

A Sermon.

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The Conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch – Acts 8:26-40.

In the opening verse of this chapter we are told that at the time of the death of the martyr Stephen, “there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem,” and that the disciples were “all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” The storm of persecution, however, was overruled, in the providence of God to the spiritual advantage of many, for “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.” Philip, the deacon, was one of these preachers, and it is stated that he “went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them.” His preaching was attended with great success in Samaria for “the people with one accord gave heed unto these things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.” “And there was great joy in that city.” Philip had one conspicuous convert in the person of Simon, the sorcerer, but this man eventually showed himself, in the presence of the apostles Peter and John, to be only a believer in name, and not in reality – still “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.” But if Philip lost Simon, it was ordered in God's grace, that he should find another soul who would more than make up for the loss, in the person of the Ethiopian eunuch. The apostles were now come to Samaria, but the Lord had work for Philip still, and He directs him away to a very unlikely place where he should have anything to do in advancing the kingdom of Christ. The probability is, however, that the conversion of the one man of Ethiopia was a host in itself – a link in the chain of the conversion of hundreds in the dark country to which he belonged. Tradition has handed down that he was the first preacher of the gospel in Ethiopia.

We shall now proceed, in dependence on the Spirit of God, to consider this very interesting narrative. Let us then observe: –

- I. – Philip's call to “go toward the south unto the way” between Jerusalem and Gaza;
- II. – The account given of the Ethiopian eunuch;
- III. – Philip's introductory meeting and conversation with him;
- IV. – Philip's sermon; and
- V. – The fruits of the sermon in the conversion and baptism of the eunuch.

I. – Let us notice briefly Philip's call to go to the highway between Jerusalem and Gaza.

1. Our first remark on this point is that the call was a very clear one. It was given by an angel of the Lord. An angelic messenger from heaven commanded him to “arise and go,” and gave him explicit instructions as to the direction in which he should travel. This was a great privilege – he might have every confidence that in obedience to this call he was walking in the right path, the path the Lord approved of. And although the days of such supernatural communications have now ceased, it is always important that the servant of Christ, whatever position in life he may occupy, whether that of a preacher or anything else, should seek to be assured in regard to any step he may take that he has the authority and direction of the Lord for it. The word written has been given as a light to the feet and a lamp to the path, and it is possible to be assured from that word as to what the Lord would have us do. It is very sinful and dangerous, in any case, to act contrary to it. “Order my steps in thy word,” says the Psalmist.

2. The second thing we observe, is that the call was to a very unlikely place for any good to be done. It may be remarked that it is not Gaza that was “desert” – Gaza was a town of the Philistines – but the highway leading to it which passed through a desolate wilderness.

The Lord directed Philip to leave behind him the populous villages of the Samaritans, where there seemed every prospect of spiritual success in preaching the gospel, and to pursue his journey towards a part of the country where there was no inhabitant. This, no doubt, appeared strange and mysterious to the eye of reason and sense. But the Lord's ways are right and dictated by infinite wisdom, even when they are foolishness in the eyes of men. The Lord called Philip to the desert place – not a very pleasant or comfortable locality – but He had wonderful work for him to do there – perhaps greater and more enduring in some respects than anything he did in Samaria. The great thing to know is, what is the will of God; all other considerations must be made subordinate to that; and the results also must be left with Him – “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

3. The third thing that may be noted is that the Lord did not tell Philip beforehand what would take place in the desert way. This part of the future was hid from him. The mission might mean death as well as service for Philip. He did not know what dangers he might be exposed to on his solitary journey, neither had he the encouragement of knowing the precious fruit that was to be the issue of it. The Lord calls for faith on His people's part. He requires that they should put unreserved confidence in Him, when He directs them to the performance of any work whatsoever, and especially when He leads them in some path hitherto untrod. They must not expect to know all the future contingencies that lie before them. It should be enough to know that He knows the end from the beginning, that He doeth all things well, and that He is able to supply all their need out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

4. The last thing we here remark is that Philip was very obedient to the heavenly vision; “he arose and went.” There is no record of any hesitation or unwillingness. He “did not stay nor linger long as those that slothful are,” but made haste to obey the voice of the Lord. He obeyed as well as believed the message. His faith showed itself to be a vital and lively one by the alacrity with which he obeyed the divine command, though he went out, in a measure, like Abraham, “not knowing whither he went.” And the spirit which Philip showed is in more or less degree the characteristic of all the Lord's faithful followers. They show their faith by their obedience. “Faith without works is dead.” Faith without obedience is dead. Men may know and believe with the head all the things that are necessary for salvation or service and may even preach about them very fluently, but if they do not “do” them, their knowledge and faith are dead. May the Lord give us an obedient spirit ready to do His will, in dependence upon His grace, whatever may be the consequences. “He arose and went,” and if Philip had any fears or misgivings when he set out, he had abundant occasion for praise in the end.

