

# A Sermon.

By the Rev. D. MACFARLANE, Raasay.

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” – Exodus 33:14.

The children of Israel were now encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses was on the top of the mount receiving the law from the mouth of the Lord. During his absence the people committed a great sin, by which they provoked the Lord to anger, so that He refused His presence with them during the rest of the way to the land of Canaan. But at the special intercession of Moses, and on the people repenting of their sin, the Lord promises that His presence shall go with them: “My presence shall go with thee.”

The promise must be considered in connection with the circumstances in which it was given, which are set forth in detail in the context. We shall therefore have to consider four particulars, viz.

- I. The sin of the people;
- II. Their repentance;
- III. The ground on which they received the promise; and
- IV. The promise itself.

I. The sin of the people. The particular sin of which they were guilty on this occasion was the sin of idolatry. They made a false god in the shape of a golden calf, and worshipped that idol. This was “a great sin.” Every sin is against the great God, and is a violation of His holy law; but of all other sins that of idolatry is more directly against Him, and more dishonouring to Him. It is a breach of the first commandment: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” It strikes at the being and attributes of the one living and true God, and seeks to rob Him of the glory, honour, and worship due to Him alone as the Creator, Law-Giver, and Redeemer of men. Except the unpardonable sin, this was the greatest that could have been committed. And it did not in the least palliate their sin that they thought they would worship the true God by means of the image they had made, for that was a violation of the second commandment, which forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His word. All who worship God by images are idolaters as sure as the heathen who worship the gods which their own hands have formed. The people set up a false god, and they did not stop there. One false step leads to another. They also adopted a false creed, they began to preach false doctrine: “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (32:4). Having changed their God, they would require, in order to be consistent, to change their doctrine. And we see that their new doctrine is as false as their new god. It was not true that it was that dead idol that delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. It was the living God whom they had so soon forsaken and forgotten that delivered them. He reminds them of this: “I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (20:2). Why is it that so many in our day have changed their creed? Is it not because they have, like Israel, changed their God? It is not at all the God of the Bible that is preached and worshipped by many in this generation, but a god of their own imagination, an image set up in place of the living God. Hence the change in doctrine.

The occasion on which this departure was made was when Moses was up on the mount with God. It is when God’s faithful witnesses are taken home to heaven the enemy takes the opportunity of corrupting the church, and of turning men from the truth. It was during Paul’s absence the false teachers introduced the “other gospel,” which was “no gospel,” into the church in Galatia, which caused many to be removed from Him that called them. When Moses was in the congregation he was a check against idolatry, however much inclined some

of them might have been to that sin; but when he was away the restraint was removed, and the people sinned. One reason they adduced for this departure was that Moses left them, and that they did not know what became of him (22:1). Moses, they thought, served his time, and was good enough in his own day, but now they must take the lead into their own hands, make a new departure, and set up strange gods. But was not Aaron with them? Was he not a good man? Yes, Aaron was with them, and he was undoubtedly a good man. But he was not so faithful and steadfast as Moses, and the fact that he was a good man only gave a better opportunity to the enemy to turn away the people from the fountain of living waters to broken cisterns that could hold no water, and to embolden them in their sin. Satan prefers one good man to yield to his temptations to thousands of bad men. For he knows the people will say, "A good man did this, and it must be right because it was done by a good man." And this is an argument that is widely used in our day. If you speak against the errors that are brought into the church, you are asked, Do you take upon yourself to say that the men at the head of these things, or the men who are associated with them in the church, are not good men? But there is a fallacy in that argument. They would require first to prove that good men have license to do wrong because they are good, which cannot be proved. There is no license to sin given in the Word of God. "These things I write unto you that ye sin not" (John 2:1). On the contrary, they are under greater obligations to do what is right, because they even profess to be good. Aaron was a good man, but he did wrong when he made the golden calf. His sin, however, was not a pure matter of choice; he was overcome by "the fear of man that bringeth a snare," which for a time eclipsed the fear of his God; and his sin is a warning to all, and particularly to those who connive at the idolatrous practices of our day. God, who is a jealous God, and who will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to graven images, chastised the people for this "great sin." He gave tokens of His displeasure against them for it. (1) He refused to accompany them the rest of the journey: "I will not go up in the midst of thee" (verse 3). Sin is the great cause why God denies His presence to individuals and churches: "I will now return to my place, and hide myself from them till they confess their sin and seek my face." When they depart from Him He departs from them. And what is the good of a church when God departs from her? She is of no use – she can only go from bad to worse, and be an instrument for evil in the world. (2) He threatened the destruction of the whole congregation (32:10), and three thousand of them were slain at the command of the Lord. "The wages of sin is death." And if death is the desert of every sin, surely the sin of idolatry, which seeks not only to dethrone the Most High, but, if it were possible, to put Him out of existence, deserves the death that is the wages of sin in the highest degree. (3) The tabernacle was removed, and "pitched without the camp, far off from the camp" (verse 7). The Lord was not to be found in the camp – the people provoked Him to leave them – and those who sought His face would require now to go outside the camp, before they could find Him. There were some who could not be satisfied without Him, and these went out to seek Him where He was. History repeats itself. There have been times in Christian lands when the Lord's people had to go outside the camp, because their God had left the camp, and could not be found there. Referring to the Jewish Church, who crucified the Lord of Glory, Paul says: "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore without the camp bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:12,13). Jesus left the Jewish Church, and set up the New Testament Church. His people followed His example – they too went without the camp. The tabernacle is now pitched without the Jewish Church; it is in the Christian Church, and all who are awakened by the Spirit to see their sinful and lost state, and their need of Christ to save and bless them, must seek Him where He is now to be found. In the time of the Covenanters this had to be done. The Lord was not to be found in the camp, and His people had to seek Him whom their souls loved in "the fields of the wood." At the time of the Disruption in 1843 those who sought the Lord had to go

outside the camp. And even before the great crisis came there were many who had to do this. In parishes where there was a dead ministry the people of God had to hold separate meetings of their own outside the church, because they could not find the bread of life ministered from the pulpit. There was a disruption on a small scale before the general Disruption took place. In some places the people “came out” before the ministers “came out.” And is it not a fact that another disruption was pressed upon us in 1893 by the errors introduced into the church? – a disruption for which there were graver reasons than those which caused the Disruption in 1843. The tabernacle of the testimony left the camp, and we followed it in order to have the Lord’s presence with us, and that “the truth as it is in Jesus” might be continued in our land, kept pure and entire, and perpetuated to coming generations. In doing so we have to bear the reproach of Christ. But we are willing, by grace, to bear the reproach of Him who bare our iniquities in His own body on the tree. “The love of Christ constraineth us.”

II. Their repentance. Repentance was necessary ere they could get back the blessing they had lost by their sin. It is necessary in the case of all who would escape the wrath which is to come: “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.” That they were brought to repentance we have evidence of in the context.

(1) We are told that they “wept.” There is sorrow, godly sorrow, for sin in repentance. But before they mourned for their sin they were convinced of it. Conviction of sin precedes repentance. The Spirit of God convinces of sin, and works repentance in all that are saved. The Spirit convinces by means of the word of truth. And in the case of the people of Israel on this occasion their sin was brought home upon them by the word of the Lord through his servant Moses. When Moses came down from the mount he charged them with their sin: “Ye have sinned a great sin.” And when they were convinced of their sin, and heard that the Lord’s presence was not to go with them, they “wept.”

(2) Besides their weeping, they stripped themselves of their ornaments. They were commanded to do so. They, in their folly, stripped themselves to make a false god, which was made of gold, to make their religion more attractive to carnal eyes and carnal hearts, but now they strip themselves as a mark of their shame and sorrow for their sin, for following their own devices, instead of following the dictates of Him who leads His people in the way they should go. When individuals and churches that have forsaken the Lord, and changed their God and their creed, are brought to repentance, they shall strip themselves of their ornaments. They shall cast off and cast out those things which they had introduced into the churches to make the service of God more attractive to the carnal mind, things which have no warrant from the word of truth, and they shall return to the simplicity of the gospel. They shall cast out human hymns and organs, and other corruptions that defile instead of beautifying the service of Him who is a spirit, and is to be “worshipped in spirit and in truth.” There shall be no hymns of human invention or organs of man’s making in the church, we believe, during the glorious days of the millennium. These innovations have a place in the church when men are “on the down grade.” But when the church “arises and shines,” as we are sure she shall do, she shall strip herself of these “filthy rags,” and put on her “beautiful garments.” Then, through the power of the Spirit from on high, and the gracious presence of the Lord in the midst of her, all nations shall flow into her and abide in her, for there shall be no reason then for any to go outside the camp. The Lord shall dwell in her, and where He dwells His people who love His name delight to dwell.

(3) Their sin was made very bitter to them. Sin is a bitter thing, the bitterest thing in the world, and the children of Israel found out in their experience that it was so. Moses took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, ground it to powder, strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it (32:20). Each and all had to drink of it, Aaron as well as the people. So the carnal joy they had when they danced before their new

god was now turned into the gall of bitterness. Thus it must be with those who truly repent. They shall drink of the cup of their sins all their days in this world, and their sins after their conversion are made more bitter, as they are more dishonouring to God than the sins they committed in the days of their ignorance. They mourn bitterly for their sins. Though God forgave all their sins they cannot forgive themselves. The sin of Israel was the sin of backsliding, and it was therefore made very bitter to them.

III. The ground on which they received the promise. What was that ground? Some may say, "The people repented, and they received the blessing on that ground." Repentance is necessary to salvation, but it cannot be the ground of it. "If righteousness came by the law then Christ died in vain." Repentance only prepared the people for the promised blessing, but they did not receive it on the ground of their repentance, nor can we receive the Lord's favour on that ground. What, then, was the ground? It was the mediation of Moses. The ground was not in themselves, it was in another. It was in Moses. Moses, you are to bear in mind, was a type of Christ. Behold, there is a greater than Moses here! Moses acted as a mediator between God and the people, and through his mediation, as a type, they received God's favour. Christ is the one mediator between God and man, and it is on the ground of His mediatorial work, and that ground alone, that sinners obtain the blessings of salvation, and not on the ground of anything in themselves, either in a state of nature, as they are the children of wrath, or in a state of grace, as they are the children of God. They "are saved by grace through faith, and that not of themselves: it is the gift of God." Were it not so, none of our fallen race could have any hope of salvation. We must be indebted to Christ for salvation; the people of Israel were indebted to Moses as a type for the Lord's presence. Moses was in this instance a type of Christ in several respects:

(1) He had no hand in the sin of the people. He was perfectly innocent so far as that sin was concerned. Christ had no hand in the sin of the people whom He came to seek and save. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He "knew no sin." He is "a Lamb without blemish."

(2) Moses transacted with God on behalf of the people, with the view to making atonement for their sin (verse 30). Christ made a real atonement for the sins of His people. He did this when He offered Himself in their room and stead to satisfy the law of God which they transgressed, and under whose curse they came by their sins. "He is the propitiation for our sins."

(3) Moses made intercession with God on behalf of the people, and obtained the blessing. Christ ever lives to make intercession for His people, and obtains the blessing for them. He pleads on the ground of His own merit. He suffered and died on their behalf to secure salvation, and by His intercession He receives the blessings of salvation from the Father, and bestows them freely, "without money and without price." "He restores that which He took not away."

(4) Moses in his mediation had a special regard for the glory of God, while at the same time he sought the good of the people. Christ in mediation had a special regard for the glory of the Father, while at the same time He manifested His wondrous love to His people in laying down His life for them. "Father, glorify Thy name." "Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

(5) Moses, out of his love to the people committed to him, asked God to blot him out of His book rather than that they should perish for their sin. Christ was willing to be blotted out of God's book, so to speak, to be made a curse rather than that the people given Him in an everlasting covenant should perish under the curse of the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Moses was great, and acted nobly for the guilty people of Israel, but oh, there is greater than Moses here, the Son of God, the

brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet without sin, except by imputation, humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that His guilty people might not perish but have eternal life!

(6) Moses found favour in the sight of God, and he makes that a plea in his intercession for the people. Christ has been, and always is, in favour with God. "The Father loveth the Son." He loves Him even when He is pleased to bruise Him, and to give Him the awful cup of wrath to drink, the cup which His people would be drinking for all eternity had Christ not drunk it in their stead. And the blessed Mediator makes the Father's love a plea in His intercession on behalf of those whom He redeemed by His blood, that He might have them with Him where he is now, sitting on the right hand of the majesty in heaven: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given me, for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Let us then seek to know Christ, and to love and serve Him; and in all our approaches to God to have our eye, the eye of faith, fixed upon Him for the pardon of our sins and the acceptance of our persons and services. He is the mediator between God and men, "the way, the truth, and the life." No man cometh to the Father but by Him.

IV. The promise: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." This is a great and precious promise. It was given to the people of Israel in the time of need. It was not, however, peculiar to them; it belongs to the Lord's people now, and they need it as much as the people to whom it was originally given. You in this large congregation, who are His people, need this promise, and it belongs to you. You are, this last day of the feast, going down from the mount of ordinances, and you need the Lord's presence with you. You are weak and helpless in yourselves; without Christ you can do nothing; but here is a staff He puts in your hand to lean upon, and to support you on your wilderness journey to the rest that remains to the people of God. When Israel was old and weak he needed support to enable him to follow the Lord in the path of duty, and we read that he worshipped leaning on the top of a staff. This promise is a staff to strengthen the weak hands, to confirm the feeble knees, and to encourage the fearful hearts. But that we may derive benefit from it, it must be mixed with faith, and in order to receive it, we need to understand it. We need, therefore, the Spirit of truth to teach and guide us.

There are two great things in the promise – *First*, God's presence; *Second*, Rest. We need both. Without the presence of God we cannot enjoy the rest, and if we have His presence with us, we shall most assuredly attain the promised rest. Both are inseparably connected in the promise. The promise is one, but there are two precious streams flowing out of it to refresh God's heritage as they travel through the parched wilderness of this world.

*First* – The first part of the promise is in these words: "My presence shall go with thee." There are two things to be noticed here – (1) The blessing promised; (2) the promise of that blessing.

(1) The blessing – God's presence. "My presence." What are we to understand by God's presence? There are two senses in which it is spoken of in Scripture, His omnipresence and His gracious presence. By His omnipresence He is present everywhere; by His gracious presence He is present with His own people. In the former sense He is present with the wicked as well as with the righteous (Psalm 139:7-12); in the latter He is present with the righteous, while He is far away from the wicked. It is in the latter sense we are to understand the Lord's presence as spoken of in the text. It is His *gracious* presence that is promised. One may ask, "What is meant by His gracious presence?" If it is a natural man that asks the question, we must confess that we cannot explain it in such a way as that he can understand it: "For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto

him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). All we can say to such is this: “Come and see.” Seek to know it by divine teaching. “They shall all be taught of God.” It is the Spirit of God alone that can impart this knowledge. “Flesh and blood” cannot give it. “Ye must be born again.” It is those that are born again, and that have tasted that the Lord is gracious that can know what it is. “The spiritual man knoweth all things.” The gracious presence of the Lord need only be mentioned to such a man, and he knows what is meant by it. It means the favour of the Lord in which there is life, and His loving-kindness which is better than life. When the Lord lifts the light of His countenance upon His people, then they enjoy His presence. The psalmist knew what it was when he said, “Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved” (Psalm 80:3). Again, “Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled” (Psalm 30:7). Job knew what it was when he said, “O that I knew where I might find him!” Peter knew what it was by happy experience, when he said on the mount: “Master, it is good for us to be here.” And we who have been waiting upon the Lord on the mount of ordinances, and commemorating the death of Christ in these days have to acknowledge to the praise of the glory of His grace, on this last day of the feast, that His presence has been with us. O, let us seek that His presence may go with us as we now go down from the mount ! And this leads us to notice,

(2) The promise of that blessing, viz. – “My presence shall go with thee.” The form in which this blessing is set before us is by way of promise. All the blessings which the Lord has provided in the covenant of grace, for the salvation of sinners, for the comforting of His people, and the perfecting of their salvation, are set before them in the form of promises, and all these promises are yea and amen in Christ to the glory of God the Father. This teaches us in our transacting with the Father for salvation that we are to do so by means of His own Word; and that if we are saved and obtain His favour, it is necessary to act faith in His word of promise. This faith is His own gift, and is wrought in us by the Spirit through the Word. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” and not otherwise, whatever some, who are wise beyond what is written, may and do say. But to proceed to further consideration of the promise, two things are to be noticed, viz. – the party to whom the promise is given, and the need there is of the promise.

First – The party to whom the promise is given. It is given, in the first place, to Moses: “My presence shall go with thee,” and then through him to the people: “Unless Thy presence go with us.” But Moses, as we observed, was a type of Christ. And so the promise of salvation is given by the Father, first to him and then through him to his people. All blessings come to us through Christ, the one mediator between God and man. We are to ask in His name that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13). This is the Father’s will, and all the redeemed acquiesce in His will. It is doubly sweet when it comes to us from the hand of the Father through Him who shed His blood to secure the blessing for us.

Second – The need there was and is of the promise. The people of Israel needed it on many accounts, and so do we.

