only way of real happiness.

This subject explains many of the otherwise strange facts of Christian experience. Here is one man who cannot pray before his family. Inquire more deeply into his case, and you will probably find that he cannot enjoy anything in religious duty. Inquire yet further into the cause, and you will find that he does not deny himself, but lives under the laws of self-indulgence. Poor man, he cannot please God so.

Another cannot come out and confess Christ before men. The truth probably is that he has not made up his mind to deny himself at all. On the contrary, he really denies Christ. He shuns the cross. Ah, that is not the way to heaven. In that path you can have no communion with God. Try it a thousand times, and you will still find the same result, no peace, and no communion with God.

Our text says, "Take up your cross daily." So you must. This is the only possible way of holy living. And it must be done firmly, sternly, and continually. It must be made your life-work, save as you gain a respite by substantial victory over your propensities to self-indulgence. Let a man attempt to rule down the appetite for alcoholic drinks, and do it at special seasons only, say once a day, or once in a week, while all the rest of the time he gives himself to full indulgence, he must utterly fail. He never can succeed unless he takes up his cross daily and bears it all the time. Absolutely he must persevere, or his efforts are all for naught. Precisely in proportion as we sternly take up our cross, it grows light and we grow strong to bear it. When a man indulges himself in tobacco, each day's indulgence makes him more a slave. On the contrary, each successive day's abstinence makes him more a conqueror. If a man resolutely declares, By

the help of God, no lust, no appetite, shall have dominion over me, then, holding on, he comes off conqueror. The more firmly you adhere to this principle, and the more steadily you rule down the clamors for self-indulgence, so much the more speedily and surely do you gain the victory. Although at first you take up this work tremblingly, if you hold on, you will gain ground. These appetites will take less and less hold upon you. Bearing your cross will itself make you strong for your toil in the Christian life.

Shunning the cross grieves the Spirit. If you neglect duty, if you fail to pray in your family, omitting it perhaps because you have company present, you may be very sure the Spirit of God is grieved. Satan throws these temptations in your path, and you give him every advantage against you. You will perhaps try to pray while in this state; but, oh, God is not with you! You have been placed where you should have done some things unpleasant to flesh and blood; you evaded the claims of present duty; you went to bed at night without doing your duty. How was it then with your soul? Did not dark clouds shut off the light of God's face?

Did you have any comfort of his presence? or any communion with your Savior? Pause and ask your heart for the answer.

## REMARKS

**1.** So long as the religious sensibilities are not developed, men will of course feel a strong demand for worldly affections. What do they know about the religious affections of the heart?

What do they know of real love to God, or of the consciousness of the Spirit's witness to their hearts that they are God's children? Really nothing. They have never crossed their sensual propensities. Of course they have not taken the first step towards developing the heavenly affections of the heart. Consequently all their enjoyments are earthly. Their hearts are only below. But just in proportion as they deny themselves do they fall into adjustment to their spiritual nature.

**2.** It is a great and blessed thing for the Christian to find his nature conformed progressively more and more to God; to find it manifestly

coming around right, and adjusting itself, under divine grace, to the demands of benevolence.

**3.** Crossbearing, persisted in, brings out a ripe spiritual culture. The soul longs intensely for spiritual manifestations, and loves communion with God. Hear him say, How sweet the memory of those scenes when my soul lay low before God! How did my heart enjoy his presence! Now I am always sensible of an aching void unless God be there.

**4.** When men go about to seek enjoyment as an end, they surely miss it. All such seeking must certainly be in vain. Benevolence leads the soul out of itself, and sets it upon making others happy. So real blessedness comes.

**5.** Your usefulness as Christians will be as your Crossbearing and as your firmness in this course of life; for your knowledge in spiritual things, your spiritual vitality, your communion with God and, all in one word, your aid from the Holy Ghost, must turn upon the fidelity with which you deny yourself

**6.** If you have once known the blessedness of spiritual life, and your heart has been molded into the image of the heavenly, you can no longer return to the miserable flesh-pots of Egypt. There is no longer any possibility of your enjoying earthly things as the portion of your soul. Let that be considered settled. Abandon at once and forever all further thought of finding your joys in worldly, selfish indulgences.

**7.** To the young, let me say, your sensibilities are quick, and lean to worldly things. Now is the time for you to be stern in dealing with your self-indulgent spirit before you have gone too far ever to succeed. Are you strongly tempted, to give way to self-indulgence? Remember it is an unalterable law of your nature that you must seek your peace and blessedness in God. You cannot find it elsewhere. You must have Jesus for your friend, or be eternally friendless. Your very nature demands that you seek God as your God; the King of your life; the Portion of your soul for happiness. You cannot find Him such to you, save as you deny yourself, take up your daily cross, and follow Jesus.

**8.** To those of you who, being yet in your sins, cannot conceive how you can ever enjoy God, and cannot even imagine how your heart can cleave to God, and call Him a thousand endearing names, and pour out your heart in



love to Jesus, let me beg of you to consider that there is such communion with God; there is such joy of his presence, and you may have it at the price of self-denial and whole-hearted devotion to Jesus; not otherwise. And why should you not make this choice? Already you are saying, Every cup of worldly pleasure is blasted; dried up and worthless. Then let them go. Bid them away, and make the better choice of pleasures that are purer far, and better, and which endure forever.

## ON FOLLOWING CHRIST

*“Jesus saith unto him. If I will that he tarry till I come. what Is that to thee?  
Follow thou me.” — John 21:22.*

THESE words Christ spake to Peter. He had previously given Peter to understand that in his advanced life his liberty would be restrained, and that he would have the honor of glorifying God by a martyr's death. A question arose in Peter's mind more curious than wise how it would fare with his fellow-disciple, John. So he inquires “Lord, what shall this man do?” Gently rebuking this idle inquisitiveness, Jesus replied, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me.”

This reply involves a principle, and hence it has a wide practical application. It is really addressed to us.

Assuming it to be thus addressed to all at the present day, what does it teach? What does Jesus say to us?

Suppose He stood where I do this moment, and you knew it to be Jesus Himself, and saw that He was preparing to speak. You see the halo of glory around his head; you note the blending of meekness and majesty that identifies Him most fully as one like unto the Son of God, and your whole soul is moved within you to catch every word He may utter. Oh, what an earnest expectation! If He were to speak in this house, you would hear the ticking of that clock more plainly than you now do. If you chanced not to catch every word distinctly, you would ask one and another, What did He say? What was that?

He speaks, you observe, in the form of a positive command; what is this command? Remember, if it be the Lord Jesus Christ, He has the right to command. Who else in earth or heaven has this right more absolutely than He? It must be of the utmost consequence to us to know what He does command us.

Whatever it be, it must vitally affect our well-being both to know and to do it. Words from one so benevolent must be for our good. Certainly, He never did speak but He said things for the good of those to whom He spake.

It must also be for the general good; for the Great King and Lord of all never overlooks what pertains to the general good.

Moreover, it must be safe to obey. Certainly; how can it be otherwise? Did it ever happen that any man obeyed Him and found it unsafe?

Of course it must be our DUTY to obey. How can it be that Christ shall ever command us, and we be not bound solemnly to obey Him?

Also, it must be possible for us to obey. Did Christ ever enjoin impracticable things? Could He possibly do a thing so unreasonable?

All these points must be assumed and admitted. How can we ever doubt a moment on any one of them?

This, then, is the state of the case. What, now, should be the attitude of our minds? Manifestly this, Let Him speak; we will surely listen and obey. What does He say? Every word He says, I know, will be infinitely good. Let me catch every intimation of his will.

“His words shall be sweeter to my taste than honey or the honeycomb.”

But will any of you turn away, saying, “I don’t care what He says?” Will you not rather feel this, “Let Him say what He will, it is all good, and I will surely hear and obey it?”

If such be your attitude towards Him, then we are ready to examine what He says. Observe, He gives us something to be done, and, moreover, something to be done by yourself. No matter just now to you what others may do, or what God’s providence may allot to them. “What is that to thee?” It has always been the temptation of the human heart to look at the duties of others rather than one’s own. You must resist and put down this temptation. Christ has work for you to do, and it becomes you to address yourself earnestly to do it. Observe, also, that it is to be done now. He gives you no furlough, not even to go home and bid farewell to those of your house. He can take no excuse for delay.

Now let us ask, What is this thing which He requires? He says, “Follow thou Me.” What does this mean? Must I leave my home? Must I abandon my business? Am I to change my residence? Am I to follow Him all over the land?

The latter meaning was plainly the true one when Jesus dwelt among men in human flesh. He then called certain men to follow Him as his servants and disciples, and they were to attend Him in all his journeyings to go where He went and to stop where He stopped. They were to aid Him in his missionary work.

Now, Christ is no longer here in human flesh; and therefore following Him cannot have precisely that physical sense. Yet now, no less than then, it implies that you obey his revealed will, and do the things that please Him. Now, you are to imitate his example and follow his instructions. By various methods, He still makes known his will and you are to follow whithersoever He leads. You must accept Him as the Captain of your salvation, and let his laws control all your life. He comes to save his people from their sins and from the ruin that sin, unforgiven, must bring down; and you must accept Him as such a Savior. This is involved in following Him.

But let us here inquire somewhat more fully, What is implied in obeying this command?

Of course it implies confidence in Him who commands a confidence in the exercise of which you commit yourself fully to obey Him and trust all consequences to his disposal: There can be no hearty, cheerful obedience without this implicit confidence.

It implies, also, a willingness to be saved by Him, that is, saved from sin. You make no reservation of favorite indulgences; you go against all sin and set yourself earnestly to withstand every sort of temptation.

It involves also a present decision to follow Him through evil or good report whatever the effect may be on your reputation. You are ready to make sacrifices for Christ, rejoicing to be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

It is a very common fault to admit what Christ requires, yet to fail very much in doing it. This is saying, I go, sir, but going not. Such a man does not follow Christ.

He requires immediate action. He has work for you to do today, and He demands of you that you commit yourself to full obedience.

Let us next inquire, WHY shall we follow Him?

Suppose Christ were here personally and from this desk announced this command, Follow thou Me. Would you ask to know why? You could very soon assign some weighty reasons. Your own mind would suggest them. And do you know any reasons why you should not follow Him? I presume it is settled in every mind why you should obey this command, now and here, without one moment's delay. Is there any of you that can assign any reason why you should not obey this command? Does any of you doubt at all whether this be your duty? Can you think of any reason why it is not?

Then it must be your duty, and you ought to do it. The matter should lie in your mind thus, If this is my duty, of course I must do it at once. Doing duty is the business of my life.

You owe it to Jesus Christ to follow Him. If you are a student, none the less should you follow Jesus everywhere. See that young man. You ask him why he goes to college; what does he say? Does he say, Because I would be better prepared to teach men about Jesus Christ? Coming to his teachers, does he say, Give me an education, give me all the discipline of mind and heart you can, that I may be the better able to teach and preach Jesus Christ? Tell me all you know of Christ; pray for me that God may teach my heart the whole gospel; is this what he says? In this sort of way should a Christian student follow Christ.

Do you not owe this to Him? Can any one of you deny this? Have you any right to live to yourselves? If you could gain some good for the moment, could you think it right to have your own way, and disown Christ? What if you were to gain the whole world and lose your own soul?

You owe it to yourself to take care of your own soul. God lays on you the responsibility of saving your own soul, and you must bear it. No man can bear that responsibility for you. You must bear it for yourself alone.

You owe it to your friends to follow Christ. You have friends over whom you may exert a precious influence. For their sakes you ought to know Christ, that you may lead them also to follow Him. You have friends also who have done much for you and have loved you much. It is due from you to them that you should follow Christ. You owe it to your father and

mother. Are they praying souls? It is due to the sympathy they feel for you and to the strong desire they have for your salvation. If they have never prayed, it is time they did, and time that you should lead them to Christ.

You owe it to the whole world. There are millions who know not Jesus, some of whom you might teach so that they shall not die and never have known Him.

One more thought as to yourself. Such as you make yourself by obeying or not obeying this precept, you will be to all eternity. What you do in this matter will have its fruits on your destiny long after the sun and stars shall have faded away. You have no right to live so that, when you die, men shall say, There goes from earth one nuisance, and hell has more sin in it now than it ever had before.

Again: this is the only path of peace. If you would have peace, you must seek and find it here. Here thousands have found it; but none ever found it anywhere else.

Jesus Christ says to you, "Follow thou me." Will you set yourself to find some excuse? What are your excuses?

Do you say, "There are so many opinions among men, I do not know what to do?"

Ah! but you do know. It is only a pitiful pretence when you say you don't know your duty. Who of you does not know enough to be simple-hearted and to go on in duty and please God? No opinions of men need stumble you if you simply follow Christ. You talk about the various opinions among Christian sects; but, differ much as they may in lesser matters, on the great things of salvation they are all agreed. They all agree essentially, that to follow Christ in confidence and simple love is the whole of duty, and will ensure his approbation. Follow this simple direction, and all will be well with you.

But some will say, "I believe all will be saved."

You do, indeed! Will they all become like Christ before they die? Do they all in fact become holy in this world? Christ is in heaven. Can you go there unless you become first like Him in heart and in life?

What is such a belief good for? Often has this question been forced on my mind in Boston, What is this belief that all men will be saved good for? People plead this belief as their excuse for not following Christ. They say, "No need to trouble ourselves with following Christ, since we shall all come right at last anyhow. "Can this belief make men holy and happy?" Some of you will answer, "It makes me happy for the present, and that is the most I care for." But does it make you holy? Does it beget true Christian self-denial and real benevolence? A faith and a practice which make you happy without being holy are but a poor thing. Indeed, it cannot fail of being utterly mischievous, because it lures and pleases without the least advance towards saving your soul. It only leaves you the more a slave of sin and Satan.

But you say, "It makes me so miserable to believe that any will be forever lost!"

What then? What if it does make you feel unhappy? It may make you unhappy to see your guilty friend sent to the penitentiary or the gallows now; but such a doom may be none the less deserved none the less certain, because it hurts your feelings.

How can there be any other way of final happiness save through real holiness? The fountain of all happiness must lie in your own soul. If that is renewed to holiness and made unselfish, loving, forgiving, humble then you will be happy of course, but you cannot be happy without such a character.

Some of you may say, "I don't believe in the necessity of a change of heart."

Yes, you do; you are altogether mistaken in regard to the matter, if you suppose you don't believe in the necessity of a change of heart. There cannot be such a man in all Christendom a man who does not know that by nature his heart is not right with God, yet that it must become right with God before he can enjoy God's presence in heaven. Is there one whose conscience does not testify that, before conversion, his heart is alienated from God? Do you not know that you are unlike God in spirit? and that you must be changed so as to become like God before you can enjoy Him? What! a sinner, knowing himself to be a sinner, believe he can be happy in

God's presence without a radical moral change? Impossible! Every man knows that the sinner, out of sympathy with God, must be changed before he can enjoy God's presence and love. Every man, unchanged by God's grace, knows himself to be a sinner and not holy by nature.

A case in point to show the force of truth on even hardened hearts came lately to my knowledge. A Christian lady, being on a visit to one of the towns in Canada, was called on by a gentleman of high standing in society, but who had always lived a prayerless, ungodly life.

A man of strong will and nerves, professedly a sceptic, he yet took the ground before this Christian lady that he was ready, as a means of becoming a Christian, to do anything that she should say. "Well, then," said she, "kneel down here, and cry out, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'" "What!" replied he, "do this when I don't believe myself a sinner." "You need not excuse yourself on that ground," said she, "for you know you are a sinner." Having passed his word of honor to a lady, he could not draw back, and therefore kneeled and repeated the proposed words. Arising, he asked, "What next?" "Do so again, and say the same words." He raised the old objection, "I don't believe myself a sinner." She made the same answer as before, and a second time he repeated the words of that prayer. The same things were said the same things done, the third time, and then, hardened as he was, his heart felt the force of those words, and he began to cry in earnest, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" His heart broke, and he prayed till mercy came!