II. – We now go on to consider the account that is given of the eunuch of Ethiopia whom Philip met on the desert highway. It was for the express purpose of meeting this remarkable man that the Lord had sent Philip on this journey, and as we shall see more particularly further on, he was directed explicitly by the Spirit to go near and join himself to the eunuch's chariot. It would appear as if the eunuch sitting in his chariot was the first sight that met his gaze on the road. There are many things wonderful about the conversion of this man. Every particular concerning him provides us with an illustration of the truth that “the Lord of hosts is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working.”

1. Notice the eunuch's *nativity*. He was “a man of Ethiopia.” Ethiopia, a northern section of Africa, was a dark place of the earth. The people were dark in skin and dark in heart – Gentiles, afar off from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise. Such was the case of this Ethiopian also by nature, and such also is our case spiritually, though we may have a fairer outward complexion than had he. “Man looketh at the outward appearance; God looketh upon the heart.” But God, who is rich in mercy, had a purpose of grace towards the dark Gentiles as well as the more enlightened Jews, and this purpose of grace was fully manifested in due time when the Son of God came in the flesh,

and obeyed and suffered and died that Gentiles as well as Jews might be reconciled to God, and made heirs of eternal life. The conversion of this Ethiopian was thus a fruit of God's eternal purpose of love towards the Gentiles, and a fruit of the travail of Christ's soul upon the Cross. It was also an earnest of the fulfilment of the inspired prophecy of the Psalmist – "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" – Psalm 68:31.

2. Observe his *social position*. It was high. He was no ordinary man in any respect – "a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure" – something like the Lord Chamberlain of the Queen's household, or the Chancellor of the National Exchequer. He was evidently a man of great weight and influence. Here we see a trophy of divine power. "Not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" but some are, and this man of great authority was one of them. The Lord is able to bring down the pride of the most lofty of mankind, and make them humble suppliants and believers at the feet of Jesus. Here we also see the divine wisdom displayed. The Lord has the design of making one creature instrumental for good to another. He intends to use great men as well as small to advance His cause. Princes as well as peasants will be employed as vessels of mercy to convey the blessings of the gospel to their fellow-men. It is a blessed thing when men high in state are found humble followers of the Lamb, as it is, indeed, one of the greatest curses that can befall a nation when her rulers and great men are servants of "the god of this world." May the Lord deliver us as a nation from this plague which has befallen us, and may He raise up now, as He did in the past, men in the higher ranks of society who will be living epistles of Christ, and zealous promoters of His truth and glory in our own country and throughout the wide world!

3. Consider his *religious character*. The eunuch was not without a religion when Philip met him. In fact, it would appear that he had renounced the heathenism of his birth, and had become a proselyte to the Jewish faith. On this very occasion he "had come to Jerusalem to worship," and was now returning home again. We are not told to what extent he was enlightened in the knowledge of the Lord Jehovah, nor can we definitely gather in what spirit he held the faith of Israel. As far as the narrative goes, we do not see anything of the Pharisaic spirit appearing; in fact, quite the opposite – a humble spirit. But, at any rate, he had not come to the right foundation until he heard the gospel from the mouth of Philip; he did not know "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Divine grace and power appear in this, that he was not left satisfied with the defective religion he already possessed; he was brought to long after and find Jesus Christ, the one Saviour of the lost. Humanly speaking, it is generally more difficult to convert to the true faith of Christ people with some religion of a kind than those with none. But the things that are impossible with men are possible with God.

4. Lastly, let us notice *his exercise* when Philip met him. He was reading, and reading "Esaias the prophet." He was reading aloud, probably for the benefit of his charioteer. This was an excellent exercise, and he set a good example to others. Jesus commands us to search the Scriptures; and while reading or even searching God's word, with the natural intellect merely, will not give us the saving knowledge of the truth, yet we know not when the Lord may appear to our souls, and He makes use of the reading as well as the preaching of the word, as one of the doors by which He enters in. It was when the eunuch was reading and searching the Scriptures that the Lord sent Philip as a messenger of salvation to his soul. Let unconverted sinners read, and persevere in reading the word of God; at an unexpected moment the Spirit may apply it with saving power, and it will then become to them the Word of eternal life. Our times are in the Lord's hand, and we know not the day or the hour when the Son of man cometh, in grace as well as in providence.

III. – The next step we have to notice is Philip’s introductory meeting and conversation with the eunuch.

1. As to the meeting, we are not to think that it was an easy matter for Philip to approach this man, or that he would have likely done so without explicit divine direction. The eunuch was a man of high worldly position, and the circumstances of his chariot and of his personal garb and bearing would, no doubt, denote, not only his foreign birth, but his exalted rank, so that he was to the outward eye, not one that a humble preacher of the despised Nazarene would naturally approach with ease, or would suppose was a promising hearer of the gospel of Christ. It was necessary, therefore, both for Philip’s direction and encouragement that the Lord should give him an express word of command to approach the chariot. And this is what he did get. “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” And such was the power with which the word came that Philip not only went near, but actually “ran thither.” The Spirit’s command conveyed strength as well as light, and Philip ran with a holy energy and alacrity to the work that was before him. He was lifted above all fear of man, and was ready to speak the word of the Lord to princes with gracious boldness.