(1) They needed His presence to *guide* them in the way they should go, They were in a wilderness which they never travelled before. They were “strangers in a strange land.” They were on their way to the land of promise, but they needed one to show them the way. And none could do this but He who says, “My presence shall go with thee.” An angel was not competent to be their guide, much less any mere man. Moses, who was a leader himself, needed to be led by a higher hand. None was more conscious of this than himself: “If Thy presence go not with us carry us not up hence” (verse 15). None would do but the Shepherd of Israel who “leads Joseph like a flock.” It was He who led them in the past, except when they took the lead in their own hands, and He is able to lead them to the end. “This is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death.” When the Lord says, “My presence

shall go with thee," we are to understand thereby that He Himself will go with them. Where His presence is, there He is Himself. The presence of the Lord was with Jacob when he slept in the open air on his way to Padan-Aram, and he said, "The Lord is in this place." Christ was there. He is the presence of God the Father, "the angel of His presence." Every revelation of the Father is through the Son." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." It was Christ then that was with the church, and led her in the wilderness. Oh, what a leader! Let us follow Him. There are many who are followers of men, and not of Jesus Christ, who is the King of His church as well as her Prophet and Priest. Such cry, "There are no leaders." But the church of God is never without a leader. Jesus Christ, the glorious head of His church "is the same yesterday, today, and for ever." And He may, according to His sovereign will, make use of the weakest instruments to promote His glory and advance His cause and kingdom in the world. The weaker and more unworthy the instruments are, the more it is seen that the glory of anything He is pleased to accomplish through them is due to Himself alone. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." "We are not sufficient of ourselves: our sufficiency is of God." The people needed not only to be shown the way, they needed also to be led into and kept in it, and enabled to go forward to possess the good land at the end of the journey. The Lord took Israel by the hand out of Egypt, and He "taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms" (Hosea 11:3). There is a union between Christ and His people, and in consequence of that union there is a communion. They, like Enoch, "walk with God." Christ is with them, He goes before, and they follow Him. He went before His people in the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The church has her night as well as her day during her pilgrimage in the wilderness of this world, and Christ accommodates Himself to her various circumstances. The pillar of cloud could not be seen in the night time, and therefore he gives the pillar of fire to shine on their path; and thus, in the night of tribulation and perplexity, He gives them more of his presence. As their tribulation abounds, so their consolation abounds. He makes darkness light before them. The cloudy pillar by which He led Israel was a visible representation of His presence. The Lord was in that cloud, and the people were guided by this visible sign. In all their movements, during their march as well as in their encampments, they were to be regulated by these means of guidance. Where, and how long, they were to rest were indicated by the resting of the cloud, and when they were to resume their march was made known by the moving of the cloud. They would require, therefore, to have their eye always on the cloud. There might have been other clouds, but this was the only sure means of guidance. But some might mistake a common cloud for the special cloud which was given to guide the people. How could the one be distinguished from the other? The common cloud was driven by every wind that blew; the special was moved according to the will of the Lord. He was in that cloud, and directed its motions. The one was dependent on the wind, the other on the will of God. It would be dangerous, then, to mistake the one for the other. The church at present is surrounded by this danger. False teachers are compared to clouds, and there is great need of the warning, "Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine." There are many false teachers occupying high positions in the visible church in this age, who have forsaken the good old way, and have strayed into bye-paths of their own making. Why have they forsaken the good old way? They thought that was too tedious; they tell us they want to make progress. They profess to be "men of progress." It is quite possible that the cloud driven by the wind would make more progress in one day than the cloud in which the Lord's presence was would make in a month. But what kind of progress would it be? That depended on what direction the wind blew. All the progress depended on that, and on that alone. We are sure that those who follow the tendency that is not according to God's Word make progress *backward* and not forward. Such is the progress made by the men who profess to be men of progress in our day. It is said

that it is because of the great learning of these men they have adopted their new theology. They may have a learning of a sort. But we read in Scripture of some who were “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” But that the views which they promulgate are an evidence of their learning none can believe but those who are ignorant of the history of the Church. There are no errors introduced now but a schoolboy might know as well as they by reading Dr. Owen and other great writers, who discussed and refuted them by the Word of God in their own day. The errors that have been buried in the grave by the learned and godly men of the past are now revived in the dark night that has fallen on this generation. There was a time when medical doctors raised dead corpses out of the grave to dissect them so as to acquire skill in their profession, but because the law of the land was against such work they took good care not to do it in the day time – when the sun was up. They did their work in the night, in the dark. So it is now. When errors are revived it is a sign that it is night in the church. But there is this sad difference: while it was unlawful for these men to raise dead bodies, the church has made a law to enable false teachers to revive and teach erroneous doctrines. That law protects them in doing the work of darkness, and they cannot be stopped until the Lord comes in power and causes that church to bury her dead. Beware of false teachers. Keep close to the Word of God. It is the only rule of faith and practice. As the Lord was in the cloud, He is in His Word. The Word is the outward means of guidance now; and Christ promises His presence with the church so long as she continues to “teach the people to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded.” But whenever she ceases to teach what He has commanded, and begins to teach the commandments of men He withdraws His presence, and leaves her to her own devices. The Word is the sure means of guidance, but the blind cannot see. We need, therefore, the inward illumination of the Spirit, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened in a spiritual knowledge of the outward rule given, and that our hearts may be disposed to follow its guidance.

(2) They needed His presence to *feed* them. The people needed food as well as guidance. They would soon die in the wilderness without food. The wilderness was a wilderness without human inhabitants and without food. But the Lord fed them. He did wonderful things which they looked not for in the desert. “This is a desert place . . . send them away.” No, they can be fed in this barren desert. He gave them bread from heaven. He fed them with manna. Now, had not His presence gone with them, the people would have died in the wilderness for want of food. The people of God are living persons, spiritually alive, and they need Christ to feed as well as guide them. He Himself is their life, the bread of life, “the true bread that came down from heaven of which if a man eat he shall never die.” He is “the hidden manna.” “Of His fulness they have all received.” The Word which is given to the Church to guide her is also the means whereby she is fed. The church cannot dispense with the Word, either as a means of guiding or as a means of feeding. And those in our day who have abandoned the Word of God as their rule evidence by their so doing that they know not what it is to live on Christ as the bread of life. But Christ will feed His own. “He shall feed His flock like a shepherd” (Isaiah 40:11). He feeds them by His Word and Spirit. The Spirit glorifies Christ by taking of the things that are His, and showing them to His people. Though in a wilderness, they are not, after all, so ill off. Christ is with them; their table is furnished daily with provision sent down from heaven; they live at the expense of the King of Glory; and, therefore, though in themselves poor, without money and without price, in either purse or hand, they are welcome to the provision which, of His

(3) They needed His presence to *comfort* them. There is no true comfort without the Lord’s presence. Some go to broken cisterns for comfort in the time of trouble, and for happiness in the time of misery. They go to the creature instead of going to the Creator for the blessing which can only be found in Him in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. There were many troubles to be met with in the wilderness which would cause



sorrow and sinking of heart. But Christ was present to comfort them. He is a present help in the time of trouble. He was present with the disciples when He said, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

(4) They need His presence to *protect* them from the dangers and the enemies of the wilderness, and to enable them to triumph over them. The children of Israel had to meet with enemies on their way to the good land. These would do their utmost to obstruct their passage, and to keep them from entering the promised rest. But Christ, who knew all the dangers and enemies to which they were exposed, and knew also His own sufficiency to overcome all these difficulties, says, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." "Thou art weak and helpless, but 'in Me is thy help.'" If we would enter the rest that remains to God's people, we too shall meet with enemies on the way. We have enemies within and enemies without. The flesh, sin, is an enemy in us, the world and the devil are the enemies without. These three are combined against the people of God in all ages. Those without are formidable, but the enemy within is the more dangerous. One enemy in the camp is more dangerous than many without: he betrays us to those outside. One traitor in the garrison of Khartoum opened the gate to those outside, and was the means of destroying the whole army. Achan, in the camp of Israel, was worse for the people than all the men of Ai. Indwelling sin is more dangerous, hurtful, and more difficult to overcome than all enemies without. So also are enemies within the church. They do more harm to the cause of God than all outside her pale. But in this promise, "My presence shall go with thee," is our encouragement and our strength. "Thou art my king, O God: command deliverances for Jacob. Through Thee will we push down our enemies: through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But Thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise Thy name for ever" (Psalm 44:4-8). When the people of Israel provoked the Lord to withdraw His presence, a few of their enemies would discomfit them, but when they walked in the way of His commandments, one of them would put to flight a thousand. The Lord was with them, and fought for them. "O that my people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries." It is by the Lord's presence that the church can overcome all her enemies; and the church of believers shall be made more than conquerors through Him who loved and gave Himself for them. "He must reign till all His enemies are made His footstool." The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed. This shall be accomplished at the end of their wilderness journey.

(5) They needed His presence to *carry* them safely across the river Jordan. They got safely across the Red Sea, but now Jordan stands between them and the land of promise. There was no way of reaching that good land but by crossing that river. Ah, friends, the river of death is before us, and we cannot get to heaven but through death: We need Christ with us. All the people of Israel that crossed Jordan landed in Canaan, but all who pass through death to the eternal world shall not land in heaven. "Except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." To be born again, to be in Christ, and He in us, to be made holy as He is holy, is the only passport to the heavenly Canaan. If we are thus prepared, Christ's presence shall go with us to carry us safely over death to possess the glorious inheritance beyond the river. But how did the people of Israel get over Jordan to possess the land beyond? It was by Christ's presence. Besides the cloud and the fire that were their guides there was the ark in the camp. The ark was a symbol of the Lord's presence. The law was in the ark, and the mercy-seat covered the ark, typifying the propitiation of Christ whereby He magnified the law. It was on the ground of His atoning sacrifice, prefigured by the Paschal Lamb, they were brought out of bondage in Egypt, and it is on the same ground they shall

now cross Jordan into the promised land. We do not mean that all that entered the earthly Canaan had a saving interest in the atonement of Christ. But the people of Israel were typical of the people of God, His covenant people, given to Christ by the Father in the eternal covenant of grace. All this "Israel shall be saved," and it is on the same ground that they were saved from a state of sin and wrath, they shall be brought through death to heaven.

But to return to the people we left on the brink of Jordan. Let us see how they passed over the river, and let us learn how we shall pass the river of death if we have Christ's presence when we come to the brink of eternity. The Lord went before them, and opened up a way. The priests went with the ark to the brink of Jordan, while all the congregation stood still to behold omnipotent power put forth by the Creator of heaven and earth, before whose glorious presence heaven and earth shall one day flee away! What is Jordan before such a power? As soon as the feet of the priests touched the waters, Jordan fled (Psalm 114:5). The river was dried, and the people passed over dryshod, while the priests that carried the ark stood in the midst of Jordan. Then the priests themselves went over, and Jordan, at the command of Jehovah, overflowed its banks again. All this was done in fulfilment of the promise, "My presence shall go with thee." And this promise is to God's people in all ages. He has promised to be with them alway, even unto the end of the world, yea for ever and ever. He will be with them in the valley of the shadow of death, and therefore, they shall fear no evil. When He has prepared them by His grace on earth for His fellowship and service in heaven He "will receive them unto Himself, that where He is they may be also" (John 14:3).

*Second* – Rest. "I will give thee rest." This is the second part of the promise. In the wilderness the people had not much rest. But they had one great privilege: Christ's presence. They found, however, no permanent rest till they were settled in their inheritances. The rest of Canaan is a type of the rest of heaven, and the heirs of glory shall not find permanent rest till they reach heaven. We shall then speak of the promise as it respects them. But before we speak of the nature of the rest, it may be observed that the blessing promised is a gift. "I will give." It is not a thing that is merited by those who obtain, but a thing that is freely given. Eternal life is a free gift (Romans 6:23). It is given for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is given on the terms of the covenant of grace. And those that will not receive the blessing on these terms shall never enjoy it. Let them remember this ere it be too late. God will not change His own terms for any man. This important matter has been finally arranged in an unchangeable covenant that is "ordered in all things and sure." The promised rest is the gift of God. It has two parts: first, the rest of grace, and second, the rest of glory. "The Lord will give grace and glory" (Psalm 84:11). The former is given in this world; the latter, in the world to come. Both are given for the sake of Jesus Christ.

(1.) *The rest of grace.* This includes, among other things –

(1) Peace with God, that is, reconciliation through the blood of Christ, by which He satisfied the justice of the law. It is on the ground of Christ's satisfaction sinners can be reconciled to God. "Be ye reconciled to God." "For He hath made Him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:20,21). This blessing is freely bestowed on believers, on their receiving Christ by faith. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God" (Romans 5:1). This is the first great blessing in the rest of grace. They have the rest of reconciliation. "We who have believed do enter into rest" Hebrews 4:3).

(2) Peace of conscience. This blessing follows reconciliation, and is an effect of it. It can never be had before reconciliation. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit given to those whose sins are pardoned, and is an evidence of their reconciliation. It is the happy effect of the blood of Christ sprinkled on the conscience, purging it from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14). This inward peace of soul is an echo of that outward peace which our blessed Redeemer accomplished when He cried, "It is finished." And those to whom Christ

gives it have rest. It is, however, imperfect in this life; it is subject to changes, while their reconciliation is unchangeable.

(3) Rest of satisfaction, with Christ as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. They rest in Him as the one Mediator between God and men, their Surety, Substitute, and Head in the covenant of Grace, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. They heartily acquiesce in God's way of salvation through Jesus Christ. They are satisfied with Christ as their Saviour and their portion for time and eternity, and well they may. Here they find rest. "This is all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Samuel 23:5).

(4) Rest of communion with God. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Man, before the fall, enjoyed rest in fellowship with God; but when he sinned he lost that blessing, and man now is without true rest, and goes from one thing to another, crying, "Who will show us any good?" (Psalm 4:6). He cannot find the good he really needs till he returns to God to enjoy His favour and fellowship. Believers find moments of sweet rest in His fellowship. "I sat down under His shadow with great delight" (Song 2:3). "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Matthew 17:4). But they must "arise and go hence," for in this world unbroken fellowship cannot be enjoyed. That is reserved for the state of glory.

(5) Rest in the service of God. We believe that man in the state of innocency enjoyed perfect rest in doing the will of his Creator as well as in the enjoyment of His favour and fellowship. And what is salvation, in the application thereof, but the restoring of man to God, to His image, which He had lost by sin, and to His service, for which he was created? The redeemed, who are "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," begin to serve God, to do his will, and they find rest in this work. They do not rest on their endeavours to serve the Lord as the ground of their acceptance with Him, but they delight to do His will. They have something of the mind of Christ, who said, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). They have the rest of delight in the service of their Lord and Master. This service is congenial to the new nature wrought in them by the Spirit in regeneration, and nothing can satisfy the new creature but to be enabled to glorify God, and to enjoy Him. This is the grand work for which we were created. And if we are born again, we shall find rest in doing God's will as revealed in His Word. Those who never found any more delight in the Lord's service than they found in a secular employment have much cause to fear that they are strangers to the blessing promised in the text.

(6) Rest of hope. "Good hope through grace." Those who are without a well-founded hope for eternity are without rest, and whatever other hope they may have, it shall perish at death. Paul, speaking as the mouthpiece of the church, and looking forward to the dissolution of the body, says: "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). All believers may not be able to express their hope with such confidence and certainty, yea, many of them have not, and the best of them cannot have the same strength of hope always; but they all have the grace of hope in being, and the exercise of it is not in their own power. They are dependent upon the Spirit of all grace for its exercise. Weak hope is hope as sure as strong hope; and the Lord will not cast away His people though they may be afraid that they have not the hope that is saving. But that you may examine yourselves to see if you are in possession of the hope that maketh not ashamed, consider that the Holy Spirit is its author; that it is only those that are regenerated that can have it; that the Word of God is its warrant, and that it leads to holiness. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Hope gives the believer the rest of anticipation. It has respect to those blessings promised, but not yet realised. "For we are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24).

(2.) *The rest of glory.* This rest is given to believers in the world of eternity. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” Their souls shall enter this rest at death; their bodies, re-united to their souls, shall enjoy full possession of it at the resurrection. What is this rest? It is –

(1) Rest from sin, perfect and everlasting deliverance from that evil. They were, at their conversion, in a sense delivered from sin. They were delivered from its guilt in their justification; they were delivered from its reigning power in their regeneration, but the work of sanctification is not perfected till death. At death they are delivered from the very being of sin. They are “made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.” In the state of grace on earth they carried a body of sin which made them groan and cry for deliverance: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But in heaven they are never troubled with sin; a vain thought never passes through their minds. They are as free from sin as Adam was when God created him in His own holy image. And a great element in the happiness of the redeemed in glory is the assurance that they shall never fall again into a state of sin. “Because I live,” says Christ, “ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

(2) Rest from all the evils which sin brought, and to which it made them liable. When the cause has been removed the effect must cease. Whatever troubles may afflict the just on earth, from the devil, the world, or their own evil hearts, they cannot follow them to the rest of glory. There is no room for them there. They may and shall follow them to the brink of Jordan, but no further are they allowed to come. “In the world,” Christ says, “ye shall have tribulation.” Their tribulation is limited by the bounds of time, “the world.” Christ promised to give them rest from sin and all evil, and He will give it. Satan, knowing that all the trouble he can give them must be done in this world, does his utmost while he has the opportunity; and the nearer they are to their Father’s house, the keener he is to molest them, knowing that his time is short. But in glory they are for ever set free from all that caused them sorrow on earth: “The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10).

(3) Rest of enjoyment. They shall have the enjoyment of God, and that for ever. They enjoyed Him on earth, but their enjoyment was neither full nor lasting. It was often interrupted by sin in themselves, sin in the world around them, and the temptations of Satan; but in glory their enjoyment shall be full, uninterrupted, and everlasting. Who can in this world comprehend the full import of this? The redeemed have foretastes on earth, but it doth not yet appear what they shall be. They shall also have the communion of saints. They loved and desired this communion on earth, and if it was so precious and desirable in the state of imperfection, how much more so in the state of perfection! They shall enjoy the company of holy angels, which shall contribute to their happiness. They are all one family in Christ, a holy and happy family.

(4) Rest in due appreciation of their deliverance from sin and misery, and of the unspeakable obligations they are under to Christ for His great mercy: “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 1:5,6).

(5) What may be called *active rest*. The redeemed shall enjoy such rest in heaven. They were never on earth so active in serving the Lord as they shall be in heaven. The idea generally attached to the term rest is inaction; but when we speak of the rest of glory it has no such meaning. It means, among other things, the employment of the saints as they surround the throne above. God created them for the manifestation of His own glory, as well as for their enjoyment of Him. Eternity shall be an everlasting Sabbath, and the redeemed shall be

employed in the worship and service of God. without ceasing, for ever and ever. But do they not need some rest from work? Their work is their rest; and if their work could be interrupted even for one moment, their rest in heaven would be disturbed. But we are assured that no such interruption shall mar their happiness: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple" (Revelation 7:15). The body at the resurrection, reunited to the soul, shall be put in possession of the rest of glory. Death separated between soul and body, but did not separate either from Christ. At the resurrection they shall meet again to part no more. The whole man was created for the glory and enjoyment of God; the whole man was redeemed by Christ, and regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit; and now soul and body shall be glorified together, that they may glorify Him whose they are: "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

In conclusion, there are several lessons that we ought to learn from the portion of Scripture which we have been considering:

(1) The proneness of all men to sin in general, and the sin of idolatry in particular. Some are professedly worshippers of idols; all, in their natural state, are practical idolaters. Whatever object takes up the place of God in the hearts and minds of men is their God.

(2) A warning to the visible church in our day. The sin committed in the camp of Israel was not the sin of individuals only, but the sin of the whole congregation; and when we bear in mind that the whole visible church of God was gathered together there, we see that the whole visible church, excepting a few persons, was guilty of forsaking the Lord, guilty of idolatry. The visible church in our day is divided into several denominations, and is it not patent to all whose eyes are open, that these denominations, with very few exceptions, are guilty of forsaking the Lord? The sin of this generation, so far as the cause of the Lord is concerned, is the sin of the professing church as a whole.

(3) The duty of repentance. The people of Israel repented, and it is the duty of professing churches now to repent. The Lord calls as He did to Israel of old: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity" (Hosea 14:1). But alas! the only response as yet to be heard from backsliding churches is: "No, for I have loved strangers, and after them I will go" (Jeremiah 2:25).

(4) That God, according to His eternal purpose, will bring His own people into the glorious inheritance which He prepared for them before the foundation of the world, notwithstanding their sins and their unworthiness. They are "saved by grace," and "accepted in the Beloved."

(5) A call to the Lord's remnant to faithfulness in following Him according to His Word, in testifying against sin, sin in themselves, sin in the church, and sin in the nation. Let them be like Moses when he came down from the mount with a message from God. Let them declare, without the fear of man, the awful denunciations pronounced by God against men for their sins.

(6) That *now* is the time to labour for the Lord, and for the good of precious souls; and that there is work to be done on earth which cannot be done in heaven. Let those who labour in the Word be up and doing, for "the night cometh when no man can work."

(7) Lastly, when God's people shall have finished their course they shall receive a crown of righteousness as Paul tells us: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). Then they shall understand the full meaning of the precious promise, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

[May 1896]

## Notes of a Gaelic Sermon

by Rev. D. MACDONALD, Shieldaig.  
(taken by a hearer.)

The Good Samaritan and the man who fell among thieves.

Luke 10:30-35.

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.” Let us consider, first, the city of Jerusalem which the man left, and then say a word or two about Jericho, whither he was going. We learn from the Scriptures that Jerusalem was highly favoured with advantages and privileges above all other cities. The Temple of God was there. God’s presence was there. Many of God’s people were also to be found in Jerusalem. Taking into account all the blessings enjoyed in this city you wonder how this man turned his back upon such a desirable place of abode. Yet, we see, the man left Jerusalem, and was on his way to Jericho, a city under the curse of God. Man had all possible comforts and happiness in the garden of Eden. He was perfectly happy, and lacked nothing for body or soul. And yet man was foolish enough to believe that he might be brought to a happier state. The old serpent beguiled our first parents: “Ye shall not surely die.” They believed this lie and did eat the forbidden fruit. They sinned against God and were driven out of the garden of Eden. “God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). “My

people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). The covenant of works was broken, and all mankind fell in Adam. When man was driven out of Eden he went towards Jericho. Notice that the road which led to Jericho was a dangerous road, leading to a cursed place. You who are yet in a state of nature, remember you are travelling a dangerous road. “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matthew 7:13). Soul and body are under the curse.