So often, when men say they don't believe this and that, they do believe it so far as conviction is concerned. They know the truth respecting their own guilt.

But you plead, perhaps, this: I must attend to other duties first; my studies, or my business.

No, my friend; no other duties can come before this. This is the greatest duty and ought to be the first. Hear what the Savior said on this very point. He said to one man "Follow Me;" and he answered, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." This is a strong case, and is placed on record for our instruction because it is strong. It may seem to you very unnatural that Jesus would call any man away from a duty so obvious and



so inborn in every human heart; yet what did He say? He gave no heed to this plea, but answered, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Not even the last rites of burial to the dead must be allowed to stand before obedience to Christ's call. No doubt Christ saw a disposition in this man to plead off, and therefore He saw the necessity of meeting it promptly. Suppose the man had said at first, "Yes, Lord, I am ready; my father lies unburied; but I am ready, if Thou callest me, to follow Thee even now;" it is at least supposable, if not probable, that Jesus would have answered, Yes; I will go with thee to that funeral. Let us lay the dead solemnly in their last bed, and then go to our preaching.

Another man replied to his call, saying, "Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home in my house." To him, Jesus replied, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Thus Christ teaches that no duty can possibly come before this of giving up your heart to follow Him. You must make up your mind fully to this life-business, and really enter upon it. All things else are only an offence to God.

Do you say, I must study? You must first make up your mind to do all for Christ, else study can be no acceptable duty. When Jesus says to you, "My son, give Me thy heart," He wants nothing else instead of your heart. He does not wish to be put off with some other duty than the very one He calls for. When He says, "Follow Me," He demands an explicit answer, whether you will or no, and he cannot accept anything evasive.

## REMARKS

**1.** You are now, each one of you, called to follow Christ, with the implied pledge on his part, that if you give yourself to him, he will give himself to you. Think of that. Would it not be a blessed thing to have Christ give himself to you, to be your eternal Friend your portion and joy for ever?

Suppose Jesus were passing along here, and were calling one and another by name to follow him. When he came near you, would you not be saying in your heart, I hope he will certainly call me? Or can it be you would say, I hope he will not call me? Can it be you could say that? Would you not

rather say, Oh, is it possible he will pass me by; how awful! Can it be? And if so, shall I never see him passing by so near again?

O sinner, Jesus is now passing by you, so near; arise and speak to him, for he does call you; and you must decide now whether you follow him or not, and decide for eternity!

**2.** Don't think about others. Say not, as Peter said, "Lord, what shall this man do?" This is an old and artful device of your adversary this turning your mind to think about others. If you are wise, you will think about yourself only.

**3.** It is a great comfort to reach the point where you say, I will follow him. anyhow: let others do as they please; I will go after Christ. This is just what you should say; and when you come to this point with a full heart, you will find it is a most precious decision.

**4.** You are now called to decide your own future destiny. Some decision upon it you will certainly make. You take a step here today which may decide all your future being. Is it not well that you take this step right?

Suppose I should now say, Come, separate yourselves according to the decision you make. All ye who will follow Christ, come into this aisle; what will you do?

Will you refuse and say, I will not follow Christ yet; I have ends of my own to accomplish first: I will not be his servant now? Is this your decision? Shall we ask to have it put on record? It will go on record anyhow, whether you ask it or not.

Some of you will perhaps say, I will not decide just now. I did not come here today expecting to decide so great a question at this time.

What, indeed! Did not you expect to hear a gospel sermon today? And did not you know that in every gospel sermon there is, in fact, a gospel call on you to repent and follow Jesus?

But will you now turn again and say, "Lord, I can't understand, I cannot realize, why I should follow thee?" Don't say that; for you can understand it. And you can decide this question today.

But, says some young man, if I should go after him, I am afraid I should have to forego some of my favorite plans for life. I might have to give up my intended profession. Another might be debarred from some lucrative business that pays better than following Christ.

Then you can go and tell your Savior so. Tell him how the case lies. Tell him you cannot trust him to provide for your worldly interests. You are afraid he would send you also to preach the kingdom of God, and might pay you but poorly for your services. Perhaps he will excuse you from his service here and from entering into the joy of your Lord hereafter besides!

There is a young man who says, I can't follow Christ now, because I cannot leave my dear Christian mother. Then go upon your knees and spread out your excuse before the Lord. Say to him, My good mother gave me the best Christian instruction and her constant prayers; she did everything to make me thy servant: but now, since thou art calling me to follow thee, I find I cannot go and preach thy love to a dying world. She cannot spare me and I cannot leave her.

Indeed, you cannot afford to. And your pious mother thinks her claim is above that of the Savior! Well, you must both make your choice.

# CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER

*“Ask, and it shall be given you.” Matthew 7:7, 8.*

*“Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to consume it upon your lusts.” James 4:3.*

I PROPOSE to consider the conditions of prevailing prayer.

The first condition is a state of mind in which you would offer the Lord’s Prayer sincerely and acceptably.

Christ at their request taught his disciples how to pray. In doing so, he gave them an epitome of the appropriate subjects of prayer, and also threw a most important light upon the spirit with which all prayer should be offered. This form is exceedingly comprehensive. Every word is full of meaning. It would seem very obvious, however, that our Lord did not intend here to specify all the particular things we may pray for, but only to group together some of the great heads of subjects which are appropriate to be sought of God in prayer, and also to show us with what temper and spirit we should come before the Lord.

This is evidently not designed as a mere form, to be used always and without variation. It cannot be that Christ intended we should evermore use these words in prayer, and no other words; for he never again used these precise words himself, so far as we know from the sacred record, but did often use other and very different words, as the Scriptures abundantly testify.

But this form answers a most admirable purpose if we understand it to be given us to teach us these two most important things; namely, what sort of blessings we may pray for, and in what spirit we should pray for them.

Most surely, then, we cannot hope to pray acceptably unless we can offer this prayer in its real spirit our own hearts deeply sympathizing with the spirit of this prayer. If we cannot pray the Lord’s Prayer sincerely, we cannot offer any acceptable prayer at all.

Hence it becomes us to examine carefully the words of this recorded form of prayer. Yet be it remembered, it is not these words, as mere words, that God regards, or that we should value. Words themselves, apart from their meaning, and from their meaning as used by us, would neither please nor displease God. He looks on the heart.

Let us now refer to the Lord's Prayer, and to the connection in which it stands.

"When ye pray," says our Lord, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."

Hence there is no need that you continue to clamor unceasingly, "O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us." Those were indeed vain repetitions just such as the heathen use. It is a most singular fact that the Roman Catholic church has fallen into the practice here condemned. Like the priests of Baal, in Elijah's time, they demand and practice everlasting repetitions of the same words, numbering their repetitions of Paternosters and Ave Marias by their beads, and estimating the merit of prayer by the quantity, and not the quality, of their prayers. The more repetitions, the greater the value. This principle, and the practice founded upon it, our Savior most pointedly condemns.

So, many persons, not Roman Catholics or heathen, seem to lay much more stress upon the amount of prayer than upon its character and quality. They think if there can only be prayer enough, that is, repetitions enough of the same or similar words, the prayer will be certainly effective, and prevalent with God. No mistake can be greater. The entire word of God rebukes this view of the subject in the most pointed manner.

Yet, be it well considered, the precept "Use not vain repetitions," should by no means be construed to discourage the utmost perseverance and fervency of spirit in prayer. The passage does not forbid our renewing our requests from great earnestness of spirit. Our Lord himself did this in the garden, repeating his supplication "in the same words." Vain repetitions are what is forbidden; not repetitions which gush from a burdened spirit.

This form of prayer invites us, first of all, to address the great God as "Our Father who art in heaven." This authorizes us to come as children and address the Most High, feeling that he is a Father to us.

The first petition follows, “Hallowed be thy name.” What is the exact idea of this language? To hallow is to sanctify; to deem and render sacred.

There is a passage in Peter’s Epistle which may throw light on this.

He says, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” The meaning seems plainly to be this: Set apart the Lord God in your hearts as the only true object of supreme, eternal adoration, worship, and praise. Place him alone on the throne of your hearts. Let him be the only hallowed object there.

So here, in the first petition of the Lord’s Prayer, we pray that both ourselves and all intelligent beings may in this sense hallow the name of the Lord God and sanctify him in their hearts. Our prayer is, Let all adore thee the infinite Father as the only object of universal adoration, praise, worship, and love.

This prayer hence implies:

- 1.** A desire that this hallowing of Jehovah’s name should be universal.
- 2.** A willingness to concur heartily ourselves in this sentiment. Our own hearts are in deep sympathy with it. Our inmost souls cry out, Let God be honored, adored, loved, worshiped, and revered by all on earth and all in heaven. Of course, praying in this spirit, we shall have the highest reverence for God. Beginning our prayer thus, it will so far be acceptable to God. Without such reverence for Jehovah’s name, no prayer can possibly be acceptable. All irreverent praying is mockery, most abhorrent to the pure and exalted Jehovah.

“Thy kingdom come.” What does this language imply?

- 1.** A desire that God’s kingdom should be set up in the world, and all men become holy. The will is set upon this as the highest and most to be desired of all objects whatever. It becomes the supreme desire of the soul, and all other things sink into comparative insignificance before it. The mind and the judgment approve and delight in the kingdom of God as in itself infinitely excellent, and then the will harmonizes most perfectly with this decision of intelligence.

Let it be well observed here that our Lord, in giving this form of prayer, assumes throughout that we shall use all this language with most profound

sincerity. If any man were to use these words, and reject their spirit from his heart, his prayer would be an utter abomination before God. Whoever would pray at all, should consider that God looks on the heart, and is a holy God.

**2.** It is implied in this petition that the suppliant does what he can to establish this kingdom. He is actually doing all he can to promote this great end for which he prays. Else he fails entirely of evincing his sincerity. For nothing can be more sure than that every man who prays sincerely for the coming of Jehovah's kingdom, truly desires and wills that it may come; and if so, he will neglect no means in his power to promote and hasten its coming. Hence every man who sincerely offers this petition will lay himself out to promote the object. He will seek by every means to make the truth of God universally prevalent and triumphant.

**3.** I might also say that the sincere offering of this petition implies a resistance of everything inconsistent with the coming of this kingdom. This you cannot fail to understand.

We now pass to the next petition, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

This petition implies that we desire to have God's will done, and that this desire is supreme.

It implies also a delight in having the will of God done by all his creatures, and a corresponding sorrow whenever it fails of being done by any intelligent being.

There is also implied a state of the will in harmony with this desire. A man whose will is averse to having his own desires granted is insincere, even although his desires are real. Such a man is not honest and consistent with himself.

In general, I remark, respecting this petition, that if it be offered sincerely, the following things must be true:

**1.** The suppliant is willing that God should require all he does, and as he does. His heart will acquiesce both in the things required and in the manner in which God requires them. It would indeed be strange that a man should pray sincerely that God's will might be done, and yet not be willing

himself that God should give law, or carry his will into effect. Such inconsistencies never can happen where the heart is truly sincere and honest before God. No, never. The honest hearted suppliant is as willing that God's will should be done as the saints in heaven are. He delights in having it done, more than in all riches more than in his highest earthly joy.

**2.** When a man offers this petition sincerely it is implied that he is really doing, himself, all the known will of God. For if he is acting contrary to his actual knowledge of God's will, it is most certain that he is not sincere in praying that God's will may be done. If he sincerely desires and is willing that God's will should be done, why does he not do it himself?

**3.** It implies a willingness that God should use his own discretion in the affairs of the universe, and just as really and fully in this world as in heaven itself. You all admit that in heaven God exercises a holy sovereignty. I do not mean by this, an arbitrary, unreasonable sovereignty, but I mean a control of all things according to his own infinite wisdom and love exercising evermore his own discretion, and depending on the counsel of none but himself. Thus God reigns in heaven.

You also see that in heaven, all created beings exercise the most perfect submission and confidence in God. They all allow him to carry out his own plans, framed in wisdom and love, and they even rejoice with exceeding joy that he does. It is their highest blessedness.

Such is the state of feeling towards God universally in heaven.

And such it should be on earth. The man who offers this petition sincerely must approximate very closely to the state of mind which obtains in heaven.

He will rejoice that God appoints all things as he pleases, and that all beings should be, and do, and suffer as God ordains. If man has not such confidence in God as to be willing that he should control all events respecting his own family, his friends, all his interests, in short for time and eternity, then certainly his heart is not submissive to God, and it is hypocrisy for him to pray that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven. It must be hypocrisy in him, because his own heart rebels against the sentiment of his own words.



This petition offered honestly, implies nothing less than universal, unqualified submission to God. The heart really submits, and delights in its submission.

No thought is so truly pleasing as that of having God's will done evermore. A sincere offering of this prayer, or indeed of any prayer whatever, involves the fullest possible submission of all events, for time and for eternity, to the hands of God. All real prayer puts God on the throne of the universe, and the suppliant low before him at his footstool.

**4.** The offering of this petition sincerely implies conformity of life to this state of the will. You will readily see that this must be the case, because the will governs the outward life by a law of necessity. The action of this law must be universal so long as man remains a voluntary moral agent. So long, therefore, the ultimate purpose of the will must control the outward life.

Hence the man who offers this prayer acceptably must live as he prays; must live according to his own prayers. It would be a strange and most unaccountable thing, indeed, if the heart should be in a state to offer this prayer sincerely, and yet should act itself out in the life directly contrary to its own expressed and supreme preference and purpose.

Such a case is impossible. The very supposition involves the absurdity of assuming that a man's supreme preference shall not control his outward life.

In saying this, however, I do not deny that a man's state of mind may change, so as to differ the next hour from what it is this. He may be in a state one hour to offer this prayer acceptably, and the next hour may act in a manner right over against his prayer.

But if in this latter hour you could know the state of his will, you would find that it is not such that he can pray acceptably, "Thy will be done." No; his will is so changed as to conform to what you see in his outward life.

Hence a man's state of heart may be to some extent known from his external actions. You may at least know that his heart does not sincerely offer this prayer if his life does not conform to the known will of God.

We pass to the next petition, "Give us this day our daily bread."

It is plain that this implies dependence on God for all the favors and mercies we either possess or need.

The petition is remarkably comprehensive. It names only bread, and only the bread for "this day"; yet none can doubt that it was designed to include also our water and our needful clothing whatever we really need for our highest health, and usefulness, and enjoyment on earth. For all these we look to God.

Our Savior doubtless meant to give us in general the subjects of prayer, showing us for what things it is proper for us to pray and also the spirit with which we should pray. These are plainly the two great points which he aimed chiefly to illustrate in this remarkable form of prayer.

Whoever offers this petition sincerely, is in a state of mind to recognize and gratefully acknowledge the providence of God. He sees the hand of God in all the circumstances that affect his earthly state. The rain and the sunshine the winds and the frosts, he sees coming, all of them, from the hand of his own Father. Hence he looks up in the spirit of a child saying, "Give me this day my daily bread."

But there are those who philosophize and speculate themselves entirely out of this filial dependence on God. They arrive at such ideas of the magnitude of the universe that it becomes in their view too great for God to govern by a minute attention to particular events. Hence they see no God, other than an unknowing Nature in the ordinary processes of vegetation, or in the laws that control animal life. A certain indefinable but unintelligent power, which they call Nature, does it all. Hence they do not expect God to hear their prayers, or notice their wants. Nature will move on in its own determined channel whether they pray or restrain prayer.