2. The conversation that took place. Philip, when he drew near, heard the eunuch reading Esaias the prophet, and as an ambassador of that glorious King of kings whose word was in the Ethiopian’s hand, he did not hesitate to introduce himself to his notice, and to do it with a very important question, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” The eunuch at once answered, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” There is something very striking in the humility manifested in this answer. The eunuch might have resented such a question from an entire stranger as an impertinence. But he did not. It is evident that his mind had been brought to a humble and teachable frame by God, and also that there was a point and impressiveness that attended Philip’s question, that made him entirely willing to hear what the stranger had to say. The Lord was with Philip, and his words were with power; and He was also working in the heart of the Ethiopian. All worldly distinctions vanished, and to shew his true and sincere desire to be taught, “he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.” This Philip did, and it was found that “the place of the Scripture which he read was this,” in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.” “And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?”

Could any portion of God’s Word be more appropriate than this for Philip to take up – a passage directly referring to the Messiah in His sufferings and death? We may wonder why the eunuch should put such a question as even suggested that the prophet might be speaking about himself and not another. But probably the solution is as follows: – He had been at Jerusalem, and had heard, no doubt, much discussion as to the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Messiah. Before Christ came, the Jewish Rabbis, with one accord, regarded the 53rd chapter of Isaiah as referring to the Messiah, but now that Jesus had appeared, such was their opposition to Him, that they would fain make the passage apply to the prophet himself – in any case, some other than the Messiah. The eunuch had probably heard these discussions, and was anxious to have the question solved, a thing that his friends at Jerusalem had evidently not been able to do for him. Whether this is the exact explanation or not of the origin of his enquiry, he could not have failed, in these stirring times at Jerusalem, to have heard of Jesus and His followers, and he was clearly anxious to know further about Him. Was He the person of whom Isaiah spoke, or was He not? seems the underlying concern. And from the spirit in which he answered Philip, and the ultimate issue of the conversation, we are safe in concluding that there was more here than intellectual enquiry – there was a desire on

the eunuch's part to know the Redeemer of Israel and the Saviour of sinners, whoever He was, for himself. And this was the blessed knowledge he attained to before Philip and he parted from one another.

Let us notice, at this point, that the first question Philip put to the eunuch is of importance for all of us still. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" It is not enough that we read the Bible, though that is good in itself; do we understand what we read? Do we understand it in a spiritual and saving way? The question is not, "Comprehendest thou?" but "Understandest thou?" We cannot comprehend many things that we can understand or apprehend. There is nothing whatsoever in the kingdom of nature or the kingdom of grace that we can comprehend in all its fulness. The infinite and unfathomable marks all the works of God. But we can apprehend or know much that is beneficial for us. And this is what is needed in relation to divine truth as bearing upon the salvation of our souls. We must understand, by divine illumination, the things concerning sin and salvation, otherwise we shall perish forever. It should be the desire, therefore, of every man who has the least concern about his eternal state, that his understanding and conscience would be enlightened as to his condition as a sinner before God, and as to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, and that the Lord would so effectually instruct him that he would, with his whole heart, receive God in Christ as his Saviour from sin and all its consequences. "And this is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" – John 17:3.

It is admirable also to notice in this connection the eunuch's answer to Philip's question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" Though a man of great authority, and, no doubt, of superior intellectual powers, he readily acknowledges his ignorance, and declares his entire willingness to be taught by any other man who can guide him into the truth. And so it is in regard to all enlightened of God in divine things. They are made willing to acknowledge their ignorance, and to receive instruction from any instrument the Lord may be pleased to use to communicate it. Men, however, are always to be viewed only as instruments, and their words are to be brought to the test of "the law and the testimony." The soul must look beyond them to the great High Priest, "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," and who has not only "the truth" to give, but can make the sinner both willing and able to receive it. "Good and upright is the Lord; he will teach sinners in the way."

IV. – We now pass on to observe the sermon that Philip preached from the text that the eunuch gave him. It was Isaiah 53:7,8, and the inspired writer says, that "Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." Luke is very brief on the matter, and sums up the sermon in one word, but a great one, "Jesus." Who can tell what a wealth of grace and glory is wrapped up in this name, for there is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved?"

1. We remark first, that Philip, a man full of the Holy Ghost, preached Jesus, and not another, from the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. This chapter has indeed convinced infidels in the past of the truth of Christianity; only the blind unbelieving Jews could not see Jesus in it. It has been reserved, however, for the blasphemous higher critics of our degenerate age professing Christianity – to say that Isaiah does not speak of Christ. We heard one of them with our own ears – the late Professor Davidson, New College, Edinburgh – say that he thought it was not the Messiah but "the invisible Church" that was spoken of. And this is stated in the face of the express testimony of the Holy Ghost by Philip and others in the New Testament. Truly such unbelief is appalling and bespeaks judicial blindness. Moreover, it is the men who thus defy the authority of God's word, that in our miserable day are praised to the skies for their gifts and virtues, and are exalted to the most responsible offices in the professing Church. People talk about "Back to Christ," and "Loyalty to Christ," and condone and justify the most blatant unbelief. Truly God is sending "strong delusion" that men may

“believe a lie,” that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thessalonians 2:11,12). If you have any common pity for your fellow creatures, pray that they may be delivered from the influences of the teachers of infidelity that are in the chairs of learning, belonging not to secular societies, but to what claim to be the most enlightened Christian Churches of the day. “If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.”