On his way to Jericho the man fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment. The poor man was left in a sad condition. The thieves were too strong for him. Who were they? As we already mentioned, the old serpent, the devil, was one of them. What did he steal from man? He robbed him of the image of God. He robbed him of the knowledge of God and of holiness. He took away his spiritual life, and gave man instead spiritual death. He robbed him of righteousness, and left the poor man “naked,” exposed to law and justice. And truly it may be said, that man spiritually was left naked. Instead of the holy and pure man as God created him, we have a man altogether vile, quite defiled and corrupted by sin. “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores” (Isaiah 1:6). Sin was the cause of all the calamities and troubles, sicknesses and afflictions that the human race are heirs to. Sin, we say, opened the door to diseases without number. Our most skilful physicians are quite unable to relieve the suffering of thousands of our fellowmen. Many poor sufferers may be found enduring their painful afflictions from year to year. Some do not know what it is to enjoy health from morning to night, and many are not cheered with prospects of recovery. How terrible are the fruits of sin! Not only are we liable to suffering in our bodies, but alas! the mind also is darkened. We have become so unreasonable and stupid by the effects of sin. Yes, our memories are corrupted. We forget what is good, but retain the evil. The night of death and darkness is reigning in every soul yet in a state of nature.

Consider how much of the fruit of sin we see in our poorhouses. Many have to be supported there, who at one time enjoyed much of this world’s goods, but through sin and folly have come to want. They are now dependent on others for their food and clothing. Consider, also, how we see the fruits of sin in our infirmaries and hospitals. As you look around you, and hear the groans and cries of men and women, do you not think of sin that caused such suffering? But let us visit the asylum, and what awful fruits of sin we behold there? Some of the poor ones who have lost the use of reason require to be guarded to prevent them taking their own lives. When you speak to them and find that their reason has left them, are you not, at such a sad moment, thinking of sin and its sad fruits? The prison house, also, has sad fruits of sin. Many who have broken the laws of God and men are confined and punished for years, while others will never regain their liberty again. But, oh, consider the rivers of blood shed on the battlefields, and do you not mourn at the fearful fruit of sin witnessed there? Do you not long for the time promised in the Word of God when “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more?” In the last place, we say that it was sin that opened the door to death, natural, spiritual, and eternal. Unbelief is also a robber. “Not this man, but Barabbas.” We reject Jesus: “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). Love of the world is also a robber. We have no time left us to worship God. All precious time is to be spent in the pleasures of sin. You cannot spend one minute to plead with God on behalf of your never dying soul. Love of the world is surely robbing many of everlasting life. Riches are a snare to many. “Love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10). Demas should be a

warning to us all. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Riches carry away thousands to eternal flames. Hear what Christ says of his people: "But ye are not of the world." "I have chosen you out of the world." I hope you understand me when I say that the thieves stripped the poor man of all good. The thieves wounded him, stripped him and left him "half dead." Notice carefully how they left him, "half dead." We know that in one sense he was quite dead. We are all by nature, "dead in trespasses and sins." How then was he described as "half dead?" Because he could be restored to life again. Jesus could bring him back to the full possession of life. The angels that fell are more than half dead. Their doom is fixed, and there is for them no salvation. Man can be plucked as a brand from the burning, and in this sense he was left "half dead." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." O poor sinner, would that you believed your own condition to be fully and faithfully set before you in this portion of Scripture. You are quite as helpless as this man, who must have died were it not for the good Samaritan. The Priest and the Levite "passed by on the other side." There was no help from either. These persons represent the law. You need not expect salvation from the law. It will give you no help except that it may show you how much you need a Saviour. It may act the part of a "schoolmaster." But understand that "by the works of the law no flesh can be justified." Consider how near to man Jesus Christ as the good Samaritan came. He came in the flesh. "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). He thus drew near in human nature. He took "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." The great sacrifice must have "blood." As God, Christ had no blood, and "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Do you realise how much the Church cost Jesus Christ? It cost him His precious blood. You need not wonder at her love to Him, after she understood the infinite value of His atonement. "When I should find thee without I would kiss thee" (Song 8:1). Aged Simeon, no wonder you should desire to have Him in your arms! "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:29,30). The Samaritan "had compassion on him." When did Christ's compassion begin? It had no beginning. We say that the love of the Triune God had no beginning. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jeremiah 31:3). This love had no beginning, and shall have no end. What proofs did Jesus give of His love? He gave strong proofs of His love in the valley of humiliation. "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep" (John 10:11). Did he not give clear and strong proofs of His love in the garden, and more especially on Calvary? The Church got a sight of Jesus in the garment dipped in blood. She then believed He loved her. The law had Christ's child by the throat and demanded payment: "Pay me that thou owest." What was your answer? It was this, believer, "I have not a single farthing wherewith to pay; you must look to my surety." Yes, believer, your surety paid all your debts to law and justice. He magnified the law and made it honourable. Observe also, that the Samaritan not only had compassion on him, but he also "bound up his wounds." How did Christ bind up the wounds in your broken heart? By the promises of His Word. He poured in "oil and wine." What do we make of the oil? The anointing of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing equal to oil in healing wounds, burnings, &c. Precious oil has healing virtues. The sufferer often groans with the pain of his burnt arm. The oil is applied, and very soon the sting is taken out of the severe pain. Ah, well, my conscience has been severely burnt with the law. "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Romans 7:9). You know something of the apostle's feelings. You have tasted a little of the bitterness of sin. You and I are much in need of the Holy Ghost in His healing virtues being applied to our law-scorched consciences. He will bring joy and peace. Oil is very useful for light. It was the Holy Spirit who enlightened your mind in the knowledge of Christ. It was He that revealed Christ to your soul as a suitable and willing Saviour. "Unto you that



fear my name shall the Son of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” The Holy Spirit first opened your eyes to see your lost and ruined condition by nature, and then opened the eyes of faith in your soul that you got a sight of Christ on the cross suffering for you. It was then, and not till then, that Christ became precious to your soul. “Unto you, therefore, which believe He is precious” (1 Peter 2:7). The Holy Ghost also opened your eyes to see His glory. “We beheld His glory, the glory as that of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He opened your eyes to see the mysterious union that exists between Christ – and His people. “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5). “I in them and thou in me” (John 17:23). “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Some of the children got a sight of heaven upon earth. “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Revelation 21:22). Yes, the poor children get wonderful visions of glory even here below. There is a sweet flavour off this precious oil; so there was off the alabaster box of ointment. There is always a sweet smell off the broken heart. Since the Holy Ghost beautified you there is a sweet odour off your prayers and your fellowship. “All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces” (Psalm 45:8). The gracious soul knows the presence of the oil of the Holy Spirit in his soul; and he knows when the precious oil of the Spirit is absent. When absent, how wearisome and heartless are all your religious duties and exercises. The Holy Spirit comes; and under His influence, how easily and pleasantly the wheels of your soul move, and the soul enjoys living communion with God. When the wheels of a clock or watch become dry and rusty for want of oil, and you cannot depend on either for time, what is your remedy? To have them cleaned, and then to apply the oil. Child of grace, when you are under the power of spiritual death and spiritual darkness, as one of old crying, “He hath made me dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead” (Psalm 143:3); you, in such a case, need the oil of grace. Again, you must not forget that the good fight must be continued from day to day, and you cannot fight without nourishment. Yes, we have a daily warfare with the world, the devil and the flesh; and so we need the Holy Ghost. Dr. Love says, that “the world in darkness does not trouble much about anything concerning the soul, but that God’s children have no resting place in this world. Their position here is, to be up and doing. They cannot take matters so easily.”

Again, the godly Dugald Buchanan says as follows: –

‘T’s diamhain dut bhi’g earraidh saimh,  
 N’aon ni no ’n ait air bith fo’n ghrein;  
 Cha chlos do d’chorp an taobh so ’n uaigh,  
 No t’anam n’taobh so shuaimhneas Dé.”

Now, as a fighting soldier, see that you listen to these words, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day” (Ephesians 6:13). O, you now desire to say, “My love forever to Jesus who brought me from the fearful pit and saved my poor soul from eternal woe.” Under the influence of the oil of the Holy Ghost you will endeavour to “keep your heart with all diligence.” But the good Samaritan also poured wine into the wounds. What do we make of the wine? The blood of Christ. Why? Because it cleanses and strengthens the soul. The blood which cleanseth from all sin must be poured into the souls of God’s children. What wonderful effects come from “the blood.” “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). The blood of Christ is very precious to you now believer; to you it “speaketh better things” than the blood of Abel. Yes, you were strengthened by the blood. I would rather enjoy three minutes of the peace of God in my conscience through the blood, than should I get millions of worlds! For what would all that could be enjoyed on earth do for my needy soul? “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul” (Mark 8:36). No, my poor

believing hearer, you will not forget the anguish of soul you were in when the peace-speaking blood was revealed to you by the Holy Ghost. I tell you who have no interest in “the blood,” and no cry for mercy, that sin will yet tear and destroy you as the she-bears tore and destroyed the wicked children who mocked Elisha, the man of God. The blood of Christ is the only shelter for you. “Flee for your life.” Consider how very weak the man must have been by this time, “half dead.” He must have been very far gone indeed, his eyes closing and his strength quite gone. He was much in need of strength. We say that through the oil and the wine, the Spirit and the blood, that the eye of faith and the eye of hope were both opened. The pouring in was as the breathing of hope to the law-slain soul. The wine purifies and also strengthens. But is the wounded man left to look after himself now that he has been so far attended to? No, the Samaritan, we are told, “set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” I think I may state that faith is the beast that carried the wounded man. Not the faith, mark you, belonging to the man, but the Samaritan’s own beast. It is the faith of which God is the author that is implanted in the true believer’s soul by the Holy Spirit. Faith must be genuine. Beware of deceiving yourself with a false faith.

If you are going forward to death, judgment, and eternity in the strength of a false faith, which is not begotten by the Spirit of God in your soul, I compare you to sailors who venture out on a voyage on the stormy ocean in a ship that was condemned. Remember you are trusting to “the condemned vessel” a precious soul that may be lost for ever. Think of the solemnity of your position, facing eternity with no faith, or with a faith that is a delusion. Do not forget that every man’s work is to be tried by fire. There is a day coming when all of us must be tested and tried. In view of this awful day see to it, dear souls, that you are faithful to your own souls, and to generations yet to come. Support nothing that in any way is contrary to the Word of God, or you will suffer loss. How painful to think of God’s own children countenancing and supporting men and views that are not in accordance with His Word. Ah, well, they will yet suffer loss for such unfaithfulness, should it be at death. Better to suffer the loss of all our worldly substance than that we should lose spiritually here or hereafter.

The people of God go by faith from strength to strength. How tender and kind is our loving Christ to His dear children in this wilderness! If you have tasted that He is gracious, if you in any measure experience His love and mercy, remember that you must not hide your testimony. Do not seek to creep into a corner. You are indebted to Christ, and you must witness for Him. Stand up for His Word. Stand up for His glory. When His enemies are so fearless and so very bold, how is it that you are not out and out defending your Master in this dark and cloudy day? Out of your hiding places, and stand up manfully for Christ. Hear what the faithful soldier of old says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” and he was much persecuted for the gospel in his day.

The Samaritan “brought him to an inn.” Why did he bring him to an inn? He was not to be left long in the inn. You must not complain should you get hardship in this life, this world is not your home, believer. “I go,” said Jesus, “to prepare a place for you.” It is true of His children that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They do not expect much comfort or happiness in this vale of tears. Their desire is to get home and “be with Christ which is far better.” His people’s great desire is to “see Him as He is.” Their heart and their treasure is in heaven. “We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). The language of their hearts at times is: “I long so much to get home, I am so weary of this body of sin and death, and I am tired of this prolonged fight with the evil heart of unbelief. I would like so much to get home, I am faint and weak, I need rest.” Is this not the inward desire of your heart, my dear friends? Yes, but we must be of good cheer. The horse “faith” will carry you over mountains of trials and troubles, and will see you safe home to glory. Be of good courage, you are not left to fight the battle alone, for he hath said, “Lo, I

am with you alway, even to the end of the world.” “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31,32). They are “kept by the power of God.”

“And on the morrow when he departed he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” You may have sympathy from many in words, but the purse is closed against you. The good Samaritan provided for this poor man. Two pence were left for his use, one penny for the body and the other for the soul, or in other words, the stores of providence and the stores of grace. Christ has the key to both stores. “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it.” You must draw from the stores of grace if you are to witness for Him at His table on the morrow. See to it that you do not go in your own strength. There must be a daily coming and eating of the bread of life, and you are most welcome. “Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved” (Song 5:1).

Christ is coming again. He will soon come, and then you who have been giving the cup of cold water shall be rewarded. Yes, He is coming in glory. Set your house in order. “Ye know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.” “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them” (Revelation 20:11). We must all appear before Him when He comes to judge the world. Oh you who are yet unconverted, would that your cry were: What must I do to be saved? Can I obtain the blessings of the covenant? His own words are, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). May His children here to-day be enabled by His grace to say, “My beloved is mine and I am His.” [June 1896]

## A sermon.

By the Rev. ALEX. MACRAE, Kames, Tighnabruaich.

“Whose fan is in His hand, and he will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” – Matthew 3:12.

These solemn words were spoken by John the Baptist in reference to the functions that were to be discharged by Him whose forerunner John professed to be. He appears now to have entered upon the ministry to which he was divinely called. In him some of the predictions made under the Old Testament dispensation are actually fulfilled: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Malachi also speaks of his coming: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." A solemn message it was that John delivered. It was exactly the same as that which the Lord Jesus declared when He had entered upon His public ministry on earth: "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." John preached the absolute necessity of repentance with all the authority with which his divine message was invested. The result was that large congregations assembled to hear him, and many "were baptised of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." But among his hearers were some self-righteous characters who had such a favourable estimate of their own integrity as not to have any need of confessing their sins. These he very sharply rebukes, and delineates their character in a manner in which they did not expect to be described: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance." John is careful to inculcate the insufficiency of his baptism. In it, he acknowledged, there was no intrinsic efficacy to effect a change either of state or of nature. He thus turns the attention of his hearers to the absolute necessity of receiving a baptism from Christ, – whose prerogative it is to baptise "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." The doctrines that John is here careful to inculcate are those expressed in the passage: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." John, therefore, does not claim to have any right to hold the fan in his hand. He only has a right to bear the fan unto whom the Father "hath committed all judgment." His foundation standeth sure, having the seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are his." "With His fan He will thoroughly purge His floor;" and in the exercise of His divine rights and prerogatives "He will gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Three things present themselves in this passage for our consideration, viz.: –

I. The floor.

II. Christ's treatment of the floor: "He will thoroughly purge His floor."

III. His treatment of those who are on the floor: "He will gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

I. In this passage John speaks metaphorically. The Scriptures abound in metaphors; but invariably they convey a deep spiritual meaning. All the hearers of John would understand the literal signification of what he had here spoken; but few of them were able to understand the spiritual meaning these words conveyed. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Under the representation of a floor the visible church is set forth. Many of those who are members of the visible church are not members of the church invisible. "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of man, but of God." Thus the floor is represented as having wheat and chaff on it. It has been so from the beginning, and it shall be so to the end of time. From the beginning Christ had a floor. He placed it not among the fallen angels, but among the fallen race of Adam: "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." No sooner

did wheat appear on His floor than chaff also appeared. Abel, we are told, offered unto the Lord of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof; but Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto Him. To the offering of Abel the Lord had respect, because he offered it in the exercise of faith on the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” “Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.” Abel had respect to the doctrine of justification by faith through the infinite merits of the atoning blood of Christ; but Cain repudiated that doctrine, and blindly asserted the possibility of justification by works, as many professors of religion do nowadays. Let them, however, remember that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.” It is not by works that any member of the human race can be saved, but by grace: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

The Jewish Church was Christ’s floor under the Old Testament dispensation. Thus the Psalmist refers to it – “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.” On it the outward ordinances of Christ’s house were instituted. Moses had received the injunction, “See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” On the floor of the Jewish Church the ceremonial law was given, which remained in force till the death of Christ. Then it was totally and finally abrogated, for “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.” On this floor the Lord had some wheat, but there was much chaff. That is very evident from the fact that many thousands of the Israelites were destroyed in the wilderness. “With whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?” Many of them could not enter into rest because of unbelief: “He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” David was much concerned for this floor in his day. How many in our day are concerned about their own affairs; but how few are really and sincerely distressed for the state of Christ’s cause! “Do good,” said David, “in thy good pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem.” What gross darkness had fallen upon it in Elijah’s troublous days: “The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” The prophets of Baal were numerous. They were lost in carnal security. They heartily rejoiced in the success that crowned their efforts to advance the kingdom of darkness. Fittingly are they described by the Psalmist: “The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.” But although troops may overcome Gad, he shall overcome at the last. There was indeed much chaff on the floor; but comparatively little wheat. Consider how grieved in spirit Jeremiah was at the state of Christ’s cause: “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” Why should he be so affected? There was much chaff on the floor. There was much graceless profession of religion. The prophets were light and treacherous persons; the priests had done violence to the law. How sadly is their character depicted in the Scriptures “His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” No wonder then, though the soul of every child of God should be sorely grieved. The majority of the prophets were like the foxes in the desert. They prophesied out of their own heart, and spoke vanity. How unspeakably sad was the condition of the people who listened to them. “They have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.” It is very

probable that these false prophets would now assert, with all the power of argument at their command, that never before was the floor in a more flourishing condition. It is but natural for them to think that the floor cannot flourish but when they themselves are well represented on it. "The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of those who believe not." Poor Scotland! we fear that Satan is permitted to ride triumphantly on the floor of Christ in thee.

In the fulness of time Christ appeared personally on His floor. The people of God, who are here represented under the character "wheat," were looking for His advent. "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts." But did He find much wheat on His floor when He came? No. Simeon was a precious grain on it. He is described as "waiting for the consolation of Israel. . . . And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." We also read of Anna, a prophetess, "who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." There were a few others on it who are given under this representation; but the predominating party were those represented by the "chaff." On that account, the question has been put, "Who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiners' fire, and like fullers' soap." Was Christ kindly received when He appeared on His own floor? No. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Every graceless person cherishes the same thoughts towards Him now as those did who actually cried, "We will not have this man to reign over us." What a wonderful Person! Christ, the eternal Son, who is the same in substance, equal in power and in glory, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in the unity of the God-head. In Him is the mystery of godliness revealed. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh. To assume a sinless human nature and bring it into an indissoluble union with the divine nature was a mighty act of the eternal Person: "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us." To this greatest of all mysteries Nahum refers for the consolation of the Church "Behold upon the mountains the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" But Him the Church rejected. On His own floor was He apprehended, crucified, and ignominiously put to death. But "ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" so that "the stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." He was indeed delivered for the offences of His people; but He was raised up again for their justification. And now as He is about to ascend gloriously to the Father's right hand where there are pleasures for evermore, in whose presence is fulness of joy, what is the parting command He gives to His disciples? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Christ's floor, therefore, embraces both Jews and Gentiles. Under the representation of a floor the visible church is here set forth.