Now men who hold such opinions cannot pray the Lord's Prayer without the most glaring hypocrisy, How can they offer this prayer and mean anything by it, if they truly believe that everything is nailed down to a fixed chain of events, in which no regard is had or can be had to the prayers or wants of man?

Surely, nothing is more plain than that this prayer recognizes most fully the universal providence of that same infinite Father who gives us the promises, and who invites us to plead them for obtaining all the blessings we can ever need.

It practically recognizes God as Ruler over all.

What if a man should offer this prayer, but should add to it an appendix of this sort, "Lord, although we ask of thee our daily bread, yet thou knowest we do not believe thou hast anything at all to do with giving us each day our daily bread; for we believe thou art too high, and thy universe too large, to admit of our supposing that thou canst attend to so small a matter as supplying our daily food. We believe that thou art so unchangeable, and the laws of nature are so fixed, that no regard can possibly be had to our prayers or our wants."

Now would this style of prayer correspond with the petitions given us by Christ, or with their obvious spirit?

Plainly this prayer dictated by our Lord for us, implies a state of heart that leans upon God for everything for even the most minute things that can possibly affect our happiness or be to us objects of desire. The mind looks up to the great God, expecting from him, and from him alone, every good and perfect gift. For everything we need, our eye turns naturally and spontaneously towards our great Father.

And this is a daily dependence. The state of mind which it implies is habitual.

We must pass now to the next petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

In this immediate connection, the Savior says, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

The word "trespasses" therefore, doubtless explains what is meant by debts in the Lord's Prayer. Luke, in reciting this Lord's Prayer, has it,

"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." These various forms of expression serve to make the meaning quite plain.

It may often happen that in such a world as this, some of my fellowmen may wrong or at least offend me in some such way as I wrong and displease God. In such cases this petition of the Lord's Prayer implies that I forgive those who injure me, even as I pray to be forgiven myself.

The phraseology in Matthew makes the fact that we forgive others either the measure or the condition of our being forgiven; while, as given by Luke, it seems to be at least a condition, if not a ground or reason, of the request for personal forgiveness. The former reads "Forgive us as we forgive," etc., and the latter, "Forgive us, for we also forgive every one indebted to us."

Now on this petition I remark:

**1.** It cannot possibly imply that God will forgive us our sins while we are still committing them. Suppose one should use this form of petition: "Lord, forgive me for having injured thee as thou knowest that I do most freely forgive all men who injure me;" while yet it is perfectly apparent to the man himself and to everybody else that he is still injuring and abusing God as much as ever. Would not such a course be equivalent to saying "Lord, I am very careful, thou seest, not to injure my fellowmen, and I freely forgive their wrongs against me; but I care not how much I abuse and wrong thee?" This would be horrible! Yet this horrible prayer is virtually invoked whenever men ask of God forgiveness with the spirit of sin and rebellion in their hearts.

**2.** This petition never reads thus, "Forgive us our sins and enable us to forgive others also." This would be a most abominable prayer to offer to God; certainly, if it be understood to imply that we cannot forgive others unless we are specially enabled to do so by power given us in answer to prayer; and worse still, if this inability to forgive is imputed to God as its Author.

However the phraseology be explained, and whatever it be understood to imply, it is common enough in the mouths of men; but nowhere found in the book of God.

**3.** Christ, on the other hand, says, Forgive us as we forgive others. We have often injured, abused, and wronged thee. Our fellowmen have also often injured us, but thou knowest we have freely forgiven them. Now, therefore, forgive us as thou seest we have forgiven others. If thou. seest

that we do forgive others, then do thou indeed forgive us, and not otherwise. We cannot ask to be ourselves forgiven on any other condition.

**4.** Many seem to consider themselves quite pious if they can put up with it when they are injured or slighted; if they can possibly control themselves so as not to break out into a passion. If, however, they are really wronged, they imagine they do well to be angry. Oh, to be sure! somebody has really wronged them, and shall they not resent it, and study how to get revenge, or, at least, redress? But mark: the apostle Peter says, "If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." "For even hereunto were ye called," as if all Christians had received a special call to this holy example. Oh, how would such an example rebuke the spirit of the world!

**5.** It is one remarkable condition of being answered in prayer that we suffer ourselves to harbor no ill-will to any human being. We must forgive all that wrong us, and forgive them too from the heart. God as really requires us to love our enemies as to love our friends, as really requires us to forgive others as to ask forgiveness for ourselves. Do we always bear this in mind? Are you, beloved, always careful to see to it that your state of mind towards all who may possibly have wronged you is one of real forgiveness, and do you never think of coming to God in prayer until you are sure you have a forgiving spirit yourself?

Plainly, this is one of the ways in which we may test our fitness of heart to prevail with God in prayer. "When thou standest, praying, forgive, if thou hast aught against any." Think not to gain audience before God unless thou dost most fully and heartily forgive all who may be thought to have wronged thee.

Sometimes persons of a peculiar temperament lay up grudges against others. They have enemies, against whom they not only speak evil, but know not how to speak well. Now such persons who harbor such grudges in their hearts, can no more prevail with God in prayer than the devil can. God would as soon hear the devil pray and answer his prayers as hear and answer them. They need not think to be heard; not they!

How many times have I had occasion to rebuke this unforgiving spirit! Often, while in a place laboring to promote a revival, I have seen the

workings of this jealous, unforgiving spirit, and I have felt like saying, Take these things hence! Why do you get up a prayer-meeting and think to pray to God when you know that you hate your brother; and know moreover that I know you do? Away with it! Let such professed Christians repent, break down, get into the dust at the feet of God, and men too, before they think to pray acceptably! Until they do thus repent, all their prayers are only a “smoke in the nose” before God.

Our next petition is, “Lead us not into temptation”

And what is implied in this?

A fear and dread of sin; a watchfulness against temptation; an anxious solicitude lest by any means we should be overcome and fall into sin. On this point Christ often warned his disciples, and not them only, but, what he said unto them, he said unto all, “Watch.”

A man not afraid of sin and temptation cannot present this petition in a manner acceptable to God.

You will observe, moreover, that this petition does not by any means imply that God leads men into temptation in order to make them sin, so that we must needs implore of him not to lead us thus, lest he should do it. No, that is not implied at all; but the spirit of the petition is this, O Lord, thou knowest how weak I am, and how prone to sin; therefore let thy providence guard and keep me that I may not indulge in anything whatever that may prove to me a temptation to sin. Deliver us from all iniquity from all the stratagems of the devil. Throw around us all thy precious guardianship, that we may be kept from sinning against thee.

How needful this protection, and how fit that we should pray for it without ceasing!

This form of prayer concludes, “For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.”

Here is an acknowledgment of the universal government of God. The suppliant recognizes his supremacy and rejoices in it.

Thus it is when the mind is in the attitude of prevailing prayer. It is most perfectly natural then for us to regard the character, attributes, and kingdom of God as infinitely sacred and glorious.

How perfectly spontaneous is this feeling in the heart of all who really pray, "I ask all this because thou art a powerful, universal, and holy Sovereign. Thou art the infinite Source of all blessings. Unto thee, therefore, do I look for all needed good, either for myself or my fellow-beings!"

How deeply does the praying heart realize and rejoice in the universal supremacy of the great Jehovah!

All power, and glory, and dominion are thine, and thine only, for ever and ever. Amen and amen. Let my whole soul re-echo, Amen. Let the power and the glory be the Lord's alone for evermore. Let my soul for ever feel and utter this sentiment with its deepest and most fervent emphasis. Let God reign supreme and adored through all earth and all heaven, henceforth and for ever.

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## REMARKS

**1.** The state of mind involved in this prayer must be connected with a holy life. Most manifestly it can never co-exist with a sinning life. If you allow yourself in sin, you certainly cannot have access to God in prayer; you cannot enter into the spirit of the Lord's Prayer and appropriately utter its petitions.

**2.** The appropriate offering of this prayer involves a corresponding sensibility a state of feeling in harmony with it. The mind of the suppliant

must sympathize with the spirit of this form of prayer. Otherwise he does, by no means, make this prayer his own.

**3.** It is nothing better than mockery to use the Lord's Prayer as a mere form. So multitudes do use it, especially when public worship is conducted by the use of forms of prayer. Often you may hear this form of prayer repeated, over and over, in such a way as seems to testify that the mind takes no cognisance of the sentiments which the words should express. The chattering of a parrot could scarcely be more senseless and void of impression on the speaker's mind. How shocking to hear the Lord's Prayer chattered over thus! Instead of spreading out before God what they really need, they run over the words of this form, and perhaps of some other set forms, as if the utterance of the right words served to constitute acceptable prayer!

If they had gone into the streets and cursed and swore by the hour, every man of them would be horribly shocked, and would feel that now assuredly the curse of Jehovah would fall upon them. But in their senseless chattering of this form of prayer by the hour together, they as truly blaspheme God as if they had taken his name in vain in any other way.

Men may mock God in pretending to pray, as truly as in cursing and swearing. God looks on the heart, and he estimates nothing as real prayer into which the heart does not enter. And for many reasons it must be peculiarly provoking to God to have the forms of prayer gone through with and no heart of prayer attend them.

Prayer is a privilege too sacred to be trifled with. The pernicious effects of trifling with prayer are certainly not less than the evils of any other form of profanity. Hence God must abhor all public desecration of this solemn exercise.

Now, brethren, in closing my remarks on this one great condition of prevailing prayer, let me beseech you never to suppose that you pray acceptably unless your heart sympathizes deeply with the sentiments expressed in the Lord's Prayer. Your state of mind must be such that these words will most aptly express it. Your heart must run into the very words, and into all the sentiments of this form of prayer. Our Savior meant here to



teach us how to pray; and here you may come and learn how. Here you may see a map of the things to pray for, and a picture of the spirit in which acceptable prayer is offered.

# AN APPROVING HEART CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER

*“Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” — 1 John 3:21, 22.*

IN discussing this subject, I shall,

- I. SHOW THAT IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE HAVE AND CANNOT BUT HAVE CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD THAT HE ACCEPTS US;**
- II. THAT IF WE HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE SHALL ALSO HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL GRANT US WHAT WE ASK;**
- III. SHOW WHY THIS IS SO, AND WHY WE KNOW IT TO BE SO.**

I. If our heart does not condemn us, we can have confidence we are acceptable to God

If our heart really does not condemn us, it is because we are conscious of being conformed to all the light we have, and of doing the whole will of God as far as we know it. While in this state it is impossible that, with right views of God’s character, we should conceive of him as condemning us. Our intelligence instantly rejects the supposition that he does or can condemn us, that is, for our present state. We may be most deeply conscious that we have done wrong heretofore, and we may feel ourselves to be most guilty for this, and may be sure that God disapproves those past sins of ours, and would condemn us for them even now, if the pardoning blood of Christ had not intervened; but where pardon for past sins has been sought and found through redeeming blood, “there is therefore no more condemnation” for the past. And in reference to the present, the obvious truth is that if our conscience fully approves of our

state, and we are conscious of having acted according to the best light we have, it contradicts all our just ideas of God to suppose that he condemns us. He is a father, and he cannot but smile on his obedient and trusting children.

Indeed, ourselves being in this state of mind, it is impossible for us not to suppose that God is well pleased with our present state. We cannot conceive of him as being otherwise than pleased; for, if he were displeased with a state of sincere and full obedience, he would act contrary to his own character; he would cease to be benevolent, holy, and just. We cannot, therefore, conceive of him as refusing to accept us when we are conscious of obeying his will so far as we know it. Suppose the case of a soul appearing before God, fully conscious of seeking with all the heart to please God. In this case the soul must see that this is such a state as must please God.

Let us turn this subject over till we get it fully before our minds. For what is it that our conscience rightly condemns us? Plainly for not obeying God according to the best light we have. Suppose now we turn about and fully obey the dictates of conscience. Then its voice approves and ceases to condemn. Now all just views of the Deity require us to consider the voice of conscience in both cases as only the echo of his own. The God who condemns all disobedience must of necessity approve of obedience; and to conceive of him as disapproving our present state would be, in the conviction of our own minds, to condemn him.

It is therefore by no means presumption in us to assume that God accepts those who are conscious of really seeking supremely to please and obey him.

Again, let it be noted that in this state with an approving conscience, we should have no self-righteousness. A man in this state would at this very moment ascribe all his obedience to the grace of God.

From his inmost soul he would say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am"; and nothing could be farther from his heart than, to take praise or glory to himself for anything good. Yet I have sometimes been exceedingly astonished to hear men, and even ministers of the gospel, speak with surprise and incredulity of such a state as our text presupposes a state in

which a man's conscience universally approves of his moral state. But why be incredulous about such a state? Or why deem it a self-righteous and sinful state? A man in this state is as far as can be from ascribing glory to himself. No state can be farther from self-righteousness. So far is this from being a self-righteous state, that the fact is, every other state but this is self-righteous, and this alone is exempt from that sin. Mark how the man in this state ascribes all to the grace of God. The apostle Paul when in this state of conscious uprightness most heartily ascribes all to grace. "I labored," says he, "more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me."

But, observe that, while the apostle was in that state, it was impossible that he should conceive of God as displeased with his state. Paul might greatly and justly condemn himself for his past life, and might feel assured that God disapproved and had condemned Saul, the proud persecutor, though he had since pardoned Saul, the praying penitent. But the moral state of Paul the believer, of Paul, the untiring laborer for Christ, of Paul, whose whole heart and life divine grace has now molded into his own image, this moral state Paul's conscience approves, and his views of God compel him to believe that God approves.

So of the apostle John. Hear what he says "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." But here rises up a man to rebuke the apostle. What! he says, did you not know that your heart is corrupt, that you never can know all its latent wickedness, that you ought never to be so presumptuous as to suppose that you "do those things that please God?" Did you not know that no mere man does ever, even by any grace received in this life, really "keep the commandments of God so as to do those things that are pleasing in his sight?" No, says John, I did not know that. "What," rejoins his reprove, "not know that sin is mixed with all you do and that the least sin is displeasing to God?" Indeed, replies John, I knew I was sincerely trying to please God, and verily supposed I did please him and did keep his commandments, and that it was entirely proper to say so, all to the praise of upholding, sanctifying grace.

Again, when a man prays disinterestedly, and with a heart in full and deep sympathy with God, he may and should have confidence that God hears

him. When he can say in all honesty before the Lord, Now, Lord, thou knowest that through the grace of thy Spirit my soul is set on doing good to men for thy glory; I am grieved for the dishonor done to thee, so that “rivers of water run down my eyes, because men keep not thy law,” then he cannot but know that his prayers are acceptable to God.

Indeed no one, having right views of God’s character, can come to him in prayer in a disinterested state of mind, and feel otherwise than that God accepts such a state of mind. Now since our heart cannot condemn us when we are in a disinterested state of mind, but must condemn any other state, it follows that if our heart does not condemn us, we shall have, and cannot but have, confidence that God hears our prayers and accepts our state as pleasing in his sight.

Again, when we are conscious of sympathizing with God himself, we may know that God will answer our prayers. There never was a prayer made in this state of sympathy with God, which he failed to answer. God cannot fail to answer such a prayer without denying himself. The soul, being in sympathy with God, feels as God feels; so that for God to deny its prayers, is to deny his own feelings, and refuse to do the very thing he himself desires. Since God cannot do this, he cannot fail of hearing the prayer that is in sympathy with his own heart.