2. We have no doubt that Philip pointed out the remarkable correspondence between the description of the Messiah by Isaiah and what was true of Jesus of Nazareth in His character, sufferings and death. No beauty in His outward appearance to attract the carnal eye of man; holy and spotless in His words and deeds – “he had done no violence neither was any deceit in his mouth;” merciful and compassionate to the sorrows and sins of men – “he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows,” and made intercession for the transgressors; meek and silent under all the unjust accusations of His enemies; the sin-bearer, bearing the iniquity of His people, and brought as a lamb to the slaughter for their transgressions, and yet, though dying, living again, seeing His seed, prolonging His days, and the pleasure of the Lord prospering in His hand. Philip preached Jesus Christ, and Him crucified and Him risen, to the listening eunuch, as the one Substitute and Saviour of sinners, and he evidently also declared Him to be, as we learn from the sequel, not a mere man, but the Son of God, of whom Isaiah speaks in another place in these soul-quickenings words – “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” – Isaiah 11:6. Philip also spoke of baptism as an ordinance of Christ, and a sign and seal of the remission of sins.

This, then, is the true Christ of God whom Philip preached, and the Christ that must be preached and believed in to-day as then, if men are to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. No other Saviour will meet our case but God incarnate, obeying, suffering, dying, rising again, and ascending into heaven, as the representative of His sinful people. All other Christs are false, and will land men in perdition at last.

V. – We come now, in the fifth and last place, to the fruits of Philip’s sermon in the conversion and baptism of the eunuch.

1. It is remarkable to observe the silence of the Scripture as to the inward emotions of the eunuch under Philip’s preaching. What wonderful changes of thought and feeling must have passed over his soul during this time, until at last he is enabled, with all his heart, to believe in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and the Saviour of the lost, and to declare, with holy and humble confidence, his faith in this glorious Redeemer! The Holy Spirit who guided Philip to this place, manifestly accompanied His words with power. “The gospel came, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance,” and the eunuch is prepared to confess Christ without further delay. The Lord is able, when He pleases, to do a great work in a short time, and this was frequently illustrated in the apostolic age, and has been also since.

2. The eunuch desires to be baptised. It appears that they came to a certain water, and that, when the eunuch saw it, he said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?” Now, this desire was not a little thing, and very especially as coming from such a man, and in such circumstances. The confession of Christ meant much in those primitive times. To go back to Ethiopia a believer in the despised Nazarene, and to endeavour to follow in His steps, might involve the loss of everything the world counts dear, even the loss of life itself. The eunuch, by his acceptance of Christ and his willingness to be baptised, practically declared his readiness to suffer the loss of all things for the name of Jesus. He presents his request, also, in an honest and humble way, which confirms his sincerity. “What doth hinder

me to be baptised?” he asks – as much as to say, “Have you, Philip, any objections? Are there any obstacles in the way?” He shows that he recognises that there may be hindrances to his acknowledgment as a believer, and is willing to accept Philip’s judgment in the matter.

3. The eunuch’s confession of faith – “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” This confession was drawn from him by Philip, who answers in regard to the question of baptism, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”

Philip here points out

(1) that there may be a faith that is *not* with *all* the heart. There is a merely intellectual or moral faith that is only in the understanding or conscience, and that does not carry the will or the affections – the whole soul with it. Many believed in this way in the time of Christ, but in the stress of trial or persecution, they went back and walked no more with Him. This faith is not saving in its nature. Sin and self still reign in the heart. Philip impresses the truth

(2) that saving faith is *a faith with all the heart*. It is a faith with the consent of all the faculties of the soul. The whole soul is freed from the bondage of sin and is gained to Christ. It flows from and gives evidence of a new birth – a new creation. No other faith is saving but this. No other man believes in Christ to the saving of the soul, or is vitally united to Him by the Holy Ghost, but the man who is the subject of this great change. Such an one is wholly for Christ, and not for another.

To Philip’s searching word, “the eunuch answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” He here expressed in a few impressive words his faith in the Messiahship and Divinity of Jesus, and that as one who was receiving Him as his own personal Saviour. It may be easy for us to-day to make such a confession of Christ, after the evidences of nineteen centuries, though many are not doing even this who are under the power of infidelity unknown to themselves. But it was not so easy for the Ethiopian eunuch who had heard little or nothing of Christ before Philip met him. It bespoke a wonderful change, that he can give such a decided and cordial confession of the Divine Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth, after such a brief acquaintance with the truth concerning Him. He confesses Him as Christ, that is, the Messiah, and he confesses Him as the Son of God. Not *a* son merely on equality with other sons in the divine family, but *the* Son on an equality with God the Father – of the same substance with the Father and the Holy Ghost in the undivided Godhead.