II. This floor needs to be purged: "He will thoroughly purge His floor." This work He has not entrusted to any other, He has committed to His ambassadors the word of reconciliation which they are exhorted to hold fast, "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." To thoroughly purge the floor is not in the power of a finite creature, Christ alone can thoroughly purge it. It is, however, the duty of every person to strenuously oppose whatsoever may tend to corrupt it. We are enjoined to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

1. The floor needs to be purged because there is much chaff on it. And what is that chaff? The chaff represents two classes: –

(1.) Those who are brought within the pale of the visible Church through the door of baptism; and yet have undergone no saving change. It will avail us nothing though we should have the outward privileges of the Church bestowed upon us if we be not regenerated: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” When the Church is in a declining condition, she attributes much efficacy to the outward administration of the sacraments. She glories much in outward pomp and splendour. So did the Jewish Church in Christ’s time and after it. So does the Church of Rome; and now it has become a marked feature of the Churches of the Reformation, at home and abroad, to glory much in externals. Not only do Episcopalians, but also many so-called Presbyterians believe in baptismal regeneration. Remember that “circumcision or uncircumcision availeth nothing; but a new creation.” You shall certainly be found among the chaff though you should be baptised in the name of the adorable Persons of the Trinity if you be not born again. How many to whom this sacrament is outwardly administered give evidence from the fruits they bear in their daily walk and conversation that they are still under the government of the “god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience!” But “to whom much is given, of them much shall be required;” and if you think lightly of these privileges you are aggravating your own guilt. Is it not said, “This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil?” It is indeed a precious privilege to be within the pale of the visible Church; but you shall be accounted as chaff if you remain ignorant of the saving operations of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

(2.) The chaff represents those who make a graceless profession of religion. There have been many such in every generation; and this generation has its own share of them. It is a fatal mistake those ministers commit who insist on all indiscriminately to partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. All have no right to partake of it; and we fear that many such are in the ministry, and hold other important offices in the visible Church. That may be a reason for the encouragement that is given by too many ministers to all indiscriminately to become church members. We read of no class of people against whom the Lord Jesus inveighs with greater severity than against graceless professors of religion. They were the enemies of the cross of Christ in every generation. The preaching of the cross was to the Jews a stumbling block; to the Greeks, it was foolishness. It is so till now. Who were they whom John addressed in the words, “O generation of vipers?” They were professors of religion; but destitute of grace. We can conceive of no class of people more detrimental to the cause of Christ on earth than such. Therefore, it is said that the harlots and the publicans themselves will enter into the kingdom of heaven before them. But harlots and publicans cannot enter without undergoing a radical and a saving change; neither can nominal professors, whether they be ordinary church members or office-bearers in congregations. How showy was the outward profession of the foolish virgins! But what was the value of it? It all vanished. “At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.” Then “they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage; and the door was shut.” All graceless professors of religion are but chaff. Through their instrumentality the prince of darkness can advance his cause with greater success than he can through the agency of those who live in open sin. Satan makes greater havoc when he appears as an “angel of light” than when he goes about as “a roaring lion.” Do not then rest satisfied with an outward profession of religion. Give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure. Although the process of being emptied from vessel to vessel is by no means a pleasant experience, it is unspeakably sad to have the lot and portion of Moab. “Moab,” it is said, “hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, therefore, his taste remained in

him, and his scent is not changed.” The Lord’s people are frequently afraid that they are nothing better; but the words of Christ to them are, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” The two classes that we have been describing seem to be the two parts referred to by Zechariah: “In all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die.” He speaks of a third part which shall be left therein, probably representing the wheat, or the Lord’s people; for “they shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.” The floor, therefore, needs to be purged. But Christ “will thoroughly purge His floor.”

2. Again, the floor needs to be purged because of the unscriptural practices of churches that profess to be churches of Christ. Think of the foul practices of the Church of Rome. She is represented in the Scriptures as having upon her forehead a name written: “Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.” She is described as becoming “the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” The Lord’s people are, therefore, exhorted to come out of her, that they be not partakers of her sins; and receive not of her plagues. Are churches that go under the name of Protestant Churches much better? Many of them are not. How corrupt is the floor in Episcopalian Churches! The Church of Rome is rapidly regaining her strength beyond her own borders, and few only have the eyes to behold it. Anglicanism is very closely allied to Romanism. But consider the Romanising tendencies that appear in the Presbyterianism of Scotland. This generation seems to connive at these tendencies; but following generations are likely to be laid prostrate under the heel of Popish dominion as a result of our unfaithfulness. The floor of Christ in Presbyterian communions is much polluted. That is clear

(1) from the practice of many of these churches. Have they any divine warrant or authority to introduce instrumental music into the public worship of the sanctuary? No; but the divine injunction is, “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.” Many devote all their energies to defile the floor which Christ will ultimately thoroughly purge; but the word of the Lord shall most certainly be fulfilled in them if they repent not: “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” Inconceivably dangerous it is then to introduce into the sanctuary a form of worship that Christ Himself has not prescribed; and we would fain hope that congregations who indulge in such an unwarrantable practice as this may speedily give it up for the good of Zion in our land. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me . . . . When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts.”

(2) It is also evident that the floor is much polluted by the too many unscriptural views of truth that are given out. The floor was wonderfully purged in Scotland through the instrumentality of the excellent Reformers whom God raised up; but now there is an imaginary enlightenment that looks with contempt upon the attainments of the Reformation. The Confession of Faith is repudiated in many quarters, and doctrines are authoritatively sanctioned that are subversive of the doctrines of the Word of God. They “wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.” To what an alarming extent is the floor now polluted in Scotland with Arminianism, Sacramentarianism, Voluntarism, Romanism, &c.! “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” On all these accounts the floor needs to be purged.

3. The Lord’s people, represented by the wheat on the floor, need themselves to be purged. They have all been washed “by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” But they need to be washed daily. “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash



me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Christ will thoroughly purge His people. By nature they were all chaff. They were "the children of wrath, even as others." But through the powerful and saving operations of the Holy Spirit in them in effectual calling they were made new creatures; for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." They acquiesced most heartily in God's way of salvation through the infinite merits of Christ's sacrifice. They realised Christ in His finished work to be an all, yea, an infinitely and everlastingly satisfying portion. "This is all my salvation, and all my desire." Those, therefore, whom He washes not have no part in Him. His people are justified freely by His grace. But they need to be sanctified. "Sanctify them through Thy truth." Christ is thus made to them of God both righteousness and sanctification. In respect of their justification and the acceptance of their persons by God on the ground of Christ's imputed righteousness, they are as perfect as they can possibly be; but they are not so, in respect of their sanctification. There are no degrees in their justification, as there are in their sanctification. The former is a completed act, taking place in the twinkling of an eye – it is an *act* of God's free grace. It is, therefore, a perfect blessedness. What profound and stupid ignorance has been exhibited on the floor of the General Assembly of the Church, which we can no longer regard as representing the Free Church, by the irreverent applause that has been elicited by the utterance of a statement calling in question the orthodoxy of the words in the psalm, "That man hath perfect blessedness, &c." It is not partly that the Lord justifies or reconciles any sinner to Himself; otherwise there could be no justification or reconciliation at all. But justification is a perfect blessedness, and that perfect blessedness all the Lord's people have on earth, as is evident from the words, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifieth." In this respect they are all "complete in Him," although they are not "thoroughly purged." But sanctification is a *work* – it is a process carried on; so that they shall not be thoroughly purged until this work in them is completed. This is the mysterious work that the Holy Spirit carries on in their souls throughout their whole life of faith on earth; and the singularity of this work is, that the more it advances, the greater is one's own consciousness of the depth of wickedness of one's heart, and the exceeding sinfulness and corruption of one's nature. He will, therefore, bring them "through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined." Christ shall present His people before the Father, "holy, unblameable, and unreprouvable." He is made sanctification to them, so that He shall thoroughly purge them by ultimately making them perfect in holiness. Then only shall a complete and an everlasting separation be effected between them and their corruption. Christ shall thus answer their prayer, "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity." If the floor is to be thoroughly purged, the Lord's people on the floor shall also themselves be thoroughly purged.

4. He will thoroughly purge His floor by actually separating the wheat from the chaff. "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked." A clean separation shall He effect between them; and for that purpose He has the fan in His hand. Let no person presume to have a right to exercise functions that are exclusively Christ's. In His hand only is the fan safe. Great as John was he entirely disclaims the right to fulfil functions that were never entrusted to him. Let us, therefore, be careful not to presumptuously arrogate to ourselves prerogatives that are not ours to exercise. How unspeakably precious that Christ has His fan in His hand! But what is that fan?

(1.) The fan of His word. How many try to wrest it out of His hands! How many attempt to rend it to pieces! But it shall rend terribly the consciences of many eternally; for the worm shall not die, neither shall the fire be quenched. Many think that they can improve on Christ's fan – some by detracting from it, others by adding to it. But His fan is perfect, – "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." How sadly deluded those are who endeavour to interpret it in such a way as to suit their own carnal tastes! The Scriptures, however, shall not be changed, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle

shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” Some Churches think that they can make any alterations they like on this fan. Can anything be more dishonouring to God than a deliberate denial on the part of any individual or Church, of the integrity and inerrancy of His word? To the law and the testimony we must come; and by them must our whole conduct be regulated. No individual or Church, or any power whatever, can take the fan out of Christ’s hand, “Strong is Thy hand, and high is Thy right hand.” But with the fan of His word He will thoroughly purge His floor. How do you stand related to the Word of God? Is your knowledge of it confined to the letter, or do you know it in its power? “The Word of God is living and powerful.” Many of those who profess to be followers of Christ know it not in its power; and, therefore, in the faithful proclamation of His word He has been carrying on sifting processes in order to sever the wheat from the chaff. We have a very remarkable instance of this when Christ preached to those whom He fed in the wilderness, the necessity of eating the flesh of the Son of man, and drinking His blood, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” They followed Him because of the loaves and fishes. How worldly and selfish they were in their aspirations! They could not, therefore, bear to hear the truth faithfully declared, “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?” and “from that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” But did His true disciples turn back? No. “Lord,” said Peter, “to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” What are the words of eternal life? “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you,” in regard to which His nominal followers said, “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?” Observe the difference between both. What a wonderful sifting had there taken place by the fan of Christ’s word! The chaff went away; but the wheat remained. That is exactly the case till now. Many will not listen to the faithful declarations of the Word of God, “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables.” This incident in the wilderness serves as a mirror in which we can clearly see the condition of the Churches in Scotland now. What do many say about the doctrines of the Confession of Faith? “This is a hard saying, who can hear it.” Some churches have relaxed these doctrines; and we can only compare them to those nominal disciples of Christ who “went back and walked no more with him.” Infinitely better it is to have the company of a few despised disciples who receive the words of Christ as the “words of eternal life,” than be associated with thousands who regard His doctrines as “an hard saying.” He will, therefore, purge His floor with the fan of His word.

(2.) He will also purge it with the fan of affliction. Christ has the government both of providence and of grace upon His shoulders. There is, therefore, no accident in His providential agency. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father.” David derived much comfort from the thought that He was the God both of providence and of grace. “My times are in Thy hand,” that is, the hand in which the fan is. How much was Jacob tried with this fan! “All these things are against me.” He thought that the wheels of providence were revolving in a manner that was detrimental to him. But these wheels Christ controls, so that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” With this fan He will purge His floor, and effect a separation between the wheat and the chaff. Consider how clearly this is exemplified in the case of Job and his wife. The Lord was pleased to visit them with sore afflictions. With what resplendent lustre does the work of God in Job shine when he utters the words, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.” But how sadly does his wife appear to be under the influence of the prince of darkness! “Curse God and die.” The one blessed, but the other cursed. He will purge His floor with the fan of affliction. If you cast a piece of silver into the fire it melts. If you cast a piece of clay into it, it hardens. So it is

with the righteous and the wicked. In the fire of affliction the Lord's people are moistened, but the wicked are hardened in it. "He will thoroughly purge His floor."

(3.) He will purge it with the fan of trials. With this fan the floor was purged in Gideon's day. His army of two and thirty thousand was reduced to three hundred. Men frequently make much of the chaff. It often appears weighty in their eyes; but it is even lighter than a feather, and before the winds of trial it must inevitably go. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence." In fanning operations, how rapidly does the chaff fly away when it is laid out before the wind! It is even so on the floor of Christ's Church. There is, therefore, need of grace to help in every time of need. It is possible – and it has often been the case – that some grains of wheat may be carried away a little before the wind. Although some of the Lord's people may fall, they shall not fall utterly. He shall heal all their backslidings. Satan desired to have Peter that he might sift him as wheat, – "But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." The Lord seems to be sifting the inhabitants of Scotland to-day. Choose you then whom ye will serve; and may many be enabled to say with Joshua, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!"

(4.) Christ will thoroughly purge His floor with the fan of the final judgment. God the Father puts this fan into His hand. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The floor shall not be thoroughly purged until then. Christ shall effect with this fan a complete and an everlasting separation between the wheat and the chaff. Then He shall have a perfectly pure Church, "and the inhabitants shall not say I am sick." These words shall, therefore, be fulfilled to the uttermost, "He will thoroughly purge His floor."

### III. His treatment of those who are on the floor.

(1.) He will gather His wheat into the garner. The wheat is represented as Christ's own possession, "*His* wheat." His people are the Father's gift to Him, "The Father who gave them Me is greater than all." They are His by purchase and by their own choice in effectual calling. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price." These He will gather into the garner. The garner represents the state of glory. He first gathers them into the kingdom of grace; but He shall also gather them into the kingdom of glory.

"They shall be brought with gladness great,  
And mirth on every side,  
Into the palace of the King,  
And there they shall abide."

They shall be in the full enjoyment of God throughout eternity. "Their sun shall no more go down. The Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended." "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." In the infinite sovereignty of the grace of God, they have all from eternity been linked on to that golden chain of unbroken continuity described by the apostle, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son . . . whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." They shall see Christ as He is and be made like unto Him, so that they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their own Father in infinite and everlasting blessedness.

(2.) "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." What indescribable horror must overwhelm the wicked when He in infinite righteousness and justice, shall adjudge them to the condemnation of eternal death! "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,

prepared for the devil and for his angels.” Fire is an emblem of the wrath of God. His wrath shall be revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men. “For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” The fire is unquenchable. Eternity shall not exhaust the wrath that shall be revealed. The dismal shrieks of the lost shall not stay the outflow of it. The wind of His wrath shall drive them into the bottomless pit of His fiery indignation. “The ungodly are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” They shall not be annihilated in the unquenchable fire of His infinitely righteous indignation. He who inflicts His avenging strokes, shall keep them in being for ever. Think of how inconceivably terrible must your eternity be if you be among the chaff that He shall “burn up with unquenchable fire!” Will you not be made wise for the salvation of your soul? Give up your sinful practices. Cease to indulge your carnal appetites. “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him.” Listen to the voice of Christ in the truth, “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die.” Hearken diligently unto Him; hear, that your soul may live. The righteous shall go into life eternal; but the wicked into everlasting punishment.

[July 1896]

## A Sermon

by the Rev. Neil Cameron, St. Jude’s, Glasgow.

“Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it” – Psalm 80:12,13.

This Psalm is one of the many prayers which the Holy Ghost breathed into the songs of Zion. No other part of the Holy Scriptures contains more of the experiences of the Lord’s people than the Psalms of David. They are full of the joys and sorrows of the true Church of God. This caused the people of the Most High to value them exceedingly ever since the Lord gave them to His Church? They valued them for several reasons: (1) because they could not find any words so suitable to express their inward experiences; (2) because the experiences contained in them were those of the “holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” and (3) because the person, mediation, suretyship, atonement, and offices of Christ were all clearly held forth in them. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing sinners to repentance, faith, and salvation, through Christ, makes up no small part of this book. The infinite hatred of God revealed against sin, and His infinite love to holiness and purity stand boldly forth in this book.

Since the days of Abel the Church has been poor and afflicted. This world has been from that time hating “the poor in spirit,” and treating them sometimes with derision, at other times with cruelty. Whenever the Church took sides with the world, the Lord hid His face from her, and immediately troubles followed. At such times the unconverted

flowed into her communion, and trampled upon her most precious jewels, and left nothing but ruins within her walls. The true church deplores this in many parts of Scripture, and very particularly in this Psalm. We find here the voice of the living in Zion raised to the ear of the Shepherd of Israel in their extremity; that He would incline His ear to their cry; that He would shine forth from off the mercy seat; and that He would stir up His strength to deliver them from their backsliding and breach of covenant, as well as from men who, like wild beasts, destroyed all that was dear to them. This leads us to consider the words of our text. In these words there are four things to be considered –

I. The hedges of the Church.

II. The question, Why hast thou broken down her hedges?

III. How may it be known when the hedges are broken down?

IV. How are the people of God exercised at such times, and under such circumstances?

I. The hedges of the Church of God. In the book of Job Satan complains that the Lord built an hedge about Job. “Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every, side?” This shows that the Lord’s hand in His providence protected Job and all his possessions so that Satan could not touch him. As soon as the Lord withdrew His protecting hand, wicked men, fire, and storms devoured Job’s substance and family in one day; clearly showing that Satan got access to the belongings of the “perfect and upright man.” The enemy is never content with having destroyed the substance of the people of God, he desires to lay violent hands upon their persons. Were God to allow it, this is the aim of Satan, and as he needs to work through men, seeing he is a spirit, he becomes a false spirit in the mouth of the prophets of Ahab, and thereby harasses the Church of God. Job had another hedge around his person which the Lord removed also, so that Satan was enabled to harass him in both body and mind; but the hedge which was around his life could not be taken away “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” The men who carried away Job’s herds, &c., and slew his servants might be wondering why they spared him so long, but the secret of the case was that God protected His servant; and though men could not see this protection, the adversary saw it. Satan is termed in Scripture the god of this world, and bears a most bitter hatred to those who do not worship him. There is a warfare between him and the God of Zion who delivers every soul in His kingdom out of the captivity of Satan, and closes them in His own hand.

Angels of light are a protecting hedge about the Church of God. Gehazi rose one morning, and saw the hosts of the king of Syria upon Mount Carmel, so that he was quite overcome with fear; but when the prophet Elisha prayed, his eyes were opened, and he saw “the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.”

The Church, in this Psalm, is compared to a vine brought out of Egypt, planted, room made for it, the heathen cast out, taking deep root, and filling the land. The hedge protected the vine. This similitude is used by our Lord to represent the Church under the New Testament. The vine is what needs protection, the hedge is what protects. What is it that needs protection in the Church of Christ? “The ministry of reconciliation – to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” The Word of God and the ministry of that Word are always attacked by all the powers of the kingdom of darkness. Therefore the true ministers of Christ, unto whom He has committed this trust, have been like hedges around the truth, protecting the poor sheep of Christ, and keeping outside the foxes and wolves. False prophets had the woe of God pronounced against them, because they did not fill the gaps in the hedges. “Thus saith the Lord God, Woe unto the foolish

prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing! O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.” At the siege of Saguntum in Spain, when the Carthaginians broke down the walls of the town, the men of Saguntum, seeing that everything was to be lost, made a wall of their own bodies to protect their wives, children, homes, and all that was dear to them, and died in the act of defence. The faithful witnesses of Christ, when the armies made gaps upon the walls of Zion, stood in the gaps, and died at stakes, in prisons, and upon the scaffold, protecting the truth of God, and the doctrines and principles contained therein. Why did men and women die in Scotland in defence of the crown rights of Christ? Because they were hedges round about the vine in this land, so that only by the blood of their testimony could they deliver their souls. They set us a noble example, inasmuch as they preferred to die, rather than be like the children of Ephraim, turning back in the day of battle. The enemies of Christ in every generation are endeavouring to set up their own ensigns as signs in the church, and who can find fault with us for keeping the Word, which He has commanded for thousands of generations, as we have received it from them who spilt their hearts’ blood bringing it to our hands. Better bear the reproaches of men than one frown from the lovely face of Christ on our deathbeds. I would not, for the favours of all the men of the world, venture to face the deathbeds of some men in this land. The old landmarks of the widow and the fatherless have been removed in Scotland, and may we not expect the curse if we connive at such sacrilege. Are we, “encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” going to allow men to lay weights and burdens upon the consciences of the poor of Christ, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? “To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.” Let us go round about Zion, mark well her bulwarks, count her towers and palaces, that we may tell it to the generations following.