In the state we are now considering, the Christian is conscious of praying in the Spirit, and therefore must know that his prayer is accepted before God. I say, he is conscious of this fact. Do not some of you know this? Ye who thus live and walk with God, do you not know that the Spirit of God helps your infirmities, and makes intercession for you according to the will of God? Are you not very conscious of these intercessions made for you, and in your very soul, as it were, with groanings that cannot be uttered? Your heart within pants and cries out after God, and is lifted up continually before him as spontaneously as it is when your heart sings, pouring out its deep outgushings of praise. You know how sometimes your heart sings, though your lips move not and you utter no sound; yet your heart is full of music, making melody to the Lord. Even so, your soul is sometimes in the mood of spontaneous prayer, and pours out its deep-felt supplications into the ears of the Lord of Hosts just as naturally as you breathe. The silent and ceaseless echoing of your heart is, Thy

kingdom come thy kingdom come; and although you may not utter these words, and perhaps not any words at all, yet these words are a fair expression of the overflowing desires of your heart.

And this deep praying of the heart goes on while the Christian is still pursuing the common vocations of life. The man, perhaps, is behind the counter or in his workshop driving his plane, but his heart is communing or interceding with God. You may see him behind his plow but his heart is deeply engrossed with his Maker; he follows on, and only now and then starts up from the intense working of his mind and finds that his land is almost finished. The student has his book open to his lesson; but his deep musings upon God, or the irrepressible longings of his soul in prayer, consume his mental energies, and his eye floats unconsciously over the unnoticed page. God fills his thoughts. He is more conscious of this deep communion with God than he is of the external world. The team he is driving or the book he professes to study is by no means so really and so vividly a matter of conscious recognition to him as is his communion of soul with his God.

In this state, the soul is fully conscious of being perfectly submissive to God. Whether he uses these words or not, his heart would always say, "Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done." Hence he knows that God will grant the blessing he asks, if he can do so without a greater evil to his kingdom than the resulting good of bestowing it. We cannot but know that the Lord delights to answer the prayers of a submissive child of his own.

Again, when the conscience sweetly and humbly approves, it seems impossible that we should feel so ashamed and confounded before God as to think that he cannot hear our prayer. The fact is, it is only those whose heart condemns them, who come before God ashamed and confounded, and who cannot expect God to answer their prayers. These persons cannot expect to feel otherwise than confounded, until the sting of conscious guilt is taken away by repentance and faith in a Redeemer's blood.

Yet again, the soul in this state is not afraid to come with humble boldness to the throne, as God invites him to do; for he recognizes God as a real and most gracious father, and sees in Jesus a most compassionate, and condescending high priest. Of course he can look upon God only as being always ready to receive and welcome himself to his presence.

Nor is this a self-righteous state of mind. Oh, how often have I been amazed and agonized to hear it so represented! But how strange is this! Because you are conscious of being entirely honest before God, therefore it is maintained that you are self-righteous! You ascribe every good thing in yourself most heartily to divine grace, but yet you are (so some say) very self-righteous notwithstanding! How long will it take some people to learn what real self-righteousness is? Surely it does not consist in being full of the love and Spirit of God; nor does humility consist in being actually so full of sin and self-condemnation that you cannot feel otherwise than ashamed and confounded before both God and man.

## II. IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT WE SHALL RECEIVE THE THINGS WE ASK

**1.** This must be so, because it is his Spirit working in us that excites these prayers. God himself prepares the heart to pray; the Spirit of Christ leads this Christian to the throne of grace, and keeps him there; then presents the objects of prayer, enkindles desire, draws the soul into deep sympathy with God; and now, all this being wrought by the grace and Spirit of God, will he not answer these prayers? Indeed he will. How can he ever fail to answer them?

**2.** It is a remarkable fact that all real prayer seems to be summed up in the Lord's Prayer, and especially in those two most comprehensive petitions: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The mind in a praying frame runs right into these two petitions, and seems to center here continually. Many other and various things may be specified; but they are all only parts and branches of this one great blessing: Let God's kingdom come, and bear sway on earth as it does in heaven. This is the sum of all true prayer.

Now let it be observed that God desires this result infinitely more than we do. When, therefore, we desire it too, we are in harmony with the heart of God and he cannot deny us. The blessing we crave is the very thing which, of all others, he most delights to bestow.

**3.** Yet let it be noted here that God may not answer every prayer according to its letter; but he surely will according to its spirit. The real spirit is evermore this, “Thy kingdom come thy will be done”; and this God will assuredly answer, because he has so abundantly promised to do this very thing in answer to prayer.

### III. WHY WILL GOD CERTAINLY ANSWER SUCH A PRAYER, AND HOW CAN WE KNOW THAT HE WILL?

**1.** The text affirms that “whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” Now we might perhaps understand this to assign our obedience as the reason of God’s giving the blessing sought in prayer. But if we should, we should greatly err. The fundamental reason always of God’s bestowing blessings is his goodness his love. Let this be never forgotten. All good flows down from the great fountain of infinite goodness. Our obedience is only the condition of God’s bestowing it never the fundamental reason or ground of its bestowment. It is very common for us, in rather loose and popular language, to speak of a condition as being a cause or fundamental reason. But on a point like the present, we ought to use language with more precision. The true meaning on this point undoubtedly is that obedience is the condition. This being fulfilled on our part, the Lord can let his infinite benevolence flow out upon us without restraint. Obedience takes away the obstacle; then the mighty gushings of divine love break forth. Obedience removes the obstacles; never merits or draws down the blessing.

**2.** If God were to give blessings upon any other condition, it would deceive multitudes, either respecting ourselves or himself. If he were to answer our prayers, we being in a wrong state of mind, it would deceive others very probably; for if they did not know us well, they would presume that we were in a right state, and might be led to consider those things in us right which are in fact wrong.

Or, if they knew that we were wrong, and yet knew that God answered our prayers, what must they think of God? They could not avoid the



conclusion that he patronizes wrong-doing, and lifts up the smiles of his love upon iniquity; and how grievous must be the influence of such conclusions!

It should be borne in mind that God has a character to maintain. His reputation is a good to himself, and he must maintain it as an indispensable means of sustaining his moral government over other creatures. It could not be benevolent for him to take a course which would peril his own reputation as a holy God and as a patron and friend of holiness and not of sin.

**3.** God is well pleased when we remove the obstacles out of the way of his benevolence. He is infinitely good, and lives to do good, and for no other purpose for no other end whatever except to pour forth blessings upon his creatures wherever he can without peril to the well-being of other creatures under his care and love. He exists for ever in a state of entire consecration to this end. Such benevolence as this is infinitely right in God, and nothing less than this could be right for him.

Now, if it is his delight and his life to do good, how greatly must he rejoice when we remove all obstacles out of the way! How does his heart exult when another, and yet another, opportunity is afforded him of pouring out blessings in large and rich measure! Think of it, sinner, for it applies to you! Marvelous as you may think it, and most strange as it may seem, judged of by human rules and human examples, yet of God it cannot fail of being always true that he delights supremely in doing you good, and only waits till you remove the obstacles; then would his vast love break forth, and pour its ocean tides of mercy and of grace all around about you. Go and bow before your injured Sovereign in deep submission and real penitence, with faith also in Jesus for pardon, and thus put this matter to a trial! See if you do not find that his mercies are high above the heavens! See if anything is too great for his love to do for you!

And let each Christian make a similar proof of this amazing love. Place yourself where mercy can reach you without violating the glorious principles of Jehovah's moral government; and then wait and see if you do not experience the most overwhelming demonstrations of his love! How greatly does your Father above delight to pour out his mighty tides of blessings! Oh, he is never so well pleased as when he finds the channel

open and free for these great currents of blessings to flow forth upon his dear people!

A day or two since, I received a letter from the man in whose behalf you will recollect that I requested your prayers at a late church prayer-meeting. This letter was full of precious interest. The writer has long been a stranger to the blessedness of the gospel; but now he writes me: "I am sure you are praying for me, for within a week I have experienced a peace of mind that is new to me."

I mention this now as another proof of the wonderful readiness of our Father in heaven to hear and answer prayer. Oh, what love is this! To what shall I compare it? and how shall I give you any adequate view of its amazing fullness and strength? Think of a vast body of water, pent up and suspended high above our heads, pressing and pressing at every crevice to find an outlet where it may gush forth. Suppose the bottom of the vast Pacific should heave and pour its ocean tides over all the continents of the earth. This might illustrate the vast overflowings of the love of God; how grace and love are mounting up far and infinitely above all the mountains of your sins. Yes; let the deep, broad Pacific Ocean be elevated on high and there pent up, and then conceive of its pressure. How it would force its way and pour out its gushing floods wherever the least channel might be opened! And you would not need to fear that your little wants would drain it dry! Oh, no! you would understand how there might be enough and to spare; how it might be said, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it"; how the promises might read, "Bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out blessings till there be not room enough to receive them." The great oceans of divine love are never drained dry. Let Christians but bring in their tithes and make ready their vessels to receive, and then, having fulfilled the conditions, they may "stand still and see the salvation of God."

Oh, how those mountain floods of mercy run over and pour themselves all abroad till every capacity of the soul is filled! Oh, how your little vessels will run over and run over, as in the case of the prophet when the widow's vessels were all full, and he cried out, Oh, hasten, hasten! "Is there not another vessel?" Still the oil flows on is there not another vessel? No more,

she says; all are full; then and only then was the flowing oil stayed. How often have I thought of this in seasons of great revival, when Christians really get into a praying frame, and God seems to give them everything they ask for; until at length the prophet cries out, Is there not yet another vessel? Oh, bring more vessels, more vessels yet, for still the oil is flowing and still runs over; but ah, the church has reached the limit of her expectation. She has provided no more vessels: and the heavenly current is stayed. Infinite love can bless no more; for faith is lacking to prepare for and receive it.

## REMARKS

**1.** Many persons, being told that God answers prayer for Christ's sake, overlook the condition of obedience. They have so loose an idea of prayer, and of our relations to God in it, and of his relations to us and to his moral government, that they think they may be disobedient and yet prevail through Christ. How little do they understand the whole subject! Surely they must have quite neglected to study their Bible to learn the truth about prayer. They might very easily have found it there declared, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." All this surely teaches us that if there be the least sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer. Nothing short of entire obedience for the time being is the condition of acceptance with God. There must be a sincere and honest heart else how can you look up with humble confidence and say, My Father; else how can you use the name of Jesus, as your prevailing Mediator; and else, how can God smile upon you before all the eyes of angels and of pure saints above!

When men come before God with their idols set up in their hearts, and the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face, the Lord says, "Should I be inquired of at all by them?" Read and see (Ezekiel 14:3-5). The Lord commissions his prophet to declare unto all such, "I, the Lord, will answer him that cometh thus, according to the multitude of his idols. Such prayers God will answer by sending not a divine fullness, but a wasting leanness; not grace and mercy and peace, but barrenness and cursings and death.

Do not some of you know what this is? You have found in your own experience that the more you pray, the harder your heart is. And what do you suppose the reason of this can be? Plainly there can be no other reason for it than this: You come up with the stumbling-block of your iniquity before your face, and God answers you according, not to his great mercies, but to the multitude of your idols.

Should you not take heed how you pray?

**2.** Persons never need hesitate, because of their past sins, to approach God with the fullest confidence. If they now repent, and are conscious of fully and honestly returning to God with all their heart, they have no reason to fear being repulsed from the footstool of mercy.

I have sometimes heard persons express great astonishment when God heard and answered their prayers, after they had been very great and vile sinners. But such astonishment indicates but little knowledge of the matchless grace and loving kindness of our God. Look at Saul of Tarsus. Once a bitter and mad persecutor, proud in his vain Pharisaism; but now repenting, returning, and forgiven; mark what power he has with God in prayer. In fact, after penitence, God pardons so fully that, as his word declares, he remembers their iniquities no more. Then the Lord places the pardoned soul on a footing where he can prevail with God as truly and as well as any angel in heaven can! So far as the Bible gives us light on this subject, we must conclude that all this is true. And why? Not because the pardoned Christian is more righteous than an angel; but because he is equally accepted with the purest angel, and has, besides, the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, all made available to him when he uses this all-prevalent name. Oh, there is a world of meaning in this so-little-thought-of arrangement for prayer in Jesus' name! The value of Christ's merits is all at your disposal. If Jesus Christ could obtain any blessing at the court of heaven, you may obtain the same by asking in his name it being supposed of course that you fulfil the conditions of acceptable prayer. If you come and pray in the spirit of Christ, his Spirit making intercession with your spirit, and your faith taking hold of his all-meritorious name, you may have his intercessions before the throne in your behalf, and whatever Christ can obtain there, he will obtain for you. Ask, therefore, now, so

Christ himself invites and promises, “ask and receive, that your joy may be full.”

Oh, what a vantage-ground is this upon which God has placed Christians! Oh, what a foundation on which to stand and plead with most prevailing power! How wonderful! First, God bestows pardon, takes away the sting of death; restores peace of conscience and joy in believing: then gives the benefit of Christ’s intercession; and then invites Christians to ask what they will! Oh, how mighty, how prevalent, might every Christian become in prayer! Doubtless we may say that a church living with God, and fully meeting the conditions of acceptable prayer, might have more power with God than so many angels. And shall we hear professed Christians talk of having no power with God! Alas, alas! such surely know not their blessed birthright. They have not yet begun to know the gospel of the Son of God!

**3.** Many continue the forms of prayer when they are living in sin, and do not try to reform, and even have no sincere desire to reform. All such persons should know that they grievously provoke the Lord to answer their prayers with fearful judgments.

**4.** It is only those that live and walk with God whose prayers are of any avail to themselves, to the church, or to the world. Only those whose conscience does not condemn them, and who live in a state of conscious acceptance with God. They can pray. According to our text, they receive whatever they ask, because they keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

**5.** When those who have been the greatest sinners will turn to God, they may prevail as really as if they had never sinned at all. When God forgives through the blood of Jesus, it is real forgiveness, and the pardoned penitent is welcomed as a child to the bosom of infinite love. For Jesus’ sake God receives him without the least danger of its being inferred that himself cares not for sin. Oh, he told the universe once for all, how utterly he hated sin. He made this point known when he caused his well- beloved Son to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and it pleased the Father to bruise him and hide his face from even the Son of his love. Oh, what a beautiful, glorious thing this gospel system is! In it God has made such manifestations of his regard for his law, that now he has nothing to fear in showing favor to any and every sinner who believes in Christ. If this

believing sinner will also put away his sin; if he will only say, In the name of the Lord I put them all away all-now for ever; let him do this with all his heart, and God will not fear to embrace him as a son; this penitent need fear nothing so long as he hides himself in the open cleft of this blessed Rock of Ages.

Look at the case of the prodigal son. Famished, ragged, poor, ready to perish, he remembers his father's house and the plenty that abounds there; he comes to himself, and hence looks upon things once more according to their reality. Now he says: "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, but here I am perishing with hunger."

But why is he ready to perish with hunger? Ah, he ran away from a bountiful and kind father, and spent all his substance in riotous living. But he comes to himself. There, see him drawing near his father's mansion once his own dear home; see, the father rushes to embrace him; he hastens to make this penitent son most welcome to his home and to his heart. So God makes haste to show that he is not afraid to make the vilest sinner welcome if he only comes back a penitent and rests on the name of Jesus. Oh, what a welcome is this!

Follow on that beautiful illustration of it which the Savior has given us. Bring forth the best robe. Invite together all our friends and neighbors. Prepare the music. Spread the table and kill the fatted calf. It is fit that we should make merry and be glad. Lead forward this long-lost son and put on him my best robe. Let there be joy throughout my house over my returned and penitent son.

And what does all this show? One thing, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, and joy in the very heart of God himself, over one sinner that repenteth. Oh, I wonder, sinners will not come home to their Father in heaven!