It is no doubt possible for a man, by a process of argument, to come to an intellectual faith in Christ as the eternal Son of God; but it is more than this the eunuch confesses. It is such a faith as Peter had on a memorable occasion, when Jesus put the question – “Whom say ye that I am?” and Simon Peter answered, and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered, and said unto him, “Blessed are thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” – Matthew 16:16, 17. This faith, which stands not in the wisdom of men, but the power of God, makes a man willing to bear testimony, at all costs, for the sake of Christ, and fills him with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. And these were its attendant accompaniments in the case of the eunuch. Happy are those souls who can say, with all the heart, as the result of the Father’s teaching, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” They have everlasting life.

4. The last particulars to be observed are that Philip baptised the eunuch, “the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,” and the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.”

(1) In regard to the baptism, we only pause on this occasion to remark that nothing can be definitely concluded from this passage as to *the mode* of baptism. It does not prove immersion. If the words “went down into the water” are brought forward to prove that it was, then it is stated that *both* went down. The baptism could have been done by sprinkling or pouring; and the word in the 52nd chapter of Isaiah, in the context of Philip’s text might have been fulfilled – “He shall *sprinkle* many nations.” But, as we have said, nothing can be definitely gathered from this passage as to the mode in which baptism is to be administered.

Our Confession of Faith does not restrict baptism to any one of the three modes. All or any may be employed, in our opinion, and that quite scripturally.

(2) “The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more.” Philip appeared in a very remarkable way to the eunuch at first; and now he disappears from his view in a still more remarkable way. The Lord sent him, by a direct command, through an angelic messenger, and now the Lord snatches him away in a supernatural manner, for the words clearly mean that he was caught away bodily by the Spirit. And, however strange it may appear at first sight, we think that this was designed as a confirmation of the eunuch’s faith. The Lord made it manifest before his very eyes that Philip was His devoted servant, completely under His guidance and control both as to body and soul. The same divine power that attended the words of Philip with such sweet, irresistible force and unction to the heart of the eunuch, now is exerted upon Philip himself, and transports him out of view in a visible yet miraculous manner. The eunuch was thus fully assured that Philip was God’s ambassador to his soul, and that his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God was by the revelation of the Father who is in heaven.

(3) “And he went on his way rejoicing.” The eunuch had lost Philip, but he had found Christ. For the time, he had lost the servant, but he had found the Lord. His sorrow at the loss of Philip was entirely swallowed up in the joy of finding “the pearl of great price,” the heavenly Saviour, “whom having not seen,” he now loved, and in whom believing he now rejoiced “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” He, no doubt, loved Philip much, but he loved Christ more. Philip was his minister, but Christ was his Redeemer. This joy of his, after Philip’s departure, is another evidence of the reality of his faith in Christ. It did not depend upon Philip’s presence; its spring was in heaven. And this is a mark of the faith of the Lord’s true and faithful people in all ages. However much they may esteem any man as the messenger to Christ to their souls, they do not put that man in the place of Christ. Their faith and walk are not dependent on the creature but on the Creator. It is certainly a bad sign of any when they do not value the true ministers of the gospel, or sorrow at their removal, but it is equally bad when people who profess Christ speak and act as if their spiritual sustenance or salvation depended on ministers, and as if they would need to follow ministers no matter where they would go. Such show that their faith is either a mere formality or in a decayed condition, needing quickening from above. In the present case, Philip was clearly carried away to the situation the Lord had marked out for him; and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing. He did not stay to look after Philip, but went on in his own divinely appointed path, rejoicing in the presence of the Lord and glad in His salvation.

There are many things in this interesting narrative full of instruction for us. We must believe in the same Jesus as the eunuch believed in, if we are to be saved for eternity. Time is short; we know not what a day or an hour may bring forth; and Jesus says, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” Nothing but death eternal awaits every soul that continues in unbelief and impenitence. It is either repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, or eternal damnation. May the Lord, in infinite mercy, incline and enable sinners to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel! Jesus is willing to receive sinners – even the chief – and He is “able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him.” And may those who were enabled, in a day of grace, to believe in Christ unto salvation, endeavour to live more and more by the faith of Christ, and to delight themselves in Him and His abundant grace, who is fairer than the sons of men, the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely one, who died that His people might live, and who lives at the right hand of the Father, that they may reign with Him for ever and ever. May the Lord bless to us His Word!

[May 1907]

A Sermon.

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[Taken from a little book of "Addresses" by Mr. Burns, edited in 1858 by the late Rev. Robert Macdonald, D. D.,
of North Leith. These addresses were delivered in Scotland. – ED.]