II. Why hast Thou broken down her hedges? We have endeavoured, however feebly, to point out the hedges of the Church. Let us now consider some of the reasons why the hedges are broken down. When the farmer takes the crop from off the fields, and secures it in his barn, he allows the cattle full liberty through all his parks. Gates are thrown open, and you meet with the same beasts outside and inside the hedges. During the winter months the hedges are broken down, and unless the farmer decides to sow seed in his fields he never thinks of making up the fences. The Church has opened her gates to ungodly men; and the same men are met with in the Church, and the vanities of this world. Her ministers, elders, and members are to-day in the pulpit and in the pew, and to-morrow in the theatre or the ballroom. Inside the Church are Sabbath breakers, atheists, scoffers, such as glory in denying the inspiration of the Bible, the Bible history of creation, the fall of man, the atonement of Christ, the necessity of the regenerating work of the Holy Ghost, the sovereignty of the love of God to sinners, and the need of the Word of God, or the means of grace for the conversion of sinners. This black list only touches the outskirts of our departures from the truth as it is in Jesus. She lavishes all her honours upon the man who outstrips his fellows in abandoning her former mode of worship. Hymns, organs, and anti-Christian forms are sung, played, and practised within her gates. She has been pleaded with for over thirty years, to turn to her first love, but she refused to listen. She, at last, formed a creed for herself to bind all her departures upon all within her communion. The Lord cannot countenance deceit and lies. These are the things He abhors. Therefore He took away the hedges. He brought home to their everlasting rest, the few who were clean-handed, and who sought the praise that comes from God alone. Many are not even yet believing that their strength has departed, and that they are blindfolded, grinding corn for the Philistines of this land. The first hedge, which is the Lord’s own presence and

protection, has been removed; for He says “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.” What is the value of any human protection when He departs. She may glory in human learning, in much of this world’s riches, and in receiving honours and approbation from the profane people of the land; but her protection and usefulness are gone; for the Lord says, “Woe to them when I depart from them!” When she had her eye single for the glory of Christ, she prospered, and was a light in the land; but when she set up her own glory as her highest aim, her sun went down at noon.

Allow me to notice briefly a suggestion raised above, “that the farmer never thinks of repairing his fences until he has made up his mind to sow seed in the field.” Has the Lord began to build the hedge anew in this land? It may be a day of small things; but don’t you despise it. Settle for ever in your mind that Christ is able to build His own Church; and that He is more than a match for all the builders that refuse the corner-stone. It is true of the Lord’s people that “their strength is God alone.” Are the old foundations of truth brought to the light in our midst once more? It cannot be gainsaid; and you rejoice in it with all your soul. Then let me suggest that Christ is not willing to leave this land, nor to deliver the soul of His turtle unto the company of the wicked. O may this land be called “Thy land, O Immanuel.” The kingdom is His by right according to the eternal decree of the Father, and may He arise to plead His own cause. The severest chastisement is better for our beloved land than that Christ Jesus should remove His candlestick from our midst. Again, He has not set up this hedge in our midst but for the purpose of sowing seed in the ground. We think that this should be a cause of joy and thankfulness that there are indications that God intends to build the cities of Judah, and save Zion.

III. How may it be known when the hedges are broken down? Three things are noticed in the context to guide us in our inquiry.

(1) “All they which pass by the way do pluck her.” Those who, in former times, used to pass on their way to eternity without interfering with her privileges are now busily plucking her leaves. The leaves of outward profession which men had, in the days of Zion’s prosperity, are plucked off, and men live scandalous lives who enjoy her highest privileges. Our godly forefathers would not have put among the dogs of their flocks the most of her professors. Discipline is clean gone, because there are no hedges to keep clear the line of demarcation between the Church and the world. The leaves of the Bible are being plucked off, so that her members declare that there are errors and immoralities contained in that sacred book. Doubts are cast upon the authenticity of the most of the books of the Bible, and that not by atheists outside, but inside, the Church. One plucks away the leaves of the books of Moses, and another lays his filthy hands upon the book of Job and calls it a fable, while a host of others cast out the book of Psalms, and introduce hymns of human composition into its place. The Songs of Solomon are secular songs in their opinion, and therefore no part of the Word of God. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel share the same fate at their profane hands. The New Testament does not get off a whit better. Matthew, Mark, and Luke they say, reveal many discrepancies, and are only imperfect records, from the memories of the writers, of the sayings and doings of Christ. The Gospel of John is entirely discredited. But let this suffice, though much more could be said. Does the above not clearly prove that the hedges are broken down? If any one declares that he doubts some part or another of the Word of God he is elevated to the highest position in the Church, so that he may have a better advantage to pluck as many leaves from off Christ’s vine as he may choose. Christ may say to the churches of this land, “These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

(2) The second sign contained in our context is: “The boar out of the wood doth waste it.” We are not strangers to the habits of this unclean beast. He sets his snout to the

roots, and razes the vine from its very foundations. Are there not many at this work in our day? The very foundations must be removed. The Scriptural connection between the Church and the State shall be taken away if the Lord permits the boars of this land to see their desire upon Zion. Nations, as nations, are bound to confess Christ, His truth, and His Church, "For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve Thee shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. "They have raised a loud cry for religious equality, so that idolatry might be set up, and true godliness banished for ever from our coasts. Do they imagine that there is to be concord between Christ, and belial, and between light and darkness? Surely, in the words of the godly Samuel Rutherford, the bottom has fallen out of the reason and consciences of many in this land. Christ will have all or nothing. But we are like the Gadarenes, we prefer our swine rather than Christ. Therefore we are beseeching Him to leave our coasts. If the doctrine of establishment is in the Word of God, though only one man stood for it in Scotland, he alone would be right, and the great multitude wrong. The strength of the Church is not in the number of her followers, but in Christ her living Head. "O that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him; but their time should have endured for ever."

The foundations of the Church itself, as a jurisdiction independent of any connection with states or nations are being uprooted also. "She is built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone." The Word of God through the apostles and prophets, and Christ the elect, tried and precious stone laid in Zion for a foundation are, combined, the foundation of the Church. Whenever a church or an individual takes any other foundation, that church or that individual is no longer a part of the Church of Christ. Are churches in this land built upon the doctrines and principles of the Old and New Testaments? No. They have drawn up creeds for themselves which have no foundation in the truth, and therefore such creeds are mere spider-webs and tissues of falsehoods. Arminianism, Pelagianism, and Popish doctrines and tenets are decreed as foundations, and the true foundations have been uprooted. The Church is the pillar and ground of truth, and when the Church allows lies to enter into the ground, and sets them up upon the pillar where the banner of truth should be unfurled, Calvin says, "It is as if a knife were thrust into the entrails of a man – he must die." What has the Declaratory Act done in the Free Church of Scotland? It has set up lies where the truth ought to be held forth before sinners, and therefore that church has left the foundation. All this came to pass as a result of the work done by the boars of this land.

(3) The third mark that the hedges are broken down is – "And the wild beast of the field doth devour it." I understand by the wild beast, unconverted man. "Ephraim is like the wild asses' colt." Who would trust his vine to wild beasts? It would be as reasonable to leave a vineyard open to wild beasts, as to leave this vine the Lord brought out of Egypt in the hands of carnally-minded men. This vine covered the hills and valleys, and stretched forth her branches to the sea. Was there not a time when this was true of the Church in our beloved land? Why has it been devastated, and left to the mercy of wild beasts? Because we have had the day of our merciful visitation; but our love to the Egyptians, men great in flesh, caused Christ to withdraw and to leave us in darkness. "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone." When the gospel came to this land, it found us gloating in superstition, heathen sports, and lawlessness. Do you not perceive that we are going back again to the same works of darkness? Don't you see men trusting in an arm of flesh, and not in the arm of Jehovah, God of Israel? Is that not the height of superstition? Don't you see the heathen sports of which you have been reading in the history of this land, and which were extinguished by the light of the gospel, revived, and members of the Church taking a



leading part in them? Does not this prove that the sun of the gospel is going down upon this infatuated people? Do you not see the members of the Church foremost in Sabbath desecration, in relishing everything carnal, and in abhorring and loathing everything spiritual? Does that not prove that the wild beasts of the field have come forth from their dens; and that the men of God have gone home, from the fields of time, to enjoy their everlasting rest with Christ under the eternal light of His countenance? Crying peace, peace, at such times will not keep our garments clean of their blood; therefore we offer these humble warnings. Let us, therefore, care nothing for scoffing; but let us “walk circumspectly, redeeming thine time because the days are evil.” “Let us not be ashamed of Christ nor of His word in this sinful and adulterous generation;” but let us, in dependence upon His grace, “hold fast the form of sound words.” The Lord have mercy upon His own Church, pour the Spirit of promise upon her, and turn her captivity as streams of waters in the south.

IV. How are the people of God exercised at such times, and under such circumstances? The psalmist, in Psalm 102, declares that he ate ashes for bread, because the Lord was hiding His face from his soul. The Spirit of adoption rules in the children of God in this world, and He unites them in their desires and affections to Christ, to His cause, and people. When the Church is brought low, the true child of grace is fed with tears of sorrow. When the bondage of Zion is brought back the mouth of the gracious is filled with laughter. Under iniquitous laws in this land families were evicted, and had to go to foreign lands to seek another home. Did not the children share the grief of their parents? When Christ cannot get where to lay His head in our midst, His children fast and mourn in those days. This feebly represents the feelings of every true child of God, when Christ and His bride – the Church – their mother – are cruelly dealt with; the foundations of their house razed to the ground, and no room left for them, in some places, but the open fields or the sea shore. At such times bread loses its taste, and becomes like ashes to the poor and needy in Zion. When the harps are hung upon the willow trees, and scoffers demanding mirth, and the singing of the songs of Zion in idolatrous Babylon, grace says, How can we sing the Lord’s song? Millions may bend their knees to every kind of music, and to idols of man’s invention; but the children of the living God prefer the hottest furnace the earth can invent rather than deny Him who loved them, and redeemed them with His own blood. “Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.” As water quenches the thirst of the body when it is dry; so tears relieve the burning heat of grief in the soul. This was why Jeremiah prayed, “O that my head were fountains of water that mine eyes might run day and night for the slain daughters of my people!” Tears would alleviate the burning agony of his soul for Zion, the joy of all the earth, brought to ruin by the wickedness of false prophets, and priests doing violence to the law. How few in number they are who shed tears for the state of the cause of Christ in Scotland! Woe unto us for the hardness of our hearts, and the dryness of our cheeks when Christ is banished from the land, and immortal souls are perishing eternally with a lie in their right hand! False teachers will be of all men the most miserable at the day of judgment. Christ will refuse them; and those who were deceived by them will curse them for ever and ever “in that place where the fire is not quenched, and the worm dieth not.” The Church of Christ in Scotland appeared “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” Why has she become the laughing-stock of fools? “Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High.” My dear fellow sinners let us cleave unto the cause of truth; and let us not entertain any doubts regarding the path of duty, seeing we are thoroughly convinced in our consciences that we are standing in defence of eternal truth, and against all kinds of innovations and inventions of ungodly men. “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee in the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the face of the

earth.” “If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them . . . I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land . . . and five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight.”

The last thing to be considered is: “Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours, and our enemies laugh among themselves.” Do we desire strife? We appeal to the Searcher of Hearts that, had they adhered to the creed and constitution of the Reformed Church of Scotland, unity upon that basis would gladden our hearts, but peace and unity at the great expense of loosing truth and a clean conscience are much worse than any divisions. The man that cannot see any difference between truth and error has his conscience seared with a red hot iron. Christ says, “I came not to send peace upon the earth, but a sword.” Why a sword? Because since the fall there has been no peace between the world and the Church. The world, like Cain, think they can worship God according to their own notion; and theories; the Church, like Abel, endeavour to worship Him according to His revealed will. The strife rages in the bosom of the world, and often breaks forth into open persecution. Dear friends, let it be true of us that we shall be for peace when they are for war. I don’t mean peace with the actions of those who rob Christ of His glory, and His Church of her beautiful garments. Martin Luther wrote Erasmus that it were better that heaven and earth should be overturned than that one iota of truth should be lost. Samuel Rutherford said that the enemies of Christ were casting lots about what was of more value than Christ’s coat, and again, that the hand which would not be raised to keep the crown upon Christ’s head would be broken from the shoulder-blade. It is marvellous to us that some who bravely fought against innovations in the past, when these spurious doctrines and principles were sanctioned as laws in the Church turned the point of their swords against our throats. We cannot believe that they had the glory of Christ and the salvation of perishing sinners in view, but glory from their fellow-creatures. Popularity and carnal ease deceived them, and like Issachar, they “couched down between two burdens; and they saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed their shoulders to bear, and became servants to tribute.” It is by hard striving that the cause of Christ has been hitherto maintained in the world. He fought many a battle for His poor Church, and surely we may take courage, and count the accusations of men of little moment, when we know that Christ will settle the contention when He shall appear “in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Word of God is worth contending for, for let men take from you all you possess, but if you keep the word of his testimony He may bless it to your eternal salvation; but lose the truth, and though you should gain the whole world, you will lose your soul. The Spirit tells us in this Psalm that the enemies were laughing at the calamities of the poor Church. Never mind laughing which will be like the crackling of branches under a pot. Keep your thoughts fixed upon eternal laughing in the exceeding joys at the right hand of Christ. Don’t be ashamed of Him. Don’t allow your countenance to blush before His enemies. Who will be ashamed of Christ or His Church at the last day?’ There shall be no laughing or mocking Him then. Christ and His bride are going through the land of Moab now, and you need not expect liberty to walk upon the king’s highway except by the strength of His arm. But “the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy upon their head; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Arise, O Lord, and plead the cause that is Thine own!

[August 1896]

## A Sermon

By Rev. JOHN R. MACKAY, M.A., Gairloch, Ross-shire.

“Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice” – Psalm 50:5.

The Psalm, of which our text forms a part, is altogether a very solemn one. In it is revealed much of the glory of the Eternal as Judge of all. The Psalm may be conveniently divided into three sections. In verses 1-4, the Mighty God, even the Lord, summons all nations before Him that He may judge them. In verses 5-15, Jehovah speaks of, and to, His saints. In verses 16-22, Jehovah addresses and admonishes the wicked.

The Psalm must not be interpreted as if the judgment therein spoken of were confined to the great day. God is presently judging all nations; and those nations to whom the Scriptures have been sent may, even now, read in the light of God's word what is His judgment concerning them. The Scriptures of truth reveal to us the standard by which all shall be judged at last.

The Psalm must thus be understood in a comprehensive sense as bringing before us eternal principles by which, in time, as well as at the judgment seat of the great day, those of our race who are acceptable unto God may be distinguished from those who are unacceptable. The time is at hand when he that is unjust will be unjust still, and he which is filthy will be filthy still, he that is righteous will be righteous still, and he that is holy will be holy still.

In the words of our text, Jehovah commands that His saints should be gathered together unto Him; and at the same time He indicates who they are, “Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”

In proceeding to meditate for some time upon this portion of the Word of God we shall, in dependence upon divine aid, consider:—

- I. The sacrifice spoken of.
- II. The covenant made by means thereof.
- III. The saintship here referred to, and

#### IV. The ends for which God's saints are to be gathered.

##### I. The sacrifice.

Under the ceremonial law, sacrifices, well nigh numberless, were offered up. Those sacrifices of the old economy, we learn from the Scriptures of the New Testament, were, at best, but shadows of the one great sacrifice, in the offering up of which the new economy was introduced, that sacrifice whereby Christ Jesus hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. How then shall we interpret the reference in the instance before us? We cannot think of the reference here as being only to the blood of bulls and of goats, so far, at least, as these were only a means of sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh. Here, the ultimate reference is to that sacrifice in which Christ Jesus, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God. Our reason for coming to that conclusion is this: The sacrifices of the Aaronic priesthood so far from being of eternal efficacy, were, on account of their weakness and unprofitableness, abolished and taken away in and through the death of the Lord Jesus. The sacrifice spoken of in this Psalm is a sacrifice which is of eternal efficacy. In time, at a judgment seat, and through eternity those who have entered into covenant with Jehovah in virtue of this sacrifice are acceptable unto Him. Of no other sacrifice is that true than of that which Christ Jesus offered up to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us unto God. Moreover, even in this very Psalm, wherein mention is made of a sacrifice upon which an everlasting covenant is based, contempt is poured upon such as would put their confidence in the blood of bulls and of goats. "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" The conclusion forces itself upon us that the Spirit of inspiration who taught the Psalmist, in the language of the 40th Psalm, to predict the taking away of the sacrifices and offerings of the Aaronic priesthood through the establishing of the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, here also teaches the author of the 50th Psalm not only "to find fault" with the sacrifices which consisted only in the blood of bulls and of goats, but to bring into great prominence, in the words of our text, that there was a sacrifice present to the mind of God, which was presupposed in those that were only shadows, and that this sacrifice is a rock which shall abide when heaven and earth shall have passed away. For what end were sacrifices generally, and this sacrifice in particular, offered up? The great end for which a sacrifice was offered was to take away sin. As John Bunyan says: –

Sin is the living worm, the lasting fire;  
Hell soon would lose its heat, could sin expire,  
Better sinless in hell, than to be where  
Heaven is, and to be found a sinner there.

We are very much more apt to think with awe and terror of the wages of sin, than sin itself. But these two things should not be disconnected. Sin is that loathesome thing which God hates, and all the misery of time and of eternity, among men and among fallen angels, must be traced up to this one great cause and fountainhead of woe. By setting fully before us the misery that results from sin, the Scriptures reveal to us how hateful, how loathesome, transgression of His law is in the sight of Jehovah. Angels that sinned God spared not, but cast them into hell, and they are reserved in chains of darkness against the great day. For iniquities, the old world was deluged with a flood. Sodom and Gomorrah, for like reason, suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. The way of transgressors is hard, and, therefore, is the life of millions, even in this world, so full of anguish and sorrow. "The fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

These are the colours in which the Spirit of God has portrayed the ruin which sin works in time and throughout eternity, and from the evil effects of sin, from the wages of sin, we are taught in some measure to realise what sin is, in the estimation of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Moreover, sin is loathesome and hateful in itself, and that even if there were no hell as its wages. How intolerable a burden it is, not only in the eyes of God, but also in the eyes of those who are taught by Him, may be learned from such agonising cries as these, "Cast me not out of Thy sight," "purge me with hyssop that I may be whiter than snow," "create a clean heart in me, and renew a right spirit within me."

Well, then, we are all sinners. "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." We may rest assured, upon the testimony of the Word of God, that if we live and die in our sins, if our sins be not put away, there can be no escape from the intolerable wages of transgressing God's law.