**6.** Sinner, if you will come back to the Lord, you may not only prevail for yourself, but for your associates and friends. I was once in a revival where a large company of young men banded themselves together under a mutual pledge that they would not be converted. Father Nash was with me in that revival season, and on one occasion, while the young men alluded too were all present, he made a declaration which startled me, and almost shocked

himself. Yet, as he said afterward, he dared not take it back, for he did not know how he came to say it, and perhaps the hand of God might be in it." Young men," said he, "God will break your ranks within one week, or he will send some of you to hell."

It was an awful time. We feared that possibly it might not prove to be so, and that then the result would be exceeding bad upon the minds of that already hardened band. But it was spoken, and we could only cry unto God.

Time rolled along. About two or three days after this declaration was made, the leader of this band called to see me, all broken down and as mellow as he could be. As soon as he saw me, he cried out, "What shall I do? What are you thinking about?" Said I. "About my wicked companions," said he, "all of them in the way to hell." "Do you pray for them?" I asked. "Oh, yes," said he, "I cannot help praying for them every moment." "Well, then," said I, "there is one thing more; go to them and entreat them in Christ's name to be reconciled to God." He darted out of my room and began this work in earnest. Suffice it to say, that before the week was closed almost all of that band of young men were converted.

And now let me say to the impenitent sinners in this assembly, If others do not labor to promote a revival, begin at once and do it yourself. Learn from such a case as I have just stated what you can do. Don't you think you could do something of the greatest value to souls if you would seriously try? Who is there here let me see what young man or young woman is there here now impenitent, do not you believe that if you would repent yourself, you might then go and pray and labor and secure the conversion of others, perhaps many others, of your companions?

Sinners are usually disposed to throw all the responsibility of this labor and prayer upon Christians. I throw it back upon you. Do right yourselves, and then you can pray. Do right, and then none can labor with more effect than yourselves in this great work of bringing back wandering prodigals to their father's house.

Christian hearer, is it not a dreadful thing for you to be in a state in which you cannot prevail with God? Let us look around; how is it with you?

Can you prevail with God; and you and you? Who are they, and how many are there, in such a state that their prayers avail nothing, and who know before they pray, and while they are praying, that they are in no fit state to offer prevailing prayer? One of the brethren, you recollect, said to us at a recent church meeting, "I have lost my power to prevail with God. I know I am not ready for this work." How many others are there, still in the same awful condition?

Oh! how many have we here who are the salt of the earth, whose prayers and redeeming influence save the community from becoming perfectly putrid with moral corruption? I hope they will be found alive and at work in this trying hour. Oh! we must have your prayers for the impenitent for the anxious for backsliders; or if you cannot pray at least come together and confess your sins; tell your brethren and sisters you cannot pray, and beg of them to pray for you that you may be brought back to the light and the peace and the penitence of real salvation.



# ON PRAYING ALWAYS

*“He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” — Luke 18:1.*

IN discussing the subject of prayer, presented in our text, I propose to inquire,

- I. WHY MEN SHOULD PRAY AT ALL;**
- II. WHY MEN SHOULD PRAY ALWAYS AND NOT FAINT;**
- III. WHY THEY DO NOT PRAY ALWAYS.**

## I. WHY MEN SHOULD PRAY AT ALL

Our dependence on God is universal, extending to all things. This fact is known and acknowledged. None but atheists presume to call it in question.

Prayer is the dictate of our nature. By the voice of nature this duty is revealed as plainly as possible. We feel the pressure of our wants, and our instincts cry out to a higher power for relief in their supply. You may see this in the case of the most wicked man, as well as in the case of good men. The wicked, when in distress, cry out to God for help. Indeed mankind have given evidence of this in all ages and in every nation; showing both the universal necessity of prayer, and that it is a dictate of our nature to look up to a God above.

It is a primitive conviction of our minds that God does hear and answer prayer. If men did not assume this to be the case, why should they pray? The fact that men do spontaneously pray, shows that they really expect God to hear prayer. It is contrary to all our original belief to assume that events occur under some law of concatenation, too rigid for the Almighty to break, and which he never attempts to adjust according to his will. Men do not naturally believe any such thing as this.

The objection to prayer, that God is unchangeable, and therefore cannot turn aside to hear prayer, is altogether a fallacy and the result of ignorance.

Consider what is the true idea of God's unchangeableness. Surely, it is not that his course of conduct never changes to meet circumstances; but it is this that his character never changes; that his nature and the principles which control his voluntary action remain eternally the same. All his natural, all his moral attributes remain for ever unchanged. This is all that can rationally be implied in God's immutability.

Now, his hearing and answering prayer imply no change of character no change in his principles of action. Indeed, if you ask why he ever answers prayer at all, the answer must be, because he is unchangeable. Prayer brings the suppliant into new relations to God's kingdom; and to meet these new relations, God's unchangeable principles require him to change the course of his administration. He answers prayer because he is unchangeably benevolent. It is not because his benevolence changes, but because it does not change, that he answers prayer. Who can suppose that God's answering prayer implies any change in his moral character? For example, if a man, in prayer, repents, God forgives; if he does not repent of present sin, God does not forgive; and who does not see that God's immutability must require this course at his hands? Suppose God did not change his conduct when men change their character and their attitude towards him. This would imply fickleness an utter absence of fixed principles. His unchangeable goodness must therefore imply that, when his creatures change morally, he changes his course, and conforms to their new position. Any other view of the case is simply absurd, and only the result of ignorance.

Strange that men should hold it to be inconsistent for God to change, and give rain in answer to prayer, or give any needed spiritual blessings to those who ask them!

Intercourse with God is a necessity of moral beings, demanded by creatures as a necessity of their natures. No doubt this is true in heaven itself, and the fact that this want of their natures is so gloriously supplied there, makes heaven. The Bible represents spirits in heaven as praying. We hear them crying out,

“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10).

True, their subjects of prayer are not in all respects the same as ours: we have things to pray for which they have no occasion to ask for themselves. They are neither sick nor sinful; but can you suppose they never pray, "Thy kingdom come?" Have they lost all sympathy with those interests of Zion? Far from it. Knowing more of the value of those interests, they no doubt feel more deeply their importance, and pray more earnestly for their promotion. From the nature of the case, God's treatment of the inhabitants of heaven must be conditioned on their voluntary course in regard to him and his kingdom. It must be governed and determined by their knowledge, their progress in knowledge, and their improvement of the means and powers at their command. Obviously their voluntary worship, gratitude, thanksgiving, and service of every sort, must vary their relations to God, and consequently his course towards them. He will do many things to them and for them which he could not do if they did not pray, and praise, and love, and study, and labor. This must be true, even in heaven, of apostles and prophets, and of all glorified saints. God makes to them successive revelations of himself, each successively higher than the preceding, and all dependent on their voluntary devotion to him and to his glory. They are for ever advancing in his service, full of worship, praise, adoration, and this only prepares them the more to be sent on missions of love and service, and to be employed as the interests of God's kingdom require. Hence we see that God's conduct towards saints in heaven depends on their own voluntary course and bearing towards him. This is a necessity of any and every moral system. If saints in heaven are moral agents, and God's government over them is also moral, all these results must follow. In this world sin exists; and in this fact we see an obvious necessity for this law of moral administration. But the holy in heaven are no less moral and responsible than the sinning on earth. The great object of God's administration is to assimilate moral beings to himself; hence he must make his treatment of them depend on their moral course towards him.

In regard to saints on earth, how can God do them any good unless he can draw them to himself in prayer and praise? This is one of the most evident necessities that can be named. Men irresistibly feel the propriety of confession and supplication, in order to achieve forgiveness. This feeling

lies among the primitive affirmations of the mind. Men know that, if they would be healed of sin, they must seek and find God.

## II. WHY MEN SHOULD PRAY ALWAYS AND NOT FAINT

But why pray so much and so often? Why the exhortation to pray always and not to faint?

The case presented in the context is very strong. Whether it be history or supposition does not affect the merits of the case as given us to illustrate importunity in prayer. The poor widow persevered. She kept coming and would not be discouraged. By dint of perseverance simply, she succeeded. The judge who cared not for God or man did care somewhat for his own comfort and quiet, and therefore thought it wise to listen to her story and grant her request. Upon this case our Lord seized, to enforce and encourage importunity in prayer. Hear his argument. "Shall not God," who is by no means unjust, but whose compassions are a great deep, "shall not such a God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him, though he seem to bear long" in delaying to answer their prayers? "I tell you he will avenge them speedily."

**1.** Men ought to pray always, because they always need the influence of prayer. Consider what is implied in prayer and what prayer does for you. Prayer bathes the soul in an atmosphere of the divine presence. Prayer communes with God and brings the whole mind under the hallowed influence of such communion. Prayer goes to God to seek pardon and find mercy and grace to help. How obvious, then, that we always need its influence on our hearts and lives! Truly, we need not wonder that God should enjoin it upon us to pray always.

**2.** God needs prayer from us as a condition of his doing to us and for us all he would. He loves us and sees a thousand blessings that we need, and that he would delight to bestow; but yet he cannot bestow them except on condition that we ask for them in Jesus' name. His treatment of us and his bestowment of blessings upon us must depend upon our views and conduct, whether we feel our dependence on him, whether we confess and

forsake all sin, whether we trust him and thoroughly honor him in all things. His action towards us must depend upon our attitude towards him. It is essential in the management of a moral system that we should pray and trust, in order that he may freely and abundantly give, and especially that he may give in a way safe to us and honorable to himself. Nothing can be substituted for our own praying, either in its relations to God or to ourselves. We cannot get along without the personal benefit of prayer, confession, trust, and praise. You cannot substitute instruction, ever so much or so good; for these things must enter into the soul's experience; you must feel them before God, and carry out the life and power of these truths in your very heart before the Lord; else they are worse than unknown to you. You are not likely to understand many of these things without prayer; and even if you were to understand them, and yet not pray, the knowledge would only be a curse to you.

What can be so useful to us, sinners, as direct communion with God the searching of the heart which it induces the humility, the confessions, the supplications? Other things have their use. Instruction is good; reading God's word may be a blessing; communion with the saints is pleasant; but what are they all, compared with personal intercourse with God? Nothing else can make the soul so sick of sin, and so dead to the world. Nothing else breathes such spiritual life into the soul as real prayer.

Prayer also prepares us the better to receive all blessings from God, and hence should be constant.

Prayer pleases God as governor of the universe, because it puts us in a position in which he can bless us and gratify his own benevolence.

Search the history of the world, and you will find that where there has been most true prayer, and the soul has been most deeply imbued with the divine presence, there God has most abundantly and richly blessed the soul. Who does not know that holy men of old were eminent for usefulness and power according as they were faithful and mighty in prayer?

The more we pray, the more shall we be enlightened, for surely they are most enlightened who pray most. If we go no farther in divine things than human reason can carry us, we get little indeed from God.

The more men pray, the more they will love prayer, and the more will they enjoy God. On the other hand, the more we pray, in real prayer, the more will God delight in us. Observe this which I say, Delight; the more will God truly DELIGHT in us. This is not merely the love of benevolence, for God is benevolent to all; but he delights in his praying children in the sense of having complacency in their character. The Bible often speaks of the great interest which God takes in those who live near him in much prayer. This is naturally and necessarily the case. Why should not God delight in those who delight in him?

The more we pray, the more God loves to manifest to others that he delights in us, and hears our prayers. If his children live lives of much prayer, God delights to honor them, as an encouragement to others to pray. They come into a position in which he can bless them and can make his blessings on them result in good to others thus doubly gratifying the benevolence of his heart.

We can never reach a position in which we shall not need prayer. Who believes that saints in heaven will have no need of prayer? True, they will have perfect faith, but this, so far from precluding prayer, only the more ensures it. Men have strangely assumed, that if there were only perfect faith, prayer would cease.

Nothing can be more false and groundless. Certainly, then, we never can get beyond prayer.

If I had time I should like to show how the manner of prayer varies as Christians advance in holiness. They pray not less, but more, and they know better how to pray. When the natural life is mingled largely with the spiritual, there is an outward effervescing, which passes away as the soul comes nearer to God. You would suppose there is less excitement, and there is less of animal excitement; but the deep fountains of the soul flow in unbroken sympathy with God.

We can never get beyond the point where prayer is greatly useful to us. The more the heart breathes after God, and rises towards him in heavenly aspirations, the more useful do such exercises become. The aged Christian finds himself more and more benefitted in prayer as he draws more and

more near to God. The more he prays, the more he sees the wisdom and necessity of prayer for his own spiritual good.

The very fact that prayer is so great a privilege to sinners makes it most honorable to God to hear prayer. Some think it disgraceful to God. What a sentiment! It assumes that God's real greatness consists in his being so high above us as to have no regard for us whatever. Not so with God. He who regards alike the flight of an archangel and the fall of a sparrow before whose eye no possible event is too minute for his attention no insect too small for his notice and his love, his infinite glory is manifest in this very fact, that nothing is too lofty or too low for his regard. None are too insignificant to miss sympathy none too mean to share his kindness.

Many talk of prayer as only a duty, not a privilege; but with this view of it they cannot pray acceptably. When your children, full of wants, come running to you in prayer, do they come because it is a duty? No, indeed! They come because it is their privilege. They regard it as their privilege. Other children do not feel so towards you. And it is a wonderful privilege! Who does not know it and feel it to be so? Shall we then ever fail to avail ourselves of it?

Finally, we are sure to prevail if we thoroughly persevere, and pray always, and do not faint. Let this suffice to induce perseverance in prayer. Do you need blessings? and yet are they delayed? Pray always and never faint; so shall you obtain all you need.

### III. WHY DO NOT MEN PRAY ALWAYS?

Many reasons exist.

- 1.** In the case of some, because the enmity of their hearts towards God is such that they are shy, and dread prayer. They have so strong a dislike to God, they cannot make up their minds to come near to him in prayer.
- 2.** Some are self-righteous and self-ignorant, and therefore have no heart to pray. Their self-righteousness makes them feel strong enough without prayer, and self-ignorance prevents their feeling their own real wants.

**3.** Unbelief keeps others from constant prayer. They have not confidence enough in God as ready to answer prayer. Of course, with such unbelief in their hearts, they will not pray always.

**4.** Sophistry prevents others. I have alluded to some of its forms. They say, God, being immutable, never changes his course; or they urge that there is no need of prayer, inasmuch as God will surely do just right, although nobody should pray. These are little sophistries, such as ignorant minds get up and stumble over. It is wonderful that any minds can be so ignorant and so unthinking as to be influenced by these sophistries. I can recollect how these objections to prayer came up many years since before my mind, but were instantly answered and set aside, they seemed so absurd. This, for instance, that God had framed the universe so wisely that there is no need of prayer, and indeed no room for it. My answer was ready. What was God's object in making and arranging his universe? Was it to show himself to be a good mechanic, so skillful that he can make a universe to run itself, without his constant agency? Was this his object? No! But his object was to plant in this universe intelligent minds, and then reveal himself to them, and draw them to love and trust their own infinite Father. This object is every way noble and worthy of a God. But the other notion is horrible! It takes from God every endearing attribute, and leaves him only a good mechanic!

The idea that God mingles his agency continually in human affairs prevails everywhere among all minds in all ages. Everywhere they have seen God revealing himself. They expect such revelations of God. They have believed in them, and have seen how essential this fact is to that confidence and love which belong to a moral government. It seems passing strange that men can sophisticate themselves into such nonsense as this! Insufferable nonsense are all such objections!

On one occasion, when it had been very wet and came off suddenly very dry, the question arose, How can you vindicate the providence of God? At first the question stung me; I stopped, considered it a few moments, and then asked, What can his object be in giving us weather at all? Why does he send, or not send, rain? If the object be to raise as many potatoes as possible, this is not the wisest course. But if the object be to make us feel our dependence, this is the wisest course possible. What if God were to



raise harvests enough in one year to supply us for the next ten? We might all become atheists. We should be very likely to think we could live without God. But now, every day and every year, he shuts us up to depend on himself. Who does not see that a moral government ordered on any other system would work ruin?