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay
aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the

race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” – Hebrews 12:1,2.

The Christian life is often compared in Scripture to a warfare, in which contending parties fight till at length one is crowned with victory. Here we find it compared to a race, the comparison being taken from the heathen games at which this mode of competition was usually practised in ancient times. All the language employed alludes to this, and gives directions for the running of the race to glory. No man can begin this race until he has entered in by Christ, who is the door; no man can run till he be within the strait gate, but when once he has entered, a race opens before him, and this race is to be run by each believing soul seeking salvation. At the end of the race, in olden times, was hung up the prize; and so in the heavenly race the prize of the inheritance is placed as the goal towards which we are to run. Let us not be ignorant as to who is to be the judge of the race. It will be God, the Judge of all, to whom we are already come by faith.

But not only have we the command to run, we are likewise told that it is a race *set before us*. The moment a man begins to live again from the dead, that path opens to him; it opens up at once, clearly and evidently, in the providence of God. We do not require to go a single step *out of the way* to find the race we are to run, nor to look around us as for a hidden and obscure path. As soon as we become alive to God He gives us the heart to run in His ways; and our safety lies in ever watching and waiting for the work He would have us to do, ready to catch at all that He gives us, and to grasp at what lies nearest our hand. Now, there are some who run out of the race; and even among Christians some run so fast at first as to lose their breath, and can run no longer. Men do not run thus when in a race. They measure the distance with the eye, and if possible keep up their strength to the end, that it may not run out just when they are reaching the goal. Oh! what an awful thing would that be. How hideous to be in sight of heaven, with its glory almost bursting upon you and its prize almost within your reach, and yet to turn back and be lost for ever! Does it not make one *shudder* to think of that?

Remember, again, that you are to run this race with patience. This is a needful caution, for it is hard for us patiently to persevere in the race of God’s appointing. It is often a cross to us to keep to the performance of present duty, to remain quietly within our appointed spheres, giving ourselves up into the hands of the Master we serve, and entreating Him to choose a lot convenient for us. Some people are never contented unless they are flaming in the eyes of the world, and making a noise in it. Ah! they forget that the concealed members are often the most useful ones. It would not do if a man’s body were all an eye, or all a foot, or all a hand; each member has its proper place, and each part is useful in its own way.

But, again, we are commanded to lay aside every weight. No man would be so foolish as to load himself with a weight before he began to run, nor to encumber himself unnecessarily with what might be burdensome; but he would rather carefully weigh all he was to carry. “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” And if it be so, my dear friends, shall we who are running to obtain the crown of everlasting life, give up our hearts to idols or to sin? – shall *we* entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life?

We shall now mention one or two of those weights which must be laid aside by whomsoever would run the race to glory. The first is *the weight of unforgiven sin*. Oh! how many are trying to run with this weight of unpardoned sin upon them, and truly they run in vain. A poor chance that man would have in a race who insisted on carrying with him a load beneath which he could scarcely move. Yet many attempt this hopeless task in the heavenly race. Do you remember what John Bunyan says in his *Pilgrim’s Progress* of poor Christian,

who began his journey with the heavy burden of his unforgiven transgressions upon his back – how hard the journey was to him then! But when he came to the spot WHERE THE CROSS WAS, ah! the burden fell from off his shoulders into the gulf beneath, and how quickly, and joyfully, and lightly he went on in the narrow path that led him to eternal life. Whenever a sinner gets a believing view of Immanuel's Cross his guilt is sensibly removed, and with an unburdened soul he goes on his way rejoicing. No man can go a single step in God's way without this.

Among the many weights which oppress the believer, and which he is called to lay aside, it is *the world* which proves the sad drawback to most. Oh! the folly of cumbering ourselves with such a weight on such a long journey! It will not do; the world *must* be cast aside in all its unlawful observances. Little need have we to add to the load we necessarily carry within us by any outward ones. Believer, *is it possible* that the indulgence of the creature, or any of its passing pleasures, is to outweigh, with you, the importance of the work which has been given you to do? to mortify and subdue – not to feed and excite – the flesh, with its affections and lusts, living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world, bringing all our lawful affections also into subjection to Christ.

Another burden which must be cast off is that of *sinful care*. Cast all your cares on Him who careth for you, seeing that He knoweth all your wants better than you do yourselves. If persecutions and reproach because of the Word arise, do not fear. You must expect that; and the time when the believer is so persecuted is often the very happiest time of his life. Why not be content to lose what the Lord of Glory never had? Though you were to lose property, houses, and lands, you need not complain, for the Lord had not where to lay His head; and why should His servant murmur at losing anything which the Master, when on earth, did not possess? "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." How little do any of us know of "resisting unto blood, striving against sin!"