But now God Himself is raised up out of His holy habitation in order that sin may be put away. God's way of putting away sin is by sacrifice. By sacrifice He makes an end of sin, finishes transgressions, makes reconciliation for iniquities, and brings in an everlasting righteousness. And "now once in the end of the world hath Christ Jesus appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of Himself." This is that "fountain which has been opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness;" and this is that fountain head of consolations and blessings to which perishing sinners of our race are invited, when it is said, "The Spirit and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will let him take the water of life freely."

Have sin and its consequences become a burden too heavy for you to endure? In this sacrifice of the Lord Jesus is the only remedy under the sun for your relief; and if you believingly accept of it, and of the testimony of God concerning it, you will find that not only will yours be the blessing of pardon for all the transgressions you have done, but that through the powerful influences of the knowledge of Christ crucified those hateful chains of sin, and death and hell, wherewith you are bound will be broken asunder. Truly, when one considers how terrible is the thought of living, and dying in sin, and how fearful the consequences of going on in such a course, one might expect that the mere mention of such a blessing as "sin put away," would arrest the attention of the most careless and indifferent; and that the millions of our race unto whom this word of God hath come, would regard the possession of this blessing as the one thing needful. And why is there such indifference? Because so many imagine that it is an easy matter to put sin away. Was it then in vain, and for no purpose that Christ died? For He died, in order to put sin away.

II. But to proceed, let us now in the second place, consider the intent and nature of the covenant here spoken of, and which is said to have been made by virtue of this sacrifice. From the words, "those that have made a covenant with Me," we at once conclude that this is a covenant which is entered into by certain of the children of men with Jehovah. It is a covenant not only approved of by Jehovah, but into which he heartily enters.

Man, in his state of innocency, was in covenant with God. But when man sinned he was driven far away from God, and to point out the impossibility of access on any ground that was then revealed, cherubims and a flaming sword were placed at the east of the Garden of Eden which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. "For the Lord God said, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever."

Now, ere man can again enter into covenant with Jehovah, it is evident that there must on his part be a return; for to enter into covenant implies nearness of relation. But what if the first cause and reason of separation still exist, is there any changeableness with God? It

were impious in the highest degree to suppose that there is. And we may safely conclude, yea, rather we are bound to conclude, that if the first cause and reason of separation, which is sin, be not taken away, reconciliation is impossible, a new covenant also is impossible. Now this really is the gospel of the grace of God, that God himself hath found out a means by which sin, death-deserving, death-occasioning sin might be put away, and by which His banished might return. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." The only cause for which God drove away mankind was sin, and only by this sacrifice of the Lord Jesus can sin, in any instance, be put away. Of whom, other than Immanuel, dare we say that He hath by himself purged our sin? How great then is the folly and ignorance of those who, notwithstanding that as a race we were, on account of sin, driven away from God, and that over and above this their own conscience cannot but accuse them of many actual transgressions, yet imagine that they may draw near to Jehovah as if nothing had taken place to provoke His just displeasure. What dishonour to the law of God is this! What contempt of the wisdom of God, as manifested in the cross of Christ, is this! The acceptable people then have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. What all is implied, on their part, in so doing? There is, first of all, an acknowledgment of sins, an acknowledgment that they are transgressors, that they have broken the law of God. Men in their natural state may imagine that they can despise the claims of the law of God and yet live in peace with God. They are only dreaming, and God, when they shall awake in judgment, shall mock at their dream; for in the outpouring of a wrath, in comparison with the weight of which the mountains and rocks were easy to bear up under, shall He plead with those who unrepentingly trampled upon His statutes. But here there is an acknowledgment of transgression in drawing near to make a covenant only by sacrifice, an acknowledgment that without an atonement for transgressions there is no access unto Jehovah. They have in one word realised the dishonour which sin puts upon God. But these covenanters honour not only God's law; they honour His gospel also. God is glorified when His law is honoured; He is also glorified when His gospel is honoured. And by whom is His gospel honoured? Is it by those who refuse to seek acceptance in the Beloved, in whom the Church have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins? Not at all. His gospel is most of all honoured by those who, having the deepest sense of the ruin sin hath wrought in them, accept and rest most assuredly upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that those purposes for which the Son of God was manifested may, through Him, be fulfilled in themselves. Now, He was revealed to put away sin; to remove every cause of separation between man and God; and they who enter into covenant with God by this sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, have set to their seal that God himself hath found out a means by which sin may be put away. There is on their part a hearty appreciation and reception of the atonement which Christ made. Now, in the very knowledge of Christ crucified, I mean, in the saving knowledge of "the just who suffered for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God,*" which the Holy Spirit imparts, there is a drawing near unto God, and a consequent entering into covenant with Him.

But this covenant is not one-sided. It is not only that believers, in this transaction, enter into covenant with God, become His, as by marriage the bride becomes the bridegroom's; but God also enters into covenant with believers; He too becomes their God. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every

man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:8-12). Has God then, albeit we use great boldness in thus speaking of the Eternal, in entering on His part into this covenant, respect to the sacrifice of which we have been speaking. Yea, verily. "He sent forth His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and *for sin*, and condemned sin in the flesh, *in order that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us* who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." In the death of Christ there was not only the removal of legal barriers which stood between men and God; there was also the implementing on Christ's part of the conditions of an eternal covenant into which He had entered with the Father, and in which it had been promised Him, that when He implemented the conditions of that covenant He should surely see His seed; that all His children should be taught of the Father; that their graves would be opened; that they should be taken out of their graves; and an heart given them to know Him that He is Jehovah. Thus we see that the new covenant which Jehovah makes with His people must be regarded by us as coming under the larger category of the covenant of grace. It was included in the eternal covenant of grace, which was between the Father and the Son, as one of its promises. It is a fruit of Christ's death. Christ by His death implemented the conditions of the covenant of grace, therefore does God and the Father come forth by His word and Spirit in search of the children of the promise, while they as yet are dead in trespasses and sins. This is that grace spoken of by the Apostle, when he says that "God who is rich in mercy for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ." Not only is it agreeable to the honour of God and the Father that all those who shall draw near unto Him by Jesus Christ shall be accepted of Him, but in the covenant of grace, it has pleased Him, even Him who cannot lie, to promise, and swear by an oath that on account of Christ's obedience unto death, a company, whom no man can number, of every people and kindred and nation and tongue shall infallibly be a living covenant people unto Him, the living and covenant keeping God. Thus those who enter into covenant with Jehovah, seek Him, because He first sought them. For Christ's righteousness' sake, God opens their graves and brings them out of their graves, and gives them an heart to know Him that he is Jehovah. It is in this knowledge they are justified (Isaiah 53:11); in this knowledge they have life eternal (John 17:3); it is the excellency of this knowledge that hath led them to count everything besides as loss and dung. In this very knowledge Jehovah made to them a revelation of his covenant; and at the very time that they were captivated with the power and with the wisdom of God, revealed in this covenant, Jehovah was promising with an oath to be their God to all eternity, and they were made eternally willing to enter into this covenant, and to be His people. Henceforth this is what they would be at –

"One thing I of the Lord desired,  
And will seek to obtain,  
That all days of my life I may  
Within God's house remain.  
That I the beauty of the Lord  
Behold may and admire,  
And that I in His holy place  
May reverently enquire."

III. Let us now in the third place-briefly consider the saintship here referred to, "Gather My saints." Why are they spoken of as saints? It is because they are sanctified.

What are we to understand by their being sanctified? There is a sanctifying which is the work of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of God's people "whereby they are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness." But there is a sanctifying which is, according to the Scriptures, distinguishable from this, a sanctifying which is essentially the work of our High Priest. Even under the Aaronic priesthood there was through the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, a sanctifying which was to the purifying of the flesh. But Christ, in doing the will of the Father is said to have sanctified His Church in a much higher sense than that. By this blood of Christ it is said our conscience is purged from dead works, that we may serve the living God. It is from this point of view that saints, or the sanctified, are to be understood by us in the present instance. The saints are such, because they have made a covenant with God by *sacrifice*. Now let us observe what it is that Christ wrought in sanctifying His Church. Under the ceremonial law, every leper, and every one that had an issue, and whosoever was defiled by the dead was commanded to be placed outside the camp of Israel (Numbers 5:1-4). But the ceremonial law itself provided for the purging of these, the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified them in this sense that, being by these means cleansed from ceremonial defilement, they had liberty of access into the camp. While they were outside the camp they had none of the privileges which those had who were in covenant with God, according to the covenant that He made with them in the day in which He brought them up out of the land of Egypt. But now through this sanctification, which was possible to the Aaronic priesthood, they entered into the rights and privileges of the covenant people. Well, just as the blood of bulls and of goats was a shadow of the blood of Christ, as the covenant which He made with them in the day in which He brought them up out of the land of Egypt was a shadow of the new covenant, so the sanctification which was through the Aaronic priesthood was a shadow of the sanctification which is through the priesthood of the Son of God. They who are sanctified enter into the rights and privileges of the covenant people, a people with whom He hath made an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David. What are the privileges of this new covenant? In one word this, to draw near unto God, or in other words, to have the light of God's countenance. This is that one thing the Psalmist, as we have been observing, sought after. "Many say, who will show us any good? Lord lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."

Nor let any say that in thus emphasising the work of Christ in sanctifying His people we are undermining the doctrine of sanctification of which we have a definition in our Shorter Catechism, and to which we have already referred; on the contrary, we are establishing it. The sanctification which is the work of God's grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness, has its roots in this sanctification which is essentially a priestly function. What is the effect of Christ's death? By it the unjust are brought nigh unto God. They that were far off are said to have been brought nigh through the blood of Christ. Christ known savingly is known as one who by His sufferings brought us near unto God. This is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God which shines in the hearts of believers. There justice and mercy meet, righteousness and peace kiss mutually. Now be it observed that there is a power in God's countenance which enables the most enslaved sinner to hate every sin, whereas such as have not in some measure known the light of His countenance cannot hate all sin. They may apparently hate many sins, but they will still have some darling idol which will in the end be their everlasting destruction. But the Lord's people, when they behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, are thereby changed into the same image from glory to glory, even



as by the Spirit of the Lord. Thus does the Holy Spirit carry on the work of sanctification in this second sense in the hearts of His people. "He shall glorify Me, because He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." It is by taking of Christ; it is by showing unto believers what blessings Christ has by His death secured for those that believe; it is especially by leading them to understand that when the just suffered for the unjust, this blessing was procured for the unjust, even nearness unto God. It is by so doing, we say, that the Holy Ghost, according to the Scriptures, enables believers to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness. It is important that this should be insisted upon. In a proper understanding of it is the liberty of the children of God realised.

If we hope to bring forth much fruit, let us seek much of God's countenance. Upon what ground do believers upon earth have access unto God? Is it because of the progress they have themselves made in holiness? By no means. It is by Christ we have access unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is in virtue of the priesthood of Christ, who is said to have sanctified the people with His own blood, that we draw near unto God. And to imagine that this approach could be on the ground of our personal holiness, were as though we should place the fruit which the branches bear in place of the vine which bears the branches. Yea, throughout all eternity, when believers shall be perfectly holy, it is not because they are now spotlessly holy that they have that ineffable nearness of communion with God and the Father, which is theirs. "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. *Therefore* are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

IV. Let us, in conclusion, draw your attention to the purposes for which the command is given, "Gather My saints together unto Me." This command is given to others, and only *concerning* His saints. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, for He can make every creature in heaven and on earth subserve the interests of His own Church. This gathering is for various purposes. We shall refer only to two.

(1) It is for purposes of instruction. The Lord's covenant people albeit that they have a saving knowledge of God and of His Christ, yet stand much in need of being still taught by Himself. Much of this divine instruction is imparted in the verses that immediately follow our text, verses in which the covenant people are taught as to what is the nature of true piety, and warned against falling into the error of supposing that after having begun in the spirit they should be perfected through the flesh. "Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. And call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

The life of the true people of God is very largely made up of these three things. They call unto God out of their distresses. God appears to deliver them. They praise Him as the God of their salvation.

(2) Another reason for this gathering is with a view to their final separation from the wicked. When heaven and earth shall pass away, then the children of His servants shall endure, and their seed shall be established before Him. All others shall be driven far from Him in that day, but His saints, because they have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice, shall be gathered unto Him. It is in order that they be for ever with Him. Now shall the days of their mourning for ever be at an

end. Now shall those words find their fullest accomplishment: “He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”

[September 1896]

## A Sermon

by the Rev. Allan Mackenzie, Inverness.

“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.

The Epistle to the Hebrews clearly teaches that the priesthood of Christ is based upon His eternal Sonship. The heir of all things is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His person. Hence, in connection with His incarnation, the angels are commanded to worship Him. The Father addresses Him both as God and Lord: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” “And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands.”

A priesthood not founded on this eternal Rock would be absolutely useless. There is no meaning in the Old Testament priesthood, except in its symbolical relation to this. It was necessary, however, that the eternal Son should also become the Son of Man. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” “It behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.” “In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

He is thus able to measure out “compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.” “Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.” But it was necessary that He should have a divine call to His office. No person could call Him but God the Father, acting as the representative of the Godhead. The call to office is not after the order of the Aaronic priesthood, but after the order of Melchizedek – a more ancient and more mysterious order – to signify the mystery of godliness in God being made manifest in the flesh. After this order was He called with Jehovah’s oath. “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” “It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” But it shall never repent Him that He has

constituted the last Adam, who is “the Lord from heaven,” priest for ever. He shall have no occasion for being grieved at His heart through failure on the part of the second man to implement the conditions of His priesthood in the days of His flesh, for the affairs of His house are now entrusted to none else than to His own eternal Son, who from the eternal hills of holiness beheld the habitable parts of the earth. where the eternal plan of redemption was to be carried into execution through His own priestly sacrifice and offering, in anticipation whereof He taught the Church to sing –

“No sacrifice nor offering  
Did'st Thou at all desire;  
Mine ears Thou bor'd: sin-offering Thou  
And burnt did'st not require  
Then to the Lord these were my words,  
I come, behold and see;  
Within the volume of the book  
It written is of me.”

Let us now endeavour, in the hope of having divine guidance, to consider what this text which we find in the sacred roll declares concerning the four following points: –

- I. – The days of Christ's flesh.
- II. – His offering.
- III. – The Person to whom He offered.
- IV. – How He was heard.

I. – The days of Christ's flesh.

These days must have been the days of His humiliation. The mystery of godliness is that the eternal Son of God should have such days. The incarnation of the Second Person of the Godhead is a great deep, beyond the comprehension of any finite creature. Yet it is the great fact which forms the solid foundation on which redemption rests. The Sonship, the incarnation, the life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ are the pillars that bear up and 'stablish the house of His glory.

He who is God over all, and who created all, assumed a perfect human nature, free from every taint of sin, in conception, birth, life, and burial. His generation who shall declare, either in respect of the eternity thereof as the eternal Son, or the extraordinary and miraculous nature thereof in respect of the conception of His humanity through the power of the Holy Ghost. A true body and a reasonable soul, He as God assumed into real union with Himself, so that He had two distinct natures in His one person. His person is thus unique. Another such there is not. He has the nature of God and the nature of man, but only one person. He had a person before He had a human nature, therefore the taking of human nature did not give him a person. He was the Second Person of the Trinity from all eternity. He did not change by becoming man, but He took into union with Himself what He had not before His incarnation. He did not cease to be what He was, and yet He became what He was not when He became man. His glory He could not, as some imagined, leave behind Him when He became man, otherwise His Church could not say, We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Owing to the indissoluble union between the two natures there seems to have been, as it were, a concentrating of the glory that was infinite and eternal on the tabernacle of His humanity wherein it was veiled, like the Shekinah between the Cherubim over the mercy-seat in the holiest of all. “For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” All the faculties and members of soul and body He possessed in their entirety and in their perfection. He can thus speak of His soul as sorrowful, of His heart as melted like wax, of His will as swallowed up in His Father's will, of

His strength being dried as a potsherd, of His hands and feet being pierced. The declarations regarding His real humanity are as clear as those relating to His eternal Godhead. What phase of real humanity is there which He does not speak of in the days of His flesh? Sin is not an essential element of humanity, therefore He – and He was alone as the son of man in this – was free from every taint of it. Yet God sent Him, His own Son, in “the likeness of sinful flesh.” This seems to be the real significance of the term, “The days of his flesh.” They were days in which sin was imputed to Him, namely – the sin of all the elect. He was made sin for them. He was the sin-bearer during all these days. The guilt of an innumerable company was laid upon Him, hence His cry in His own psalm, “For innumerable evils have compassed me about.” These were the just deserts of His own body, the Church. The oneness is such that the Church can say, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” although, as in the case of the marriage covenant, the distinction of persons is absolutely maintained. It is a federal relation that secures the vital union of both. Therefore the days of Christ’s flesh are days in which He is bowed down under the load of all the sins of His brethren, of His spouse given Him in the covenant. The days of Christ’s flesh were days that were appointed in the eternal decrees. They were not long when compared with the age of the patriarchs, but the importance of them is so great that we are not now surprised that it is written, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” This is no exaggerated statement. What else could the days of His flesh be, but so fruitful that the light that shines from eternity to eternity should be concentrated upon them? Here we see wonders upon wonders. The works executed by our Lord in his short public ministry on earth are so transcendent and marvellous that even John, who writes with the pen of inspiration, finishes His gospel with the feeling of how little of it could be revealed to men. And yet, let it be noted that all this was done by one who was compassed with sinless infirmities, and who was tempted at every step by the great enemy, and opposed by all the malice of a world lying in the wicked one. How near the sympathy of Christ comes to His people in this respect it is impossible for us to determine, but that it is nearer than any creature can grasp is manifest. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” It was in those days then that He offered His offering and finished His work.

II. – We will now endeavour to explain what the offering of Christ was.

Here we must notice a fundamental doctrine in relation to Christ’s priesthood, namely, that He offered Himself. He gave Himself. He gave His life a ransom for many. No other sacrifice could suffice. To present anything short of this, were to present what God could not in justice accept. It was a person in the room of persons. “Himself for me.” This is substitution and suretyship. There are two things jealously guarded in the account given of Christ’s priesthood. In the first place, it is made abundantly clear that He offered Himself. True, in the days of His flesh He had no other offering to give, although He did not cease to be what He was as the Creator of all. The conditions of the covenant required that while He was making many rich, He Himself should in the days of His humiliation be made poor. “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.” There can therefore be no suspicion that He satisfied God with any earthly sacrifices. These would be of no value had they been offered. But when He presents Himself to God as priest and sacrifice, it is impossible for God to look upon Him without seeing infinite glory in the Offerer and in the offering. When He comes to the burning mount where no finite creature can live, He takes no other sacrifice with Him than Himself. Hence the language of every step is, “Lo, I come.” And, in the second place, no person could offer this offering but Himself. It was

He who gave Himself. It was a free will offering. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." These two essential elements of the priesthood we find jealously guarded, even when the offering is regarded as having been given up through the eternal Spirit, lest it should be possible to imagine that it was the Spirit who offered when He anointed Him for His priestly work. "Who, through the eternal Spirit offered himself." It was thus Christ who offered, and the sacrifice He offered was Himself. Herein lies the glory of the work. He offered Himself; He offered through the eternal Spirit, and He offered himself to God, the Father. How could such an offering but be acceptable? In this text we have, so to speak, the twofold accompaniments of the offering, in the "prayers and supplications" and in the "strong crying and tears." We shall not at present inquire how far these elements were present in the life of Christ before the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. Prayers, supplications, strong crying, and tears, there were manifested throughout His public ministry; but the aspect of these in the garden and on the cross is somewhat different. Deep now calleth unto deep. All the guilt of all the redeemed is laid to His charge as their surety. God, the righteous Judge, imputes them all to Him. He is reckoned among the transgressors. He is bound that they may be set free. The deep of imputed guilt calls to the deep of righteous wrath. The floods are now going over the Man of sorrows.