Another reason is, men have no real sense of sin or of any spiritual want; no consciousness of guilt. While in this state of mind, it need not be expected that men will pray.

In the other extreme, after becoming deeply convicted, they fall into despair and think it does no good to pray.

Another reason for not praying much is found in self-righteous conceptions of what is requisite to success in prayer. One says, I am too degraded, and am not good enough to pray. This objection is founded altogether in self-righteous notions assuming that your own goodness must be the ground or reason for God's hearing your prayer.

A reason with many for little prayer is their worldly-mindedness. Their minds are so filled with thoughts of a worldly nature, they cannot get into the spirit of prayer.

Again, in the case of some, their own experience discourages them. They have often prayed, yet with little success. This brings them into a skeptical attitude in regard to prayer. Very likely the real reason of their failure has been the lack of perseverance. They have not obeyed this precept which urges that men pray always, and never faint.

## REMARKS

**1.** It is no loss of time to pray. Many think it chiefly or wholly lost time. They are so full of business, they say, and assume that prayer will spoil their business. I tell you, that your business, if it be of such sort as ought to be done at all, will go all the better for much prayer. Rise from your bed a little earlier, and pray. Get time somehow by almost any imaginable sacrifice, sooner than forego prayer. Are you studying? It is no loss of time to pray, as I know very well by my own experience. If I am to

preach, with only two hours for preparation, I give one hour to prayer. If I were to study anything, let it be Virgil or Geometry, I would by all means pray first. Prayer enlarges and illumines the mind. It is like coming into the presence of a master spirit. You know how sometimes this electrifies the mind, and fires it with boundless enthusiasm. So, and much the more, does real access to God.

Let a physician pray a great deal; he needs counsel from God. Let the mechanic and the merchant pray much; they will testify, after trial of it, that God gives them counsel, and that, consequently, they lose nothing, and gain much, by constant prayer.

**2.** None but an eminently praying man is a safe religious teacher. However scientific and literary, if he be not a praying man, he cannot be trusted.

A spirit of prayer is of much greater value than human learning without it. If I were to choose, I would prefer intercourse with God in prayer before the intellect of Gabriel. I do not say this to disparage the value of learning and knowledge, for when great talents and learning are sanctified with much prayer, the result is a mind of mighty power.

Those who do not pray cannot understand the facts in regard to answers to prayer. How can they know? Those things seem to them utterly incredible. They have had no such experience. In fact, all their experience goes in the opposite direction. State a case to them; they look incredulous. Perhaps they will say, you seem to think you can prophesy and foreknow events! Let them be answered, that “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” Those who keep up a living intercourse with God know many things they do not tell, and had better not tell. When I was a young convert, I knew an aged lady whose piety and prayer seemed to me quite extraordinary. You could not feel like talking much in her presence; there was something in it that struck you as remarkable. The subject of sanctification came into discussion, and meeting me, on one occasion, she said, “Charles, take care what you do! Don’t do things to be sorry for afterwards.” A son of hers became a Christian and was astonished at the manifestations of his mother’s piety. She had prayed for him long and most earnestly. When, at length, his eyes were opened, she began to say, “I did not tell anybody my experiences, but, in fact, I have known nothing about condemnation for thirty years past. In all this time I am not aware

that I have committed a known sin. My soul has enjoyed uninterrupted communion with God, and constant access to his mercy-seat in prayer.”

Prayer is the great secret of ministerial success. Some think this secret lies in talent or in tact; but it is not so. A man may know all human knowledge, yet, without prayer, what can he do? He cannot move and control men’s hearts. He can do nothing to purpose unless he lives in sympathy and open-faced communion with God. Only so can he be mighty through God to win souls to Christ. Here let me not be understood to depreciate learning and the knowledge of God. By no means. But prayer and its power are much greater and more effective.

Herein lies the great mistake of theological seminaries and of gospel ministers. They lay excessive stress on learning, and genius, and talents; they fail to appreciate duly the paramount importance of much prayer. How much better for them to lay the principal stress on bathing the soul in God’s presence! Let them rely, first of all, on God, who worketh mightily in his praying servants through his Spirit given them; and, immediately, let them estimate above all other means, prayer prayer that is abundant, devout, earnest, and full of living faith. Such a course would be an effectual correction of one of the most prevalent and perilous mistakes of the age.

# ON PRAYER FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke 11:11-13.

THESE verses form the concluding part of a very remarkable discourse of our Lord to his disciples on prayer. It was introduced by their request that he would teach them how to pray. In answer to this request, he gave them what we are wont to call the Lord’s Prayer, followed by a forcible illustration of the value of importunity, which he still further applied and enforced by renewing the general promise, “Ask, and it shall be given you.” Then to confirm their faith still more, he expands the idea that God is their Father, and should be approached in prayer as if he were an infinitely kind and loving parent. This constitutes the leading idea in the strong appeal made in our text. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

**1.** Remarking upon this text, I first observe that, when we rightly understand the matter, we shall see that the gift of the Holy Ghost comprehends all we need spiritually. It secures to us that union with God which is eternal life. It implies conversion, which consists in the will’s being submitted to God’s control. Sanctification is

(1) this union of the will to God perfected and perpetuated;

(2) the ascendancy of this state of the will over the entire sensibilities, so that the whole mind is drawn into union and sympathy with the mind and heart of God.

**2.** It is supremely easy to obtain this gift from God. In other words, it is easy to obtain from God all spiritual blessings that we truly need. If this be not so, what shall we think of these words of Christ? How can we by any means explain them consistently with fair truthfulness? Surely, it is easy for children to get really good things from their father. Which of you, being a father, does not know it to be easy for your children to get good things from you? You know in your own experience that they obtain without difficulty even from you, all the real good they need, provided it be in your power to give it. But you are sometimes “evil,” and Christ implies that, since God is never evil, but always infinitely good, it is much more easy for one to get the Holy Spirit than even for your children to get bread from your hands. “Much more!” What words of meaning in such a connection as this! Every father knows there is nothing in the way of his children getting from him all the good things they really need and which he has to give. Every such parent values these good things for the sake of giving them to his children. For this, parents toil and plan for their children’s sake. Can they then be averse or even slow to give these things to their children?

Yet God is much more ready to give his Spirit. My language, therefore, is not at all too strong. If God is much more ready and willing to give his children good things than you are to give to yours, then surely it must be easy, and not difficult, to get spiritual blessings, even to the utmost extent of our wants.

Let this argument come home to the hearts of those of you who are parents. Surely, you must feel its force. Christ must be a false teacher if this be not so. It must be that this great gift, which in itself comprehends all spiritual gifts, is most easily obtained, and in any amount which our souls need.

**3.** How very injurious and dishonorable to God are the practical views of almost all men on this subject!

The dependence of men on the Holy Spirit has come to be the standing apology for moral and spiritual delinquency. Men everywhere profess to want the Holy Spirit, and, more or less, to feel their need, and to be praying for this gift; but continually and everywhere they complain that they do not get it. These complaints assume, both directly and indirectly,

that it is very difficult to get this gift; that God keeps his children on a very low diet, and on the smallest possible amount even of that; that he deals out their spiritual bread and water in most stinted amount as if he purposed to keep his children only an inch above starvation. Pass among the churches, and hear what they say and how they pray; and what would you think? How would you be shocked at the strange, may I not say, blasphemous assumptions which they make concerning God's policy in giving, or rather not giving, the Holy Spirit to those that ask him! I can speak from experience and personal observation. When I began to attend prayer-meetings, this fact to which I have alluded struck me as very strange. I had never attended a prayer-meeting till I had come to manhood, for my situation in this respect was very unlike yours here. But after I came to manhood, and prayer-meetings were held in the place where I lived, I used to attend them very steadily. It was a matter of great interest to me, more than I can explain, or well express. I was filled with wonder to hear Christians pray, and the more so as I then began to read my Bible, and to find in it such things as we have in our text today. To read such promises, and then hear Christians talk was surprising. What they did say, coupled with what they seemed to mean, would run thus: I have a duty to perform at this meeting; I cannot go away without doing it. I want to testify that religion is a good thing, a very good thing, although I have not got much of it. I believe God is a hearer of prayer, and yet I don't think he hears mine certainly not to much purpose. I believe that prayer brings to us the Holy Spirit, and yet, though I have always been praying for this Spirit, I have scarcely ever received it.

Such seemed to be the strain of their talking and thinking, and I must say that it puzzled me greatly. I have reason to know that it has often puzzled others. Within a few years past, I have found this to be the standing objection of unconverted men. They say, "I cannot hold out if I should be converted it is so difficult to get and to keep the Holy Spirit." They appeal to professed Christians and say, Look it them: they are not engaged in religion; they are not doing their Master's work in good earnest, and they confess it; they have not the Spirit, and they confess it; they bear a living testimony that these promises are of very little practical value.

Now, these are plain matters of fact, and should be deeply pondered by all professed Christians. The Christian life of multitudes is nothing less than a flat denial of the great truths of the Bible.

Often, when I am urging Christians to be filled with the Holy Ghost, I am asked, Do you really think this gift is for me? Do you think all can have it who will? If you tell them of instances, here and there, of persons who walk in the light, and are filled with the Spirit, they reply, Are not those very special cases? Are they not the favored few, enjoying a blessing that only a few can hope to enjoy?

Here you should carefully observe, that the question is not, whether few or many have this blessing; but, is it practically within reach of all? Is it indeed available to all? Is the gift actually tendered to all in the fullest and highest sense? Is it easy to possess it? These being the real questions, we must see that the teachings of the text cannot be mistaken on this subject.

Either Christ testified falsely of this matter, or this gift is available to all, and is easily obtained. For, of the meaning and scope of his language, there can be no doubt. No language can be plainer. No illustrations could be more clear, and none could easily be found that are stronger.

**4.** How shall we account for this impression, so extensively pervading the church, that the Holy Spirit can rarely be obtained in ample, satisfying fullness, and then only with the greatest difficulty?

This impression obviously grows out of the current experience of the church. In fact, but few seem to have this conscious communion with God through the Spirit; but few seem really to walk with God and be filled with his Spirit.

When I say few, I must explain myself to mean few relatively to the whole number of professed Christians. Taken absolutely, the number is great and always has been. Sometimes, some have thought the number to be small, but they were mistaken. Elijah thought himself alone, but God gave him to understand that there were many a host, spoken of as seven thousand who had never bowed the knee to Baal. Ordinarily, such a use of the sacred number seven, is to be taken for a large, indefinite sum, much larger than if taken definitely. It may be so here. Even then, in that exceedingly dark age, there were yet many who stood unflinchingly for God!

It is a curious fact that persons who have really the most piety are often supposed to have the least, so few there are who judge of piety as God does. Those who preach the real gospel are often refreshed to find some in almost every congregation who manifestly embrace it. You can judge by their very looks, their eyes shine and their faces are all aglow almost like the face of Moses, descended from the mount.

But theirs is not the common experience of professed Christians. The common one, which has served to create the general impression as to the difficulty of obtaining the Holy Spirit, is indeed utterly unlike this. The great body of nominal Christians have not the Spirit, within the meaning of Romans 8. They cannot say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." It is not true of them that they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Comparatively few of all know in their own conscious experience that they live and abide in the Spirit.

Here is another fact. Many are praying apparently for the Spirit of God, but do not get it. If you go to a prayer-meeting, you hear everybody pray for this gift. It is so, also, in the family, and probably in the closet also. Yet, strange to tell, they do not get it. This experience of much prayer for this blessing, and much failure to get it, is everywhere common. Churches have their prayer-meetings, years and years in succession, praying for the Spirit, but they do not get it. In view of this fact, we must conclude, either that the promise is not reliable, or that the prayer does not meet the conditions of the promise. I shall take up this alternative by-and-by; just now, my business is to account for the prevalent impression that the Spirit of God is hard to get and keep, even in answer to prayer, a fact which obviously is accounted for by the current experience of nominal Christians.

It should also be said that the churches have been taught that God is a sovereign, in such a sense that his gift of the spirit is only occasional, and it is then given without any connection with apparent causes not dependent, by any means, on the fulfillment of conditions on our part. The common idea of sovereignty excludes the idea that God holds this blessing free to all, on condition of real prayer for it. I say real prayer, for I must show you by-and-by that much of the apparent praying of the church for



the Spirit is not real prayer. It is this spurious, selfish praying that leads to so much misconception as to the bestowment of the Holy Spirit.

Some of you may remember that I have related to you my experience at one time, when my mind was greatly exercised on this promise, how I told the Lord I could not believe it. It was contrary to my conscious experience, and I could not believe anything which contradicted my conscious experience. At that time the Lord kindly and in great mercy rebuked my unbelief, and showed me that the fault was altogether mine, and in no part his.

Multitudes pray for the Spirit as I had done, and are in like manner disappointed because they do not get it. They are not conscious of being hypocrites; but they do not thoroughly know their own spirits. They think they are ready to make any sacrifices to obtain it. They do not seem to know that the difficulty is all with them. They fail to realize how rich and full the promise is. It all seems to them quite unaccountable that their prayer should not be answered. Often they sweat with agony of mind in their efforts to solve this mystery. They cannot bear to say that God's word is false, and they cannot see that it is true. It is apparently contradicted by their experience. This fact creates the agonizing perplexity.

**5.** In the next place, how can we reconcile this experience with Christ's veracity? How can we explain this experience according to the facts in the case, and yet show that Christ's teachings are to be taken in their obvious sense, and are strictly true?

I answer, What is here taught as to prayer must be taken in connection with what is taught elsewhere. For example, what is here said of asking must be taken in connection with what is said of praying in faith with what is said by James of asking and not receiving because men ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts. If any of you were to frame a will or a promissory note, binding yourself or your administrators to pay over certain moneys, on certain specified conditions, you would not think it necessary to state the conditions more than once. Having stated them distinctly once, you would go on to state in detail the promise; but you would not expect anybody to separate the promise from the condition, and then claim the promise without having fulfilled the condition, and even

perhaps accuse you of falsehood because you did not fulfil the promise when the conditions had not been met.

Now, the fact is that we find, scattered throughout the Bible, various revealed conditions of prayer. Whoever would pray acceptably must surely fulfil not merely a part, but all of these conditions. Yet in practice, the church, to a great extent, has overlooked, or at least has failed to meet these conditions. For example, they often pray for the Holy Spirit for selfish reasons. This is fearfully common. The real motives are selfish. Yet they come before God and urge their request often and long, perhaps with great importunity; yet they are selfish in their very prayers, and God cannot hear. They are not in their inmost souls ready to do or to suffer all God's holy will. God calls some of his children through long seasons of extremest suffering, obviously as a means of purifying their hearts; yet many pray for pure hearts, and for the Spirit to purify their hearts, who would rebel at once if God should answer their prayers by means of such a course of providence. Or God may see it necessary to crucify your love of reputation, and for this end may subject you to a course of trial which will blow your reputation to the winds of heaven. Are you ready to hail the blessings of a subdued, unselfish heart, even though it be given by means of such discipline?

Often your motive in asking for the Spirit is merely personal comfort and consolation as if you would live all your spiritual life on sweetmeats. Others ask for it really as a matter of self- glorification. They would like to have their names emblazoned in the papers. It would be so gratifying to be held up as a miracle of grace as a most remarkable Christian. Alas, how many, in various forms of it, are only offering selfish prayers! Even a minister might pray for the Holy Spirit from only sinister motives. He might wish to have it said that he is very spiritual, or a man of great spiritual power in his preaching or his praying; or he might wish to avoid that hard study to which a man who has not the Spirit must submit, since the Spirit does not teach him, nor give him unction. He might almost wish to be inspired, so easy would this gift make his preaching and his study. He might suppose that he really longed to be filled with the Spirit, while really he is only asking amiss, to consume it on some unhallowed desire. A student may pray for the Spirit to help him study, and yet only his ambition or his indolence may have inspired that prayer. Let it never be

forgotten, we must sympathize with God's reasons for our having the Spirit, as we would hope to pray acceptably. There is nothing mysterious about this matter.