Different ideas have been taken up of the exact meaning of the "sin which doth more easily beset us," the more general supposition being that a man's peculiar besetting sin is here alluded to; and that just as one wearing a long garment in a race would thereby be entangled and hindered, so the sin which is most apt to surprise a believer into falling must be, with the greatest watchfulness, avoided and laid aside. True it is that every child of God must be conscious of some sin which he finds the most abundant in his heart – some sin which gives him constant trouble; and against such he would do well to strive, so that he may escape its power. But the meaning we should be inclined specially to attach to the expression is rather that of inward depravity. Oh! how original sin besets a believer at each step. At every turn he takes, it reappears; every way he looks, it meets him; wherever he goes, it overtakes him. It has been with him from the beginning; it will remain with him to the end. But how, you say, is original sin to be laid aside? In one sense it is impossible to lay aside the depravity of the nature; it cannot be put off entirely *now*, but it *can* be laid aside in the way of being loathed, and abhorred, and detested as a filthy and abominable thing, on account of which you are a very horror to yourselves. And then depravity must not *reign* – it *does not reign* – in any believer's heart. It can be brought down in a very great degree, and it *is* possible for a man to pass through life without any outward stain on his profession.

We have alluded principally to the difficulties in the way of those who have entered on the Christian race; let us now speak of one or two of the incitements to run so that we may obtain. "Therefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." The cloud of witnesses here spoken of refers, of course, to those saints of old, named in the previous chapter as those who had all died in faith, and then were, and now are, inheriting the promises. Many have believed that they are here called *witnesses* in allusion to the spectators in whose presence the ancient games were performed – onlookers who watch the race to heaven, and rejoice in the believer's victory over the world. Is not this a sweet

encouragement, beloved friends? But what we should rather be inclined to suppose to be the meaning of the passage is, that the saints are called witnesses more because they are witnesses to God's truth than witnesses merely of the Christian warfare. They are witnesses to the Gospel – to God's glorious and unchanging truth – witnesses to this, that Christ died, and that God hath given them the victory through Him that loved them. They are called a cloud of witnesses because, being a multitude whom no man can number and taken from all peoples and tongues, they form one company, united in the Lamb. Oh! it is a bright, bright cloud, that cloud of witnesses; bright, because all in it are clothed with the blood-washed robe of Immanuel's righteousness; bright, because sanctified and purified by the spirit of divine light and glory; bright, because exposed eternally to the unclouded beaming of the Sun of Righteousness. And it is a *witnessing* cloud; it shines to tell of the faithfulness of the God of salvation, it witnesses to the love of Him who is the faithful and true Witness, and it testifies of the power of the renewing Spirit.

Believers, take encouragement from this; remember that its numbers were made up from the ranks of sinners like yourselves. And did any one of them ever leave on earth an evil report of the God in whom he trusted? Did any ever leave this report – that He was unfaithful, or that He was not true to His covenant? Ah, no! There was never yet a child of God, however weak and doubting, that did not, at the end of his pilgrimage, raise his Ebenezer, and say "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." This is well worthy of note, and well fitted to strengthen the heart of the weakest amongst you. No believer, however persecuted, tried, and downcast – however beaten down with fightings without, and well-nigh overwhelmed with fears within – leaves the world with only this testimony: that to him Jehovah has been a wilderness or a land of darkness. There was never one that did not add his voice to that of the cloud of witnesses above, and proclaim that He in whom he had believed was an unchanging and a faithful God. Each dying believer sets his seal, as he enters glory, to this – that God is true; and leaves behind him in the world an additional testimony to the evidence which the Church already has within itself, that *whom He loves, He loves unto the end.*

And shall we who possess more of this evidence than believers in past times ever could have possessed, shall *we* begin to doubt Him? The light that shines upon the Gospel race to-day is brighter than it ever was before; the ground is better marked out; the path is better beaten. There are more believers at this hour than there ever were before; we mean, taking in all above and all beneath. Every day the number increases, every day it is greater than the last, because every day – by the power of the Divine Spirit – souls are added to Christ's church and kingdom of such as shall be saved. And oh! if the Old Testament saints were strong in faith, giving glory to God; if they, with only the dim light of an expected Saviour, seen through the types and shadows of the Jewish temple, if they could so clearly behold that city which hath foundations, that, by the faith and sight of Him who is invisible, they could subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, obtain promises, stop the mouths of lions, quench the violence of fire, escape the edge of the sword, out of weakness be made strong – they who had never seen Immanuel evidently crucified before them – they who had never beheld the unveiled glory of the Lamb that was slain; what should be *our* faith and light and love, whose eyes have "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"? Oh! if Enoch had this testimony, in a day when there were perhaps but few believers on the earth, *that he pleased God*, how should we be serving Him unto all well-pleasing? If Enoch could walk with God in a day when there were few companions to accompany him, and when, as it were, there were but few traces impressed on the narrow way, how closely should *we* walk with Him *now*, when the path to glory is marked by the footsteps of so many followers of the Lamb; now, when they all have left their testimonies behind them to the faithfulness of Him in whom they have believed!