All things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning His sufferings, are now receiving their fulfilment. His language therefore can be read in the Psalms which predicted the sufferings, quite as sure as in the Gospels where the facts are unerringly related. The first accompaniments of His offering were "prayers and supplications." These are joined together, although there is a difference in the meaning. Elements such as these are wonderfully blended together in the texture that makes up the righteousness of Christ. They are the threads forming the warp and the woof of that garment wrought out by Him whose days were "swifter than a weaver's shuttle," when he was made flesh and dwelt among us. "Prayers" here signify entreaties in the time of distress. They are different from those referred to in the life of Christ before the sacrifice was offered. They form the incense that arises with a sweet-smelling savour from the sacrifice. They emanate from the bruised Rose of Sharon. When He prayed on the mount, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. He was then transfigured with the light of divine glory. Here He prays at a time in which he seems almost transfigured with divine wrath. His prayer is an offering up of His soul's need and of His soul's exercise. Here we are on most holy ground. We can only behold afar off. It is the meeting-place of the waves and billows that pass over His soul. Elements constitute His sufferings that no finite creature can conceive. He may well say, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue it cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

Then does He pray – "But be not far from me, O Lord; O my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth, for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." "But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. Hear me, O Lord; for thy loving kindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily." What have we here but all the tenderness of the holy soul of

Jesus stirred to its very depths in prospect of the cup, and the shame of the cross upon which the succeeding verses of this same Psalm should have their literal fulfilment in the vinegar which was given Him to drink. And in the stirring up of all these tender holy feelings towards His own Father from whom He is about to receive this awful cup, He looks for any outlet not within Himself or around Him, but into his Father's face, as the righteous Judge and the disposer of all the events that must regulate the course now to be pursued in satisfying the claims of eternal justice. And when from the Father's face He reads the impossibility of passing the cup, He as a Son, learning experimental obedience by the things which he suffers, lays His holy head, now bathed in a sweat of blood, in His Father's bosom, and on His Father's will, and prays, "Thy will be done." This is the ultimate petition in reference to the cup, and now the zeal of drinking it has such a vehement flame, that He says to Peter, who would use his sword to avert the stroke wherewith the Shepherd was now to be smitten, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? When He prays that the Father's will should be done, the prayer implies that the Father's will should be done by Him as well as to Him. For doing this, His humanity needed strength and support. It was at this stage that "there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." How the appearance of the angel strengthened Him has been well explained by the suggestion that the angel worshipped Him. This meant two things. In the first place, it implied that the exercise of His sorrowful soul was thrown, as it were, back upon the command to the angels in reference to Him as the first-begotten: "And let all the angels of God worship him." In the second place, the exercise of His soul, which was then concentrated upon the cup, must have been thrown back, if we may speak so, upon the infinite resources of His own eternal power and Godhead. Yet, this did not remove the agony; for we immediately read: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." But with dyed garments He rises to travel in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, and mighty to save. During all this transaction, no outward hand had touched Him. The cause of agony was between the Father and Him in the secret pavilion of Gethsemane, where His disciples slumbered in presence of His sorrow as they did in presence of the glory on the mount.

The "supplications" which He offered have a meaning differing them from the "prayers." They imply requests for peace offered over sacrifices, or on the ground of offerings. They lead us to the intercession of the priest. "And he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." The demonstration of this truth we find in the garden also. "If, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way." Christ is here addressing the officers of justice. Their action, indeed, so far as their relation to Christ was concerned, indicated the lowest depths of injustice. But so far as eternal justice was concerned in arresting the surety, it was just that these should be the instruments through whom He should be taken. The eternal rectitude of justice is not tarnished on account of the character of the executioners. Rather does it demand this, because the people for whom the surety acted deserved to suffer at the hands of their fellow sinners, as well as under the wrath of God. And there must be such oneness that their spotless Substitute must also suffer at the hands of sinful men. But in addressing the officers of justice, He seems to address justice itself. First, He reveals Himself as Jehovah, the person who said, I am that I am. "I am *He*." I am. This ray of light from the face of His glory caused them to fall backward on the ground. He must, however, willingly surrender Himself, if He is to drink the cup; but He cannot do this without veiling His glory as the great I am. It is then in the full light of His eternal glory as Jehovah that He offers Himself, and it is in the same manner that He asks the release of all those given Him. The apostle notes this when he adds, "That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them

which thou gavest me, have I lost none." All given Him are embraced in His supplications, and the supplications, while outwardly addressed to the officers, contain in them a plea presented to God as Judge, acting in accordance with eternal justice, that all whose names were borne on the breast-plate of their great High Priest should have reconciliation and peace through the Lord Jesus Christ. There was none exempted of all that were given Him. There was none forgotten; therefore, none of them shall be lost. The weight of their deserved wrath He took upon Himself. Here He was acting as advocate with the Father. On the same grounds He pleads on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The prayers and supplications were also accompanied by "strong crying and tears." This was also predicted in the Psalms. "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." "When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach." "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continuously say unto me, Where is thy God?" It is not in vain that the Holy Ghost here teaches that the crying was strong. It was not the moaning of one overcome. They were not the dying accents of a mere martyr. We shall only at present refer to two cries uttered on the cross. The first of these was, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" All the elect forsook God; therefore Christ is forsaken in their stead. They deserved to be forsaken throughout all eternity, and now the surety secures for them everlasting communion with God. Here we may read a contrast between the two Adams. The first Adam had all the outward and inward comforts which he needed for soul and body along with the presence and favour of God, yet he forsook God. The last Adam was, at this time, denuded of all the outward and inward comforts of soul and body, and of the sensible enjoyment of the presence of God, and yet He did not, in this awful hour of darkness, forsake God. He calls on God through the awful terrors of the vials of the wrath that is poured out upon Him. And He calls upon God as His own God in this awful hour. In the garden, and at the close of the sufferings, He speaks to Him in the relation of the Son to the Father; but here, in the relation of the last Adam, and the Head of His covenant people, He speaks to Him as God, inflicting upon Him as surety, all that the righteousness and honour of Jehovah's throne demanded as punishment for the sins laid to His charge, although they were not His own, but His people's.

Another cry we hear in the words "it is finished." This, too, was a "strong" cry. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated," for we have a greater than Moses here. It is His own public testimony to the nature of His work which was now consummated. He does not die like the other malefactors. Pilate himself wondered that He was already dead. It is in infinite majesty that He drinks the last drop of the cup, and raises His head on high to emit one other cry of infinite triumph before He bows the same head in yielding His Spirit by His own free act into the Father's hands. At this moment the wrath had passed over Him. The cup was passed from Him, but not without drinking its contents. The full light of the Father's countenance was shining upon Him *before* He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. It was in the full blaze of that light that He wound up the last part of His work on the cross by laying down His life, which was then, as before, under His own control. Of the "tears," we may not have specific instances in the garden and on the cross, but we have indications in the Psalms that they were general throughout. His Church deserved weeping and wailing for ever and ever. His tears save her from that. Each drop shines with eternal glory. His head became a fountain of tears, and these, tears of blood. The curse on the first Adam bound him to eat bread in the sweat of His face. Christ, who is made a curse for His people, procures bread for them by sweat which consisted of "great drops of blood." Tears indicate sorrow, and there was no sorrow like His sorrow. But His tears are wells of salvation out of which His people draw the water of life with joy.

III. – Let us now consider who it was to whom Christ offered. He offered “unto him that was able to save him from death.” This was God, the Father, acting as the righteous Judge in vindicating the rectitude of His eternal government when dealing with the surety, to whom He could not show partiality in exacting the demands of inexorable justice. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.” The infinite love of the Father to the person of the Son knew no abatement in this awful transaction, but pity must be hid from His eyes until all the guilt of the elect is expiated. And in all this process the Son was offering to the Father, and acting in things pertaining to God. He could not offer to any other. But how did He die, when He was offering to Him that was able to save Him from death? There is a difference between being saved out of death and being saved from dying. He died, the just for the unjust, and yet He was saved from death, for He was heard in that He feared. The text shows that this power was in the hands of the Father as the Disposer of all that was laid upon the Substitute. And what the Father had power to do in this respect, was done to His only begotten Son, whom He regarded with special complacency in the obedience wherewith He yielded His life. “Therefore, doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again.” We think that He was able to save Him from death in three respects.

(1.) When the cup was made to pass before Him in the garden, causing Him sore amazement, and wringing great drops of blood from His body, through the agony of His soul, He was saved from being so overwhelmed at that moment that death should ensue before His work was finished. True, the resources of His own divine nature were indissolubly united to His soul and body as man, and did mysteriously prevent Him from sinking under this load, for no mere man could behold what He then beheld and live, but yet the terms of the covenant were such, that He was, in these sufferings, upheld by the Father. “Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth, I have put my Spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” In accordance with the promise of the Father, the Spirit, which was given Him without measure, strengthened His holy humanity, which required this, while compassed about with sinless infirmities on which were gathered the waterspouts of the wrath which His people deserved. That He needed and received such strength, the presence of the angel testifies.

(2.) He was able to save Him also from death when drinking the cup. No mere creature could be saved from death in drinking it. No mere creature could exhaust it. How fearful must the second death of the lost be for ever! When the Son of God Himself endured such sufferings, what must the eternal doom of the wicked and unsaved be? Death approached Christ armed with all its terrors. He could now say, “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold on me; I found trouble and sorrow.” Death comes with its sting, the strength of which is the law. Death could claim every individual for whom Christ stood, because they all came short of conformity to God’s holy law. But if Christ exhaust all the demands of law in their room, death can have no more power over Him, or over them, for He will then make an end of sin, seeing that sin is the transgression of the law. If law be satisfied by His conformity, and justice by His satisfaction, then He and His people are saved out of death. It was in anticipation of this that it was said, “He will swallow up death in victory,” for He died without being overcome by death. “O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.”

He overcame death instead of being overcome by it. He led captivity captive. And the Father was able to save Him from death by ceasing to smite with the sword after all the claims of law and justice were fully and finally satisfied. It was in view of this that Christ said, “It is finished.” Here is an end made of sin, and everlasting righteousness brought in. Here is the door of escape from the second death. Here we have the grounds of a sinner’s



hope for justification. To this foundation the Holy Spirit leads the soul whom He quickens. Herein saving faith rests. Here God Himself rests. "It is finished." The sorrows of death are already past. The pains of hell are already exhausted, for "His soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption."

The Father was also able to save Him from death when dying, by ceasing to forsake Him. He did not sink under the wrath of God, for then the wrath would not have been exhausted. The wrath had all gone over Him before He died. The Father's face was shining in all its fulness of love and complacency on His soul and body *before* He gave up the Ghost. It was in the full enjoyment of this that He committed His spirit into the hands of the Father.

(3.) He was, moreover, able to save Him from death by raising Him up on the third day. "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." This was the implementing of the promise that He should not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. The state of Christ's body in the grave was unique, not only because it was united to the Godhead, as was His soul which was now in paradise, but also because He had left it in the keeping, so to speak, of the Father's promise, in the full confidence that it should be absolutely preserved from the corruption of death, until His spirit should return to inhabit the glorified tabernacle in which He was to ascend to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens.

IV. – We are now led to consider finally how Christ "was heard in that he feared." To explain this fear as piety or reverence on account of which He was heard would seem to disconnect this part of the verse to some extent from the former part. It is indeed quite true that He was heard on account of His Godly fear, for "the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord" rested upon Him beyond measure. Godly fear rested upon Him in perfection. But it cannot be denied that He feared the wrath of God, otherwise His sufferings would be divested of their intensity. He began to be sore amazed in the garden. If He were capable of being sorrowful and wearied, why should He not be capable of being afraid of impending wrath? This fear was not only holy and free from every slavish element, it was also a necessary part of His sufferings. His holy and sinless humanity could not but be afraid of the righteous wrath of the Judge against Him as the substitute of His people. Everlasting terrors were due to the elect for their sins, therefore the terrors of the wrath of the Almighty fasten upon the Man of sorrows. It was His holy sensitiveness to divine anger that caused this. His people will never be able to see the bottom of what He endured on their behalf. The terrors of death fell upon Him. "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." "And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane, and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." He even seeks some alleviation of His sorrow in disclosing it to the three disciples. This sore amazement could not possibly arise from the prospect of dying only, for that would mean that He had not the confidence in dying which belongs to His people. He was not heard in being delivered from dying, because He did not ask to be delivered from dying. Law and justice required that He should die – the just for the unjust. He died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Therefore His fear did not arise from the prospect of death and burial, for in this respect His flesh rested in hope. What then were the fears from which He was delivered?

(1.) He must have felt the fear of meeting the awfulness of the wrath of God. Therefore did He give this song to His Church to sing in anticipation of His sufferings: "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let me be delivered from them that hate me,

and out of the deep waters.” Let us remember that Christ here was acting officially as surety for the elect. Their guilt was imputed to Him. Their shame and disgrace as sinners were laid to His account. Each and all of their sins were calling for stripes from God’s inflexible justice. Each sin deserved God’s wrath and curse, both in this world and in that which is to come. Sore amazement for ever in view of the heinousness of sin in the light of Jehovah’s claims, would be the everlasting portion of all sinners if Christ had not suffered and died. The mystery of how Christ experienced fear of wrath seeing He was God is unsolvable by us, as other mysteries of the same nature are. It is clear, however, that in view of infinite wrath His holy human strength dried up like a potsherd. “My strength is dried up like a potsherd.” Acting as He was in the room of the elect under the law, the forthputting of the resources of his own Godhead, as the eternal Son, were presently restrained, though never for a moment absent, owing to the unity of His person. Justice required that His exercise of soul at this time should be the exercise of a spotlessly holy man, quite as sure as it required that this man should be no less a person than the eternal God in order to give merit to His work. Had the infinite energies of His Godhead been put forth at this time to save Him from suffering, justice had not been vindicated and His sympathy with His people had been limited. Yet He was heard in that He feared. His holy humanity was strengthened in order that He should be able as well as willing to drink the cup given to Him by the Father. He raised His head on high by drinking out of the well of the Father’s will. The sweat of blood was over before He was arrested. He will even show His executioners that He is not taken in an hour of weakness by arresting them before they arrest Him. His behaviour before His enemies reveals infinite dignity. When He does speak to them, it is as the person who can say, “I am.” He is not swallowed up by His sufferings, but He swallows up death in victory. His march through all the steps of His humiliation is triumphant. He has strength to suffer and to die without sinking under the burden. In satisfying the claims of God, He was despoiling Satan of His power and bruising the head of the serpent.

(2.) He must have felt the fear of the withdrawal of the Father’s countenance from His soul. This was known to Him from all eternity as God. It was revealed by Him to His Church in the Psalms. His Church sang His own experience in this. Now He has experimental knowledge of it in His holy soul. Need we wonder that He says, My soul is exceeding sorrowful? Can we wonder that He feared this? Would not the wonder be that He would not fear it? His holy filial relation caused Him to fear it, and to be sore amazed even in prospect of it. But was He heard in this? He was. He was strengthened with grace beyond measure to enable Him to cleave to His God in that dark hour without succumbing under His desertion. Yea more, the language that is heard on the lips of His holy humanity is the language of faith. *My God, My God*. O, what a glorious achievement! “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Moreover, Christ was heard when He cried out under this desertion; “For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard.” Here we see the covenant arrangements between the persons of the Godhead fulfilled in time. One of these was, that whenever Christ should utter His cry on the cross, the Father would not any longer hide His face from Him. He was immediately heard. The darkness was past. The terrors of wrath were gone. The loneliness of desertion gave place to fulness of joy. “It is finished.” “The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord, and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Thou hast given him his heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.”

To Him the Father calls us. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.” To Him the Spirit invites us. “The Spirit and the bride say, come.” To Himself He invites us. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will

give you rest.” “O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker.” May the Holy Ghost bring us to a saving knowledge of the way to the Father.  
[October 1896]

## A Sermon

By the Rev. JONATHAN RANKEN ANDERSON.  
Preached in Kirkfield Church, Glasgow, 6th December, 1835.

“My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word” – Psalm 119:25.

The whole design and tendency of the dispensation of grace administered by the Divine Redeemer is to deliver men from the earthliness in which by nature they are immersed, and to elevate them to the knowledge, and love, and enjoyment of objects that are pure and spiritual. And wherever this dispensation takes effect by the powerful application of the Holy Spirit, this design is, in a greater or less degree, accomplished. The soul is loosened from its attachment to the things which are seen and temporal, and set upon the pursuit of those which are unseen and eternal. But the tendency of the dispensation of grace thus displayed is counteracted by a strong opposing force in the influence of corruption within, and temptation without. The flesh, or old nature, though crucified, is not destroyed, and therefore does it withstand and retard the operation of the gracious principles implanted by the Holy Ghost, and prevent those who are the subjects of them from advancing in spirituality of mind so rapidly as they otherwise might do: “The flesh lusteth against the spirit . . . so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” The world comes to the aid of this internal enemy of a believer’s progress, and by a thousand arts endeavours to divert him from the things that are heavenly, and to entangle him with those that are earthly. The consequence of the united influence of these hostile powers is to bring the servant of God into the state described by the psalmist in the words of the text: “My soul cleaveth unto the dust,” and to constrain him to offer the prayer which he presented, “Quicken thou me according to thy word.”

I. – The first thing which offers itself to our consideration in the text is the state of a believer as set forth by the expression of the psalmist, “My soul cleaveth unto the dust.” We say the state of a believer, for it is to him, and to him only, the description will apply. It is no doubt true that the soul of every child of Adam cleaves by nature to the dust, but this, instead of being to the unregenerate a ground of complaint, is sometimes a ground of boasting, and always a matter of indifference. “For many walk,” says the apostle, “of whom I have told you often . . . that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.” But we need only to read the words of the text, or to look at the experience of a true believer to be satisfied that with him it is far otherwise. When his soul cleaves to the dust he is grieved and ashamed, nor can he get rest and comfort until his prayer is answered, and he is quickened according to the Divine Word. Now, when may it be said that the soul of a true believer cleaves to the dust. I answer –

1. – When he has not a vivid perception of Divine things. The effect which immediately follows the quickening act of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is a discovery of the importance and excellence of eternal realities. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” When this discovery is first made, the soul is filled with astonishment and awe, and feels as if it could never again think of anything but the objects which now engross its thoughts. But it knows not that there are shut up within its dark recesses a huge mass of carnality and sin, which, like clouds that obscure the brightness of the sun, may rise up, and envelop in a temporary gloom the whole of the spiritual firmament. The consequence is that when the visions which then engage and gladden his heart pass away, when the glory of the Divine character, as it is exhibited in the person of the only-begotten and incarnate Son of God, disappears, when the fulness, and preciousness, and freeness of the great salvation are hid from his view, the believer concludes that his former experience was all a dream, and that he is still wrapped in the darkness of his natural condition. He has recourse to the means which were formerly blessed for shedding the light of life upon his benighted understanding, but he may, for a season, fail to derive any benefit from them. He reads the Holy Scriptures, but they are as a sealed book to him. He bends the knee in prayer, but he enjoys neither light nor liberty. He repairs to the house of God, but it is like the temple without the Shekinah. The outward furniture is there, but the glory has departed. In the bitterness of his spirit he may say, “Oh that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness.”