The great end of all God's spiritual administrations towards us in providence or grace is to divest us of selfishness, and to bring our hearts into harmony with his in the spirit of real love.

Persons often quench the Spirit even while they are praying for it. One prays for the Spirit, yet that very moment fails to notice the Spirit's monitions in his own breast, or refuses to do what the Spirit would lead and press him to do. Perhaps they even pray for the Spirit, that this gift may be a substitute for some self-denying duty to which the Spirit has long been urging them. This is no uncommon experience. Such persons will be very likely to think it very difficult to get the Spirit. A woman was going to a female prayer-meeting, and thought she wanted the Holy Spirit, and would make that her special errand at that meeting. Yet when there, the Spirit pressed her to pray audibly and she resisted, and excused herself.

It is common for persons to resist the Spirit in the very steps he chooses to take. They would make the Spirit yield to them; he would have them yield to him. They think only of having their blessings come in the way of their own choosing; he is wiser and will do it in his own way or not at all. If they cannot accept of his way, there can be no agreement. Often when persons pray for the Spirit, they have in their minds certain things which they would dictate to him as to the manner and circumstances. Such ought to know that if they would have the Spirit, they must accept him in his own way. Let him lead, and consider that your business is to follow. Thus it not infrequently happens that professed Christians maintain a perpetual resistance against the Holy Spirit, even while they are ostensibly praying for his presence and power. When he would fain draw them, they are thinking of dictating to him, and refuse to be led by him in his way. When they come really to understand what is implied in being filled with the Spirit, they draw back. It is more and different from what they had thought. That is not what they wanted.

## REMARKS

- 1.** The difficulty is always, and all of it in us, not in God. You may write this down as a universal truth, from which there can be no exceptions.
- 2.** The difficulty lies in our voluntary state of mind, and not in anything which is involuntary and beyond our control. Therefore, there is no excuse for our retaining it, and it should be at once given up.

There is no difficulty in our obtaining the Holy Spirit if we are willing to have it; but this implies a willingness to surrender ourselves to his direction and discretion.

**3.** We often mistake other states of mind for a willingness to have the Spirit of God. Nothing is more common than this. Men think they are willing to be filled with the Spirit, and to have that Spirit do all its own work in the soul; but they are really under a great mistake. To be willing to be wholly crucified to the world and the world unto us, is by no means common. Many think they have a sort of desire for this state, who would really shrink from it if they saw the reality near at hand. That persons do make continual mistakes, and think themselves willing to be fully controlled by the Spirit, when they are not, is evident from their lives. The will governs the life, and therefore, the life must be an infallible index of the real state of the will. As is the life, so is the will, and therefore, when you see the life alien from God, you must infer that the will is not wholly consecrated to his service is not wholly in sympathy with God's will.

**4.** When the will is really on God's altar, entirely yielded up to God's will in all respects, one will not wait long ere he has the Spirit of God in the fullest measure. Indeed, this very consecration itself implies a large measure of the Spirit, yet not the largest measure. The mind may not be conscious of that deep union with God into which it may enter. The knowledge of God is a consciousness of God in the soul.

You may certainly know that God's Spirit is within you, and that his light illumines your mind. His presence becomes a conscious reality.

The manner in which spiritual agencies other than human manifest themselves in the mind of man, seems to some very mysterious. It is not

necessary that we should know how those agencies got access to our minds; it suffices us to know, beyond all question, that they do. Christians sometimes know that the devil brings his own thoughts into the very chambers of their souls. Some of you have been painfully conscious of this. You have been certain that the devil has poured out his spirit upon you. Most horrid suggestions are thrust upon your mind such as your inmost soul abhors, and such as could come from no other, and certainly from no better source than the devil.

Now, if the devil can thus make us conscious of his presence and power, and can throw upon our souls his own horrid suggestions, may not the Spirit of God reveal his? Nay, if your heart is in sympathy with his suggestions and monitions, may he not do much more? Surely none can doubt that he can make his presence and agency a matter of positive consciousness. That must be a very imperfect and even false view of the case which supposes that we can be conscious of nothing but the operations of our own minds. Men are often conscious of Satan's thoughts, as present to their minds: a fact which Bunyan well illustrated where he supposes Christian to be alarmed by some one whispering in his ear behind him, and pouring horrid blasphemies into his mind. Cases often occur like the following: A man came to me in great distress, saying, "I am no Christian, I know of a certainty. My mind has been filled with awful thoughts of God." "But were those awful thoughts your own thoughts, and did you cherish them and give your assent to them?" No, indeed; nothing could have agonized me more." "That is the work of the devil," said I. "Well," said he, "perhaps it is, and yet I had not thought of it so before."

So God's Spirit within us may become no less an object of our distinct consciousness. And if you do truly and earnestly wait on God, you shall be most abundantly supplied of his fullness.

**5.** To be filled with the Holy Ghost, so that he takes full possession of our souls, is what I mean by sanctification. This glorious work is wrought by the Spirit of God; and that Spirit never can take full and entire possession of our hearts without accomplishing this blessed work.

I do not wonder that those persons deny the existence of any such state as sanctification who do not know anything of being filled with the Holy

Ghost. Ignoring his glorious agency, we need not wonder that they have no knowledge of his work in the soul.

**6.** Often the great difficulty in the way of Christian progress is an utter want of watchfulness. Some are so given to talking that they cannot hold communion with the Spirit of God. They have no leisure to listen to his “still small voice.” Some are so fond of laughter, it seems impossible that their minds should ever be in a really serious frame. In such a mind, how can the Spirit of God dwell? Often in our theological discussions, I am pained to see how difficult it is for persons engaged in dispute and mutual discussion to avoid being chafed. Some of them are watchful and prayerful against this temptation, yet sometimes, we see persons manifestly fall before this temptation. If Christians do not shut down the gate against all abuse of the tongue, and, indeed, against every form of selfishness, there is no hope that they will resist the devil and the world so far as to be conquerors at last.

**7.** The Spirit of God troubles or comforts us, according as we resist or receive this great gift.

The gospel scheme was purposed for the end of accomplishing this complete union and sympathy between our souls and God, so that the soul should enjoy God’s own peace, and should be in the utmost harmony with its Maker and Father. Hence it is the great business of the Spirit to bring about this state. If we concur, and if our will harmonizes with his efforts, he comforts us; if we resist, he troubles us a struggle ensues: if, in this struggle, we come to understand God, and submit, then his blessings come freely and our peace is as a river; but so long as we resist, there can be no fruit of the Spirit’s labor to us, but rebuke and trouble. To us he cannot be the author of peace and comfort.

**8.** How abominable to God it must be for the church to take ground, in regard to the Spirit, which practically denies the truth of this great promise in our text! How dreadful that Christians should hold and teach that it is a hard thing to be really religious! What abominable unbelief! How forcibly does the church thus testify against God before the world! You might as well burn your Bible as deny that it is the easiest thing in the world to get the gift of the Spirit. And yet, strange to tell, some hold that God is so sovereign, and is sovereign in such a sense, that few can get the Spirit at all,

and those few only as it may happen, and not by any means as the result of provision freely made and promise reliably revealed, on which any man's faith may take hold. Oh, how does this notion of sovereignty contradict the Bible! How long shall it be so?

Do you, young people, really believe that your young hearts may be filled with the Spirit? Do you really believe, as our text says, that God is more willing to give his Spirit to those that ask him, than your own father or mother would be to give you good things? Many of you are here, far from your parents. But you know that even your widowed mother, much as she may need every cent of her means for herself, would gladly share the last one with you if you needed it. So would your earthly father. Do you really believe that God is as willing as they as ready as loving? Nay, is he not much more so? As much more as he is better than your father or your mother? And now, do you really need and desire this gift of the Spirit? And if you do, will you come and ask for it in full confidence that you have a real Father in heaven?

Do you find practical difficulties? Do you realize how much you dishonor God if you refuse to believe his word of promise? Some of you say, I am so poor and so much in debt, I must go away and work somewhere and get money. But you have a father who has money enough. Yes; but he will not help me. He loves his money more than he loves his son. Would not this be a great scandal to your father a living disgrace to him? Surely, it would; and you would be so keenly sensible of this that you would not say it if it were not very true, nor then unless some very strong circumstances seemed to require of you the painful testimony. If your mother, being amply able, yet would not help you in your education or in your sickness, you would hardly tell of it, so greatly would it discredit her character.

And now will you have the face to say, God does not love me; he does not want to educate me for heaven; he utterly refuses to give me the Holy Spirit, although I often ask him and beseech him to do so? Will you even think this? And can you go even farther and act it out before all the world? Oh, why should you thus dishonor your own God and Father!

# AFFLICTIONS OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED CONTRASTED

*“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 Corinthians 4:17. Psalm 73.*

FEW things are more interesting than to contemplate the contrast everywhere drawn in the Bible between the righteous and the wicked. No man can thoroughly study this contrast without being greatly affected by it. Throughout the Bible we find this contrast drawn in the strongest colors respecting their character, their afflictions, their joys, their entire earthly course, and their final destiny. It is my design in this discourse to notice some particulars.

Our text from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the righteous. It affirms that their afflictions are light, are transient, and productive of augmented glory. We have another passage of similar import which asserts that “all things work together for good to them that love God.”

The Bible throughout holds language directly opposite to this, respecting the wicked.

**I.** give a few particulars respecting the case of the righteous.

**1.** They have afflictions. This is asserted and implied throughout the Bible. And the whole course of God’s providence in every age teaches the same things. The best saints are chastened. Affliction is not excluded from their cup because of their piety. Their afflictions may be in themselves as painful may be as frequent and as long protracted as those which befall the wicked.

The book of Job shows that formerly this fact was greatly misunderstood. In those times of comparative darkness, when the light of written revelation had scarcely begun to fall upon the nations, some men, even some good men, seemed not to have understood the meaning of the divine dispensation towards the righteous.



But I have several specific points of remark to make respecting the afflictions of the righteous.

(1) They are light. Paul calls it, "Our light affliction." This, you will observe, is a term of comparison. We need therefore to inquire with what our afflictions are to be compared in order to be reasonably deemed light.

Obviously the afflictions of the righteous are light compared with what they know and feel that themselves deserve. This is one of the considerations which make their afflictions seem, in their own view, to be light.

Their afflictions are not said to be light compared with those of the wicked; but they are light, and every real saint feels them to be so, compared with what himself deserves.

Again, they are light compared with what Christ suffered in working out our salvation. Whenever we think of Christ's circumstances, apprehending in some measure his trials from being rejected of his people, from the unbelief and fickleness of his professed friends, from the wickedness and coming ruin of his nation (which he could neither remedy nor avert), from the malice of his murderers, and from his position as our sacrifice, when, I say, we duly apprehend such points as these, we always see that all our own utmost afflictions are light compared with his. I have never yet seen a Christian who did not feel this when reminded of the sufferings endured by Christ in his earthly afflictions.

Again, these afflictions are light when compared with those that await the wicked. Compared with those, they are too small to admit of being estimated as anything at all. They are less than the fine dust of the balance.

In the same view, these afflictions of the righteous are light compared with what they themselves must have suffered if Christ had not suffered in their stead, and if they should not, by the discipline of suffering here, be so purified that God can take them to heaven at death. It is well for all Christians to consider both these points; namely, how the sufferings of Christ have saved them from the terrible necessity of everlasting anguish, and also how the moral discipline of suffering here may perform a most important and indispensable agency in preparing the soul for exemption

from all further suffering in a world of peace and joy. Then you will see how light your afflictions are compared with what they might have been, and indeed must have been, if God had forbore to adopt the great remedial system.

(2) I must pass to remark that these afflictions of the righteous are short. They are short compared with eternity; short compared with what we deserve that they should be; short compared with the measureless duration of the sufferings of the wicked. Let their duration be compared with any of these points, and you cannot fail to see that they are indeed but for a moment.

(3) All these afflictions of the righteous are, in respect to them, means of grace. So the apostle implies. In his view they “work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” They do this only as they serve to prepare the soul for glory; by no means because they merit a reward of glory. But in their disciplinary character and results, they work for the Christian a weight of glory which infinitely exceeds all the weight of the afflictions themselves.

(4) The perceived design and tendency of these afflictions rob them of their sting. When the people of God see this design and this tendency, they feel more like embracing and kissing the rod than like repelling it. Indeed it usually happens that they can testify after the scene of trial is past, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word.” And often, while passing through the very furnace, the conviction that the hand of their own Father is in it; that it is designed for their good; and if they will fall in with this kind design, it cannot fail to do them infinite good; these thoughts serve to sustain them, so that not so much as the smell of fire is on them. Or to change the figure, these thoughts, dropped as an anodyne into the cup of their sorrows, transform what else had been gall and wormwood, to the sweetness of honey.

(5) A consciousness of their own ill-desert serves to inspire patience and submission. Let the Christian only realize this, and he will cry out, All these afflictions are nothing compared to what I have deserved at the hand of God. I cannot murmur. All this is no suffering at all when seen in the light of my deservings.

(6) The fact that they are so short makes them appear so light. With almost universal application, it may be said of the afflictions of the righteous,

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” A night of unbroken sorrow may appear long; but soon the morning comes in its joy, the night of anguish is forgotten. What Christian does not know this? Where is the Christian who has not had this written out in his own experience? Hence, under the heaviest pressure of affliction, he can still expostulate with his own dependencies, “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.”

I can well recollect that, before my own conversion, I was deeply struck with this, that Christians were the only persons in the world who had any reason to be joyful. I could easily see that they had consolations which none others had. I saw that nothing could possibly befall them which could ultimately be an evil. All things, I saw, must work good, and nothing but good for them. Reading such passages as our text, showed me plainly that all was well for them, and that they alone, of all men on the earth, had a legitimate right to be joyful.

The opposite, I saw, must be true in every instance in the case of the wicked. All these thoughts passed often through my mind while in my law office. Even then I could not help thinking intensely on these points, nor could I help seeing the force and the bearing of earthly afflictions to curse the wicked and to bless and not harm the righteous. In this state of my mind, I did not perhaps quite envy Christians their lot, but I felt that none but they had any reason to be cheerful. The sinner, I plainly saw, had no business to be cheerful. Nothing could benefit his condition and prospects but to howl and mourn in most hopeless anguish. Nothing but ill was on him; nothing but ill yet more awful was before him.

Nor in my case did those views result from a state of melancholy or depression of spirits. I never had any tendencies of that sort. These convictions were the result of sober and intense thought. I studied the great questions of the Christian religion intensely, and I could not fail of being deeply impressed with the mighty contrast between the state of the righteous even in this world, and that of the wicked.

My situation in regard to early religious instruction was rather peculiar. I heard no preaching but the strongest form of Old Schoolism, and had to grope my way along through all its absurdities, and think out all my religious opinions in the very face of all the preaching I heard in my earliest years. This led me to think deeply and thoroughly upon the great points of the Christian life. Hence, when I saw a sinner in his sins, I could see nothing cheerful in his case. All was full of gloom. But a Christian what if he does suffer now? All will soon be well. His sufferings are soon over. Who can help seeing this? It seems to me now, as it did then, quite impossible for any thinking man to avoid thinking on this subject, and if he thinks at all, how can he fail of being struck with the immense contrast between the case of the righteous and that of the wicked?

**2.** The joys of the saints are only the beginning of heaven. The Bible does not represent them as being short, like their sorrows; but represents their joys as long, and their grief as short. Their joys are enduring, deep, full, fadeless; not light and fleeting, as are those of the sinner.

**II.** I pass, in the next place, to remark that precisely the opposite in every respect is said in the Bible of the sinner. To show this I will read you the seventy-third Psalm. I select this, not because it is more striking or more decisive than many other passages in the Bible on the same subject, but because it brings out more distinctly the very truths I wish to lay before you.

It appears that before the volume of written revelation was filled up, and before men had learned to interpret the providences of God as now, in the light of revelation, we are enabled to do, some men were greatly perplexed with the course of divine providence towards the righteous and the wicked. Such seems to have been for a time the case with the writer of this seventy-third Psalm. "Truly," he says, "truly God is good to Israel;" "truly," as if the conviction had just now become fixed in his mind, and he had just learned this fact, so long obscured in darkness, "truly God is good to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped." What was the matter? He proceeds at once to tell us. "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no hands in their death; but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they

plagued like other men.” He evidently speaks not of all wicked men, for some of them have trouble as other men have; but he speaks of the prosperous classes of those who seem, during much of their life, to have all that heart can wish.

“Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens; and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return thither; and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.” It is all in vain, he says, for me to have washed my hands from sin, and to have denied myself its pleasures, for I have been sorely plagued notwithstanding more sorely even than most of these wicked men; “for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” But at this point he checks himself; it strikes his mind that to talk in this strain will be a stumbling-block to God’s people; it will throw them into the same state of perplexity and repining; and he sees instantly that this will not answer. What then shall I do? says he, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; I was yet more painfully perplexed; I dared not speak out my feelings, lest I should offend the generation of God’s children. And yet my heart was hot within me, and how could I refrain from speaking out the deep, burning perplexities of my soul?” “It was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God;” I knew not how to solve this mystery, that I should have so many troubles and the wicked so few “until I went to the sanctuary, then I understood their end.” “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.” I was stupid as a beast; why did I not understand before this that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and that their richest joys terminate almost in a twinkling, in everlasting desolation

and anguish? “Nevertheless, I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.” “Thou shalt guide me.” What a blessing to have the infinitely wise God for a guide! “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish, thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.”

We see now that, if sinners are joyful, the Bible represents their joy as only for a moment. I might quote passages almost without number to prove this. But there is no need that I should.

On the other hand, the Bible shows that when Christians are afflicted it is but for a moment, and that their afflictions are light also. Oh, how light compared with the full lot of the wicked!

But what of the wicked man; is he joyful? Yes; he has a feverish excitement and he calls it joy, but it cannot last; it vanishes away ere he has done quaffing off the mere foam of his pleasure-cup. Light too are all his joys light as air; in their very nature they never can be solid and substantial; they are as the chaff which the wind drives away. Sinner, you know there is nothing in them worthy of the name of joy. You know they are vain, false, fickle, unsatisfactory; the first breath of adversity scatters them all; disappointment has hidden her sting beneath their fairest flowers. You have known all this in your own sad experience, and yet you are loath to admit it, and more loath still to act as if it were true.

Again, the sinner’s joys are only the means of aggravating his future sorrows. Instead of being, as in the case of the righteous, an antepast of heaven, they are a prelude to hell. Every joy of the sinner in this world is a fruit of God’s mercy, and every such mercy abused will be prolific in wrath and torments in the world of retribution. God will visit for all those abused mercies.

Then, moreover, those joys of earth will be food for thought in that world of tormenting self-reflections. Conscious guilt for mercies abused will harrow up the soul of the lost sinner with unutterable pangs.

Yet again, every sinner knows that his good things are the opposite of what he deserves. The sweet consciousness of integrity, and of deserving well at the hand of God, he never has, or can have. He knows that all in his case is ill-desert desert of utter and unmingled sorrows.

Once more. In the hour of trial, how great the contrast between the afflictions of the wicked and those of the righteous! The wicked man under his afflictions can only say, if his eyes are open, These are only the beginnings of my sorrow. I have only just begun to drink the bitter cup, the dregs of which are to be my portion for ever and ever.

Yes; the wicked must bear their sufferings in this life, comfortless and unsustained. No Christian's hope gladdens and cheers their heart. No solace can they have in the bitter hour. Faith in Christ is with them entirely out of the question; they can think of Christ only as the being whose blood they have trampled under foot whose mediation for sinners they have set at naught; and now they can hear Him say only this, "Because I have called, and ye refused, therefore when ye call, I will not answer." It avails nothing to speak to them of Jesus. The name soothes not their aching bosoms; it only harrows up their souls with more bitter self-reproaches, and keener despair. No hope have they certainly no good hope through grace; for they have set all grace at naught.

Thus the very opposite things are true of their afflictions which are true in the case of the righteous. While the afflictions of the righteous are light, because of his buoyant, trusting, submissive, peaceful state of mind; the afflictions of the wicked are heavy because of his wicked state of mind. He has no power to resist and bear up under them.

Suppose an ungodly man is visited with bereavement. His property is torn away. Alas, it is his all! and what has he more? This was his God, and now it is gone, perhaps for ever. It leaves him no good to enjoy. The Christian too may lose all his property in a twinkling; but then his Father in heaven is infinitely rich, and he need not fear least he come to want. His great treasure remains untouched by the fires or the floods of earth. He can have

a thousand angels to minister to his wants, if he needs their aid, and his Father sees it best to send them.

Suppose the sinner is bereaved of some dear friend, a parent or a bosom companion, or a child of his strong and tender love. The blow comes down upon him with unmitigated weight. He has no Savior, no hope, no consolation, no being in the universe able to save, to whom he can flee.

These sorrows are heavy because they are enduring. They intermit only for a brief space, and then another avalanche rolls over him again, crushing all his fondest hopes and spreading desolation all around him. And then the thought must flash across his mind, These are only the beginning of sorrows. I am bereaved here; oh, how much more bereaved, when every friend shall be torn away! Bereavement makes me wretched now; what shall I be hereafter?

There is another point of most solemn import. The wicked man's afflictions, instead of working for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, will only work in his case a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation; for all these afflictions are only appliances on the part of God to reclaim the sinner from sinning and bring him to Jesus for salvation. If he resists them all, they cannot fail to aggravate his final doom. Hence the more thorough and searching his trials, the greater his guilt, and the more heavy his final punishment. Hence we see that the more he suffers here supposing him to resist the design of God to reclaim him by these trials, the more must he suffer hereafter as a punishment for his deeper guilt.

The reverse of this, we know, is true of the Christian; as, the more he suffers here, the more he enjoys hereafter.

It is most striking to notice here that, while all things, joyful or sad, work together for good to the Christian, all things, whether prosperous or adverse joyous or afflictive, work together for ill to the sinner. The more he enjoys here, the more miserable he must be hereafter; and the more he suffers here, the more he must suffer hereafter. If there is in this an apparent paradox, it is still true, and you will instantly see its truth when you come to see the relation of the whole course of God's providence here towards the sinner, to this sinner's final doom. All God's provinces are



means of trial to the sinner, and if he abuses them all, and resists their influence, they cannot fail to work for him a deeper damnation.

Alas, the guilty course and the fearful end of the sinner! Instead of being able to say, with the Christian, Welcome, afflictions; welcome, pains and trials and bereavements; welcome, even the cross itself; he can only say, Woe is me! These heavy afflictions, that make me weary of life now, are working for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of damnation! Nothing for me here but bitterness, and a vain pursuit of hollow pleasures, all working for me a more dire damnation for my everlasting portion!

## REMARKS

**1.** If we would understand the Bible, we must attain a position from which we shall see things as the inspired writers saw them. They estimated all things in the light of eternity. When they speak of earthly things, they compare them with eternity, and deem them long or short valuable or valueless, as they are estimated in this scale of comparison. And why should they not? If we are to exist for ever, there is surely no other rational way of estimating the value of whatever shall affect our entire well-being. Our happiness or misery in the next world is a part of the whole sum of our good or ill in existence, as much as the portion which falls to us in this world.

Hence, if earthly scenes and interests are brief and but for a moment, compared with eternity, let them be called and deemed light and of small account. So the sacred writers seemed to regard them.

Many have fallen into serious errors in consequence of not understanding this. When the apostles speak of its being only a step to the day of judgment, some have supposed their real meaning to be that Christ's second advent was really just about to occur. But it is by no means certain that this was their real meaning. Minds so deeply impressed as theirs were with the solemn realities of eternity, are wont to view eternal scenes as very near at hand. The intervention of earthly scenes and events between events in which their mind takes no interest is scarcely thought of.

Now we need to be in such a state of mind as theirs, in order to understand their language. Then we shall estimate all earthly things in the near view of the solemn realities of the eternal world.

**2.** Afflictions are light or otherwise, very much according to the state of mind in which they are experienced. In one state, a mere trifle will appear heavy; in another state, the same trial will seem scarce worth regarding. The mind sustained of God can sustain almost anything God shall lay upon it; but when a man has all his own burdens to carry alone, and can scarcely bear the burden of his own wounded spirit and rebellious, repining heart, how can he bear the superadded weight of affliction?

**3.** It is often exceedingly interesting to contemplate the afflictions of the righteous.

When we see the afflicted soul sustained triumphantly by grace, and consider also how these light afflictions must educe a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, we see it a most blessed thing to be afflicted. Oh it is a joyful scene! Their state of mind is such that they scarcely feel the pain of their afflictions. They know themselves to be blessed, and their souls sometimes exult in scenes of deep affliction with exceeding joy. They have so much of God in their souls, God takes occasion by means of the affliction to make such peculiar manifestations of his glory and his goodness to their souls, that they may well exult in the precious good of being afflicted.

You may have heard it said of one of the daughters of President Edwards, that, while a husband whom she tenderly loved lay a corpse in the house, her joy was so great that she sought some secret place to give it vent, lest it should be misconstrued by those who could not appreciate the abounding consolations of the great joy with which God was pleased to fill her soul. Now what was this? How shall we account for it? But one rational account can be given. The Lord was pleased to make this affliction in her case a sort of conductor, along which the electric fires of his own love and presence reached and filled her soul. She became so filled with the joys of the Spirit that she could not be sensible to the bitterness of grief.

Now another woman in a different state of mind would have hung over that lifeless body would have bathed it with her bitter tears would have

given way to inconsolable grief. Why? Because, in her state of mind, the consolations and joys of God are wanting.

Payson, you may recollect, said, near the close of his life; "Since I have given up my will, I have never in a single instance been disappointed." You need only be in a state in, which you have no will but God's, then all will be well with you. Form no purpose except on this condition: "If the Lord will, I shall do this or that." Let a man get into this permanent state of mind, and where is he? Where he never can be disappointed. However his plans may issue, all seems well to him, because he wishes nothing otherwise than God would have it, and God's ways can never be frustrated; as a man once said of the weather, when asked what he thought the weather would be, "just such as pleases me." But how could he know this? What does this mean? The answer is easy. Said he, "It will be such weather as pleases God, I know; and whatever pleases God will perfectly please me." Thus, beloved, if you are only weaned thoroughly from your own wills, and molded into sweet submission to the will of God, everything will go just right. However much the course of divine Providence may seem to frustrate your plans, and threaten mischief to your interests, you can say: "This pleases my Heavenly Father, and therefore I know it is best, and it shall please me."

I very distinctly recollect attending a funeral in a case where a man had lost a most beloved wife by a sudden death. But, oh, there was such a smile on his countenance, a smile so calm, so resigned, so sweet, so like heaven I never can forget it. Such a countenance as his, it seemed to betoken anything else but affliction. Why? His heart was with God.

**4.** But while this is all joyful and interesting, on the contrary, all is agonizing when you come to see the wicked under affliction. Alas! they have no consolation. I once witnessed a funeral scene in New York. A most ungodly man died, leaving two ungodly daughters fatherless. Their mother had died before, and they felt themselves thrown upon a blank world, orphans. They wept and wailed enough to move a heart of stone. Their tears and cries were agonizing. I felt unutterable anguish as I saw their forlorn, despairing grief. But I could do little else than stand and weep. I talked to them of Jesus, but they had no Jesus. This name, so dear to the Christian heart, had no charms to them. They did not know him.

They had never learned to trust him; they had never made him their friend. Alas, they had no friend in the universe! Their father had gone to hell, and they were following on in the same path.

Oh, it was enough to tear a man's heart all to pieces to witness such a scene! I could not help crying out, Oh, were they only Christians! Oh, if they only had Jesus for their friend!

But these are only the beginning of sorrows. These are only the first tastings of that bitter cup which to all eternity they must drink to its dregs. These are only the first drops of that awful, rising, gathering hailstorm, about to overwhelm them in its wide wasting ruin. If you have ever seen the awful tornado, rolling up in its mountain masses of cloud and hail from the west, roaring, crashing, sweeping along; now its first drops fall it is coming, coming even these first drops thrill through the quick pulse and the beating heart of the houseless, naked wanderer ah, how can he bear that rushing avalanche of storm!

To the sinner in this world, the few drops of affliction cut him down; he cannot stand before these few small drops; how can he stand when God shall make bare his awful arm, and clothe it with majesty, to visit wrath upon the guilty according to their deeds? O sinner, how can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, in the day when God shall deal with thee? The first drops crush you down; you cannot bear even the first small drop, but sink and wail out under even these; what next? Next comes the solid hail hear it roar. Oh, that crash as if it would tear the world in pieces! The first drops scattered in this world scald and scathe him ah, surely he never can endure in that dread day seven the storms of Jehovah's wrath shall begin to beat for ever on his guilty spirit!

When I have seen sinners under conviction, gnawing their very tongues literally as I have seen it drawing blood, I have cried out in the inward anguish of my soul, If this is conviction, what is hell? O my soul, WHAT IS HELL? No hope; no hope, no end, no escape; oh, if there were only some way of escape, or some end, though after myriads of ages had rolled away in the agonies of the second death; then it would not be all utter, hopeless despair. These thoughts of final relief might come as the elixir of life to bring at least a few drops of comfort; but no! hell has no hopes for its doomed ones; it has no balm for the wounded spirits of its guilty, self-

ruined victims. Every thought in every sinner's mind there is only the fire and the gall of hell upon the dark, malign spirits of that prison-house of despair!

**5.** Finally, brethren, let me say, it is exceedingly useful to us to contemplate this contrast between the earthly state of the righteous and of the wicked. Let Christians do this often and thoroughly. I have found it exceedingly useful to me to do it. It quickens the deep sympathies of my heart for my dying fellowmen, and calls forth gushing gratitude for the mercies of gospel salvation. It is sometimes an evil to dwell too long and too exclusively upon the Christian's hope and the Christian's heaven, and neglect to dwell upon the bitter doom of the wicked. Oh, we must not forget their awful state! Our business here is to pull them out of those fires. Then let our hearts feel their awful peril. Let us often follow out this striking, heart-affecting contrast between the righteous and the wicked. If ministers would often do this, carrying out this contrast in all its great and striking points, oh, how would both they and their churches travail in birth for souls, and be filled with unutterable emotions of benevolent solicitude for the souls of the perishing!

Brethren, do you satisfy yourselves with the dainties of the Christian life, and live to eat, rather than to labor and toil? Do you come up here to this sanctuary to regale yourselves with spiritual manna, and give no crumbs to those who must starve in the agonies of the second death? Do you lose sight of the sorrows of the wicked, and quite forget their case? Do you can you forget their awful afflictions here and hereafter so heavy, so enduring, so fearful? Oh! can you let these things pass from your minds, and live on as if all were well? Beloved, you must one day give account for souls for souls saved or lost.