But this is not all. The soul must be occupied with something, and if there be not a clear and impressive apprehension of spiritual objects, those of the world rush in and fill the thoughts. The soul, even after it has been quickened and renewed, tends strongly to the dust – that is to the mean and perishable objects of time: for well may they be called dust, which cannot be touched without defilement, which, as compared with eternal things, are absolutely worthless, and which even perish with the using. When the Spirit brings near the glory of Christ and His salvation, and when the mind is closely occupied in the contemplation of Him, this tendency is sensibly checked, and for a short time may not greatly annoy the child of God. But like the tide it never rests, and therefore, though it has been made to ebb by the force of heavenly things, it forthwith begins to flow, and silently and secretly does it advance till the spiritual perceptions of the believer are weakened, and the soul is deluged with vain imaginations. The tendency of the soul to the dust then distinctly shows itself. For when the believer would bring back his wandering thoughts to Christ, their proper object, he finds that they refuse to yield and cling to the world, and the things of the world. He opens the Word of God, but he scarcely knows what he reads, and while he seems to dwell on its sacred truths, he finds that his thoughts are roaming on the mountains of vanity. He tries to get access to the throne of grace, but he is like a bird that has lost its wings, he cannot fly. He comes to public ordinances, but amidst the stillness and solemnity of the house of prayer, his mind is filled with the bustle and confusion of the world. The attempts he makes again to realise the glorious objects that once engrossed his thoughts are often so fruitless that he is ready to give up in despair. He hears his Lord remonstrating with him, “How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” But notwithstanding all his efforts to banish them from his mind he has still to complain, “My soul cleaveth unto the dust.”

2. – The soul of a true believer cleaves unto the dust when it does not act a vigorous faith on the things of God. By the grace of faith, wrought in the heart through the power of the Spirit, is the soul first lifted above the dust, and brought into contact with the heavenly world. For so long as unbelief continues to hold dominion over the soul, time is

everything, and eternity nothing. And as it is by the exercise of faith that the soul first rises from earth to heaven, so just in proportion to the vigour of its actings is the heavenly world brought nigh. "We walk," says the apostle, "by faith, not by sight, and faith is the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for." Now there are seasons when this important grace is very strong and lively, and then the believer has as clear a conviction and as firm a persuasion of all which the Word sets before him, as if he saw them with his bodily eyes. Of Moses, who was under the influence of this principle, it is said, "he endured as seeing him who is invisible." "For our light affliction," says the apostle, in the same spirit, "which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding even an eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The believer in these cases has the dust of the world beneath his feet; he sees and admires a glory which completely eclipses the glory of earthly kingdoms. His soul dwells on objects that are grand in their nature, as they are durable in their existence. But, brethren, faith is not always in such lively exercise, it frequently grows languid and feeble, and then the soul instead of rising to the realising contemplation of heavenly things, cleaves to those that are earthly. The believer for the time feels and acts as if the present were the only state of things, at least as if it were the most important, and instead of seeking, as he generally does and as he always ought to do, first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he seeks first what he shall eat, and what he shall drink, and wherewith he shall be clothed. When he acts faith in the promise he can trust to God for the welfare of himself and his family, for the continuance of active employment, for the enjoyment of health and strength, and every other thing needful for him. But when his soul cleaves to the dust, he is careful and troubled about many things, he takes the management of his affairs into his own hands, he trembles with anxiety for the success of favourite schemes, he is cast down and enervated by what appears to blast his hopes. Nor is it always that he can at once escape from this frame of mind. When he would confide in his covenant God, when he would rest in the Divine Redeemer, when he would look forward to his heavenly home, he finds that they are like distant objects, indistinctly seen, and lightly felt. His soul continues to adhere to the dust, and under a felt conviction of his abasement and his insufficiency to rise, he exclaims, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust."

3. – The soul of a believer may be said to cleave to the dust when he does not realise his interest in the blessings of the new covenant. The things of God are in themselves infinitely worthy of a believer's attention, and in their evidence fitted to impart the strongest confidence to his heart. But he has a still closer relation to them than what arises from their truth and excellence. In Christ Jesus, and by virtue of His mediatorial work, they are His possession, His portion. "We have received," says the apostle, "not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." And when he walks in the Spirit, when he acts faith in the word of promise, when he sees Divine realities in Divine light, he feels that he has the deepest interest in all which he contemplates and admires. By this means he anticipates, in a measure, the visions of future glory, and enjoys a foretaste of eternal blessedness. "Whom, having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." What Thomas exclaimed on seeing his Lord, is represented as being realised by many through the power of faith. "My Lord and my God," said the delighted apostle. Jesus answered "because thou hast seen, thou hast believed, blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Now, it generally happens, that when the soul cannot rise to this appropriating exercise of faith, it cleaves to the dust. We say, *generally*, for we are aware there are numerous instances to the contrary. The things of time and sense take such hold of the affections, that they are incapacitated from rising to the things that are above

where Christ sitteth, so as to embrace and rest in them as their own. The influence of earthly objects may not be so great as to prevent the believer from fixing his thoughts upon those that are heavenly, or to preclude his believing in their reality and certainty. And yet, it may not admit of the high act of faith by which the soul can call them all its own. We hence find, that when the believer is entangled with the cares of this life, when his soul has been deadened by the influence of the world, he speaks of himself in terms of self-reproach and self-abasement, and dares not venture to use the exulting language which he employs when he is in a spiritual frame of mind. "I am cast out of thy sight," says Jonah, "yet will I look again toward thy holy temple." "I have gone astray like a lost sheep," says the Psalmist, "seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." "Turn thou me," says Ephraim, "and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." How different this from the language used by the saints when faith is strong and hope triumphant. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides thee: my heart and flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation."

4. – The soul of a believer may be said to cleave unto the dust when he does not actually enjoy the blessings of the new covenant, in the measure in which they are dispensed in the present state. The spiritual world is full of objects that are fitted to solace and satisfy the heart, and it is the will of God that believers enjoy the good thus provided for them. When they are in a right frame of spirit they accordingly enter into the possession of the good things of God's house, they obtain the peace which passeth understanding, and the joy with which a stranger doth not intermeddle. But their souls do often cleave unto the dust, and then, instead of saying, "Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance," they for a season, and to a certain extent, join in the silly cry of the world, "Who will shew us good?"

By the insidious influence of worldly joys, their taste for those which are heavenly may be blunted, their desire after them enfeebled, and their delight in them interrupted. The very men who once seemed to dwell in the third heavens, to eat of the hidden manna, and to drink of the rivers of pleasures that are at God's right hand, and who appeared to be so taken up with these celestial dainties, as utterly to despise the choicest of this world's entertainments, may be so abased and corrupted, that they shall be seen feeding greedily upon the husks of earthly pleasure. How deeply, brethren, did David fall, how strongly did his soul cleave to the dust, when instead of being ravished with the heart-stirring themes to which he was wont to tune his harp, he wallowed in sensuality and crime! And even when the believer awakes from his delusive dream, and feels that he has been hunting a shadow and neglecting the substance, and when he sets himself to return to his former joys, he finds that his soul sticks fast to earthly things, and for many a long day may he experience the bitter fruits of his folly in comparative darkness and discomfort. When believers forsake the fountain of living waters, they are usually compelled to swallow many a bitter draught before they get back to it. The psalmist, after his grievous sin, prays, "Make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice."

II. – The second point in the text which claims our notice is the prayer of the psalmist, "Quicken thou me, according to thy word." We must here consider the petition he offers, and the plea by which he supports it. The petition is, "Quicken me."

1. – The psalmist was sensible of the state he was in, which no natural man can be, for while he is earthly and of the earth, he is dead in sin and the uncircumcision of his flesh, and therefore, like the church in Laodicaea, he often imagines that he is rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing, while in fact he is poor, and miserable, and

wretched, and blind, and naked. But in the psalmist, and in every true believer, there is a principle of spiritual life, and however it may for a season be overborne and depressed, yet it at last shows itself in the conviction, the real and practical conviction, which he entertains of his carnal condition. The psalmist, in the exercise of this principle, felt and knew that his soul cleaved to the dust. And as he was sensible of it, so he was free to acknowledge it. The confession, indeed, was very mortifying, as every confession of sin is. For how was it that his soul had sunk into this state. Not surely because there was not power in God to support him, or grace to attract him, or fulness to bless him, or beauty to engage his admiration. No; but because he had forsaken his covenant God, had listened to the voice of the tempter, had yielded to the power of corruption, and had given way before the world which he had professed to renounce. But painful and humiliating as the confession was, he scrupled not to make it, for well did he know that if he covered his sin, whether of heart or of life, whether of nature or of practice, he could not prosper. Whereas, if he confessed and forsook his sin, he might obtain mercy. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." He did not, however, content himself with a mere acknowledgment of his depravity in that his soul cleaved unto the dust, but he entreats that it might be effectually subdued: "Quicken me according to thy word."

When the soul of a believer cleaves unto the dust, it is in what is usually called a dead state, for although the vital principle be not extinct, yet its power is cramped, and its influence checked, so that the soul, as compared with what it might be, and what it ought to be, is dead. We thus see how it is that the psalmist entreats that the Lord would quicken him. For, as the work of grace begins with an act of quickening, and the production thereby of the principle of spiritual life, so is it carried on, revived, and matured by a similar operation. The true believer is taught the way in which the Lord begins and carries forward His work. He knows that whether in the commencement or progress of the divine life, He acts upon the springs of thought and affection, and thus regenerates the soul which is dead, and revives the soul that has been decaying. The natural man may acknowledge that there is much amiss in his temper and conduct, and may wish that the pruning knife were applied to them to lop them off; but he overlooks altogether the root of the evil in the corrupt state of his nature. Were he therefore to make his case the subject of prayer, he would ask that vain thoughts might be banished from his mind, that vicious habits might be reformed in his life, but as to the quickening of his soul, it never once occurs to him as at all necessary. The true believer proceeds in a very different manner. He is led to trace his backsliding, his worldly-mindedness, his unprofitableness to the decay of the vital principle implanted in his soul, and therefore, like the psalmist, he prays, "Quicken me."

In this prayer the psalmist desires that the Lord would put forth the power of His almighty arm in giving new life and energy to the inner man, that He would raise up what is drooping, stimulate what is languid, and strengthen what is feeble. We cannot describe, because we cannot comprehend, how it is that the Lord acts upon the soul in fulfilling this petition, but we know, and are assured that He does act upon it in His mighty power. The apostle prays for the Ephesians that they might know "what was the exceeding greatness of his power toward them who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead." But the effect of the forthputting of this power is to raise the soul from the dust, to free it from the entanglements of earth, to restore to it the light, and liberty, and comfort of the children of God. "Thou which has showed me great and sore troubles shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

In this short petition will be found all which he needed, because all which is opposed to the state of carnality into which he had sunk. For how was it that he was to recover his vivid perception of Divine things, to return to the vigorous actings of faith in them, to realize anew his interest in them, and once more to draw refreshment and satisfaction from them? It was by the principle of grace which had been implanted in his soul receiving new life and activity. How is it, brethren, that darkness is to be dissipated, but by the return of the light of the Sun of Righteousness? How is it that unbelief is to be subdued, but by faith putting forth greater power and vigour? How is it that earthly things are to be made to sink into their native insignificance, but by those that are heavenly appearing in their proper greatness and glory? Now, the result of Divine quickening is to bring the soul into suitable exercise towards Christ and his kingdom, and then it no longer cleaves to the dust, but mounts up with wings as an eagle; it runs and is not weary, it walks and is not faint.

We are not, however, to conceive of this act of Divine power in quickening the soul as put forth absolutely, but with respect to the covenant, and in connection with Christ Jesus, the Covenant Head. "But God, who is rich in mercy," says the apostle, "for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The souls of believers were federally quickened with Christ, when He was raised from the dead, for just as He then lived to die no more, so the title to life was made sure to all His seed, so sure that they never could be brought into condemnation. But they also are actually quickened with Him, when united to Him by the power of the Holy Ghost they become partakers of His life-giving virtue, and because He lives in the fulness of grace, they ever live, according to the measure of His gift. "I live," says Paul, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And as it is in union to Christ that the soul is at first made alive to God, so is it in communion with Him that it is restored to activity, when, through the power of corruption, it has cleaved unto the dust. Of this mystery the psalmist and other saints of the old economy were not ignorant. We may argue this from the means which they employed to obtain quickening to their souls. For prayer was offered by them with a distinct reference to the tabernacle or temple, and to the institutions of their ceremonial worship, all which prefigured the Mediator, Christ Jesus, through whom prayer is now offered, and in whom quickening grace is to be found: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

The agent by whom the act of quickening is directly performed is the Holy Ghost, sent of the Father through His Son, Christ Jesus. Without His agency the soul never can be raised from the death in sin in which by nature it lies. For "except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But His work does not stop here. The life which He implants He habitually maintains, and when it has grown languid and inactive, he revives and quickens it. "I will be as the dew unto Israel" – a beautiful and significant emblem of the Holy Spirit, "He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon." But what is it that immediately precedes this gracious promise? "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely for mine anger is turned away from him." From which it evidently appears that it is the especial work of the Spirit to quicken those who have backslidden, or, in the language of the text, whose souls cleave unto the dust. And what says the psalmist after his grievous fall in the matter of Uriah? "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit." We must thus consider the prayer of the text, as presented to and answered by the God of salvation, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.



2. – We have now only to glance at the plea by which the prayer is supported: “Quicken me according to thy word.” The Word of God, in its most comprehensive sense, may be said to be an expression of the mind of God in the covenant, made with, and ratified by, the blood of His Son, Christ Jesus. In this view it furnished the psalmist with a valid and very powerful plea in offering up the petition, “Quicken me,” for the blessing which he thus craved was in entire accordance with its whole spirit and design. Why was it, brethren, that the covenant of redemption was framed at all, but that God might glorify Himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the quickening of those who were dead in trespasses and sins? Why was it that in this covenant the glorious Three undertook distinct parts of redemption work, but that the purpose of giving life to men might be revealed, executed, and applied? Why was it that the constitution and provisions of this covenant were committed to writing in the inspired record, but that, through the power of God, the Word might be effectual in quickening the spiritually dead? Why was it that a standing ministry was appointed for the opening up of this Word, but that those who are quickened might be preserved, and built up, and perfected in the Divine life?

The psalmist, it is true, had but a small portion of the Divine Word, and that involved in comparative obscurity, but brethren, irk that portion, small as it was in size, and dim as it was in light, the covenant of mercy was substantially revealed, and therefore it was that the psalmist laid hold of it with a vigorous faith, and pressed it with an importunate earnestness. The very first sentence in the revelation of mercy contained the whole of the covenant in embryo. “The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” And, therefore, if the psalmist had possessed nothing more than this he might, with perfect confidence, have said, “Quicken me according to thy word.” For while, to the eye of human reason, there is nought in that first promise which has even the resemblance of a remedy for a soul that cleaves to the dust, to the eye of faith there is the glorious remedy which it took 4000 years to develop, and the whole of the Scriptures to describe. The faith of Divine operation has in it a holy ingenuity and a strong penetration, and thus it is that in a brief sentence, sometimes in a single word, it discovers a world of light, of grace, and of blessedness. For, brethren, faith has for its direct object the blessed Redeemer, and so strong is the attraction which He possesses, that even when out of sight, faith discovers His presence, and realises His influence, like the needle, which requires not to be brought within sight of the magnet to turn itself towards it, let it only be placed within the sphere of its influence, and it will tell at once that the magnet is there. In like manner, true faith embraces Christ wherever He is, be He revealed in a type, or shrouded in a ceremony, or set forth in a dark prophecy. And when faith recognises Christ it recognises Him as the life of the soul, He who has life in Himself, who has procured life for His people by His death, who offers life to them by the Word of the truth of the gospel, who imparts, maintains, and perfects life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, as the Word of God sets forth the covenant, and Christ the Covenant Head, through whom, and by whom, quickening grace is imparted to believers, the psalmist might warrantably pray, “Quicken me according to thy word.”

In this language he may also have respect to the circumstance that it is by the Word as an instrument that the Lord quickens the soul, whether at first in regeneration, or subsequently in restoration from backslidings. As to the former, the apostle distinctly teaches that “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures,” and as to the latter, the psalmist himself acknowledges, “This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me.” And does not the experience of every believer accord with this statement? For when their souls cleave to the dust, through the influence of worldly cares and worldly employments, they have often been

quicken by the reading or hearing of the Word of God. "I will never forget thy precepts," says the psalmist, for with them thou hast quickened me."

*Application.* – 1. Are there any of you, brethren, who say with the psalmist, 'Our souls cleave unto the dust', who feel that vain thoughts fill and distract your hearts, that worldly cares intrude into your most sacred exercises; and that, when you would rise to the contemplation and enjoyment of heavenly things, you are entangled and engrossed with those that are earthly? We beseech of you not to rest in this state. Consider from whence you have fallen, and how aggravated is the guilt you have incurred. Be assured that the fault is all on your side; if your minds have not been assailed and corrupted by outward objects, they have been ensnared and oppressed by indwelling sin: "Your iniquities have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." With a conviction of your carnality and guilt, hasten to the throne of mercy, and tell to Him who sits upon it what you have often said to yourself, and to your companions, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust." But do not rest at this, proceed to offer the prayer of the psalmist, "Quicken me." Seek from him a cure as radical as is your disease. Be not content with anything short of the subjugation, and in due time the total destruction, of that which has so often made your soul cleave to the dust. And lay hold of the plea which the psalmist made use of, and urge it with unwearied importunity, "Quicken me according to thy word." The word of God, the tenor of the covenant, the mediation of Christ, the agency of the Spirit, the invitations, the promises, the very commands of the gospel may all be pressed into your service. For each and all of them tend to one point, the quickening of the dead, the restoration of the fallen, the recovery of the diseased. Do we require to use arguments to induce you thus to proceed? Oh think, brethren, of the degradation and misery of cleaving to the dust, as compared with a state of enlargement and comfort. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Be instant, therefore, in prayer, that he would restore your souls and make you to walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

2. But some may say, our souls do indeed cleave to the dust, and we have confessed, and prayed, and entreated, but we are as dead as ever we were, yea, if there be any difference, we are worse. I dare say you sometimes think you will be obliged to give up in despair. But is it so, that the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious, that His word fails for ever? It cannot be. Perhaps you have been asking Him to quicken you, not according to His Word, but merely according to your desires, and views, and intentions. And no wonder that you have been unsuccessful. Go back to the mercy-seat and take some word with you, it matters not what it be, if Christ, the Quickener, be in it, with deep humility, yet with holy confidence plead it before the Hearer of Prayer, and sure we are you shall not need to wait long for an answer. He never did, and never will say to any of Jacob's seed, "Seek ye my face in vain."

3. We must not forget you, my hearers, whose souls are immersed in the dust, and yet you know it not, and lament it not. We would entreat you to consider what is the judgment which God pronounces upon your possessions and enjoyments. They are but dust, your talents, your occupations, your property, your wealth, make of them what you may, they are but dust. And how degraded must your souls be when they cleave to a thing so vile and worthless, and perishable! Like the offspring of the old serpent, the devil, you may eat dust now, and find it perhaps very grateful to your sordid and carnal hearts, but will you be able to carry this wretched fare to hell with you? No, poor as it is, you must leave it behind you. And what will become of it? What will become of your possessions, your wealth, your honours? We cannot tell. Perhaps they may be employed to keep up the reign of wickedness in this apostate world. But what will become of you? As you have grovelled with the devil among dust here, so must you be consumed in the fire prepared for him and his

angels hereafter. Oh, that you, too, were roused to hasten to the throne of grace, that you were persuaded to take with you words, and turn unto the Lord, saying, "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously." For laying hold upon Christ, the Alpha and Omega of the Word, you may warrantably say, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust, quicken thou me according to thy word."

[November 1896]