Let us take shame to ourselves for this – we have had nothing yet to try our faith, so to speak; nothing to put our love *to the proof*. Believers, are you sinking under the good fight of faith? Ah! you don't know yet what trials mean. You have not had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings yet, though no man knows how soon such things might come round; you have not been subject to bonds and imprisonments yet; nor been stoned, nor had to wander about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; nor been forced to leave your homes for deserts and mountains, or for dens and caves of the earth. No, beloved; and yet those who suffered these things – even to being clad in sheepskins and goatskins, and being slain by the sword, or sawn asunder – they were just saved sinners, and nothing more. Though they were the men of whom the world was not worthy, they yet “received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” But they are perfect now. Yes, the Old Testament Church is made up now. The Old Testament Church is complete; it is above; it is a Church triumphant. And isn't that encouraging? Not a soul belonging to it left wandering on this desert world! Is it not sweet to think that these Old Testament saints now shine a cloud of witnesses? Oh, yes! And since the saints of the old dispensation have been removed to the upper courts, thousands have entered into the glorious rest prepared and remaining for the people of God.

First did the Forerunner Himself enter in, and sit down on the right of the throne, having triumphed openly. Ay, and since then many a goodly company of apostles, and martyrs, and tried believers, having washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood, have followed to the heavens. And what is *more*, beloved, I am persuaded that in the cloud of witnesses there are not a few redeemed ones taken from amongst you. Some who, not very long ago, delighted to join with us here in the precious services of this sanctuary – some who sang with us the praises of the Lord, and bent with us around a throne of grace – now stand with palms in their hands around the throne of glory, saying “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!” Yes, beloved, I believe it. “*Wherefore*, seeing *we* also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” And then what follows? “Looking unto Jesus.” Precious command! This *looking unto Jesus* is *all* the Gospel. It is precious to have the example and the victory of patriarchs, and apostles, and prophets, and martyrs to look to; but ah! that is but a small thing in comparison with the example we have in Jesus. Beloved friends, there's not a step of the steepest path to life on which His foot has not left a divine impress; there is not a step of the race that isn't marked with blood, that isn't marked with glory. The Forerunner did not ascend up on high without leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.

Christ is set before those who are running the Christian race in three different characters – as enduring the Cross, as despising the shame, and as set down at the right hand of God. One of the first sights the soul gets by faith of the Lord Jesus Christ is as enduring the Cross. He had a motive for so enduring – the joy of seeing sinners redeemed and saved by His blood. He looked back to the Old Testament Church already glorified, and He looked forward to us – to every one who by Him should be saved. In that hour He saw *you*, He saw *me* – He saw an elect world depending on Him for salvation, and so He endured the Cross. Who can tell what a weight of wrath lay upon Him at that moment – more wrath than ever lay on any sinner, or on all the condemned; and yet, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross.

If He had not done that there would have been no Christian warfare – no race – no way – no goal at the end – no combat – no victory – no eternal life. There would have been no promises, my dear friends; there would have been no commands – no threatenings. You have to thank the Cross of Christ even for commands and threatenings; thank Him that it is not an eternal sentence of woe that is gone forth; for, had Christ not endured His Father's wrath for

sinner, there had been no need or room for threatening. Neither threatening nor command is now sent to the fallen angels; all they have to do is to drink of the cup of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. But for *us*, has Immanuel endured the Cross. He drank of the brook by the way, and now He hath lifted up the head. He hath ascended up on high leading captivity captive, and receiving gifts for the rebellious sons of men.

The first view you need to get of Christ, dear fellow-sinner, is to behold Him as a Saviour, but the next is as “despising the shame.” None of His people follow Him closely, or follow Him long, without being in some measure conformed to Him in this respect; and it is not an easy thing to despise shame, or even to bear shame. But when you are, for His sake, cast out by the world, look unto Jesus as bearing the reproach and the shame for you. And oh! the believer’s happiest moments often are when he is loaded with the reproach of the Cross, for then he most clearly sees the great High Priest passed into the heavens, who sympathizes with all his griefs. The sympathy of Immanuel! What a support; what a glorious consolation! Sympathy is always sweet when anything grieves you very much. If you are suffering, for instance, under a bereavement in your family, and your friends come and show that they feel deeply for you, it consoles and soothes you. It alleviates your distress when their tears mingle with yours, and you feel that if anything could comfort you, *that* would do it. But yet human sympathy is an empty thing. It cannot fill the blank, or heal the wound, or dry the tears of sorrow. But the sympathy of Jesus is not empty. Oh! beloved friends, it is precious, precious, precious! True, He is passed into the heavens, out of His people’s sight, but yet He is near to them. And that sympathy of His is no ideal thing; it is no imagined comfort. It is a sympathy worth the having, for it is deep – deep – deep as His godhead, and yet tender as His manhood. Some believers seem to feel as if His manhood had been lost in the glory of His divine nature; but His heart and His feelings and His sympathy are just as much those of a man as when He walked by the Sea of Galilee. The sympathy of Jesus is human sympathy – it feels for a fellow-man; and He feels for His own people, and counts all that is done to them as if it were done to Himself. He is a merciful and sympathizing High Priest; He knows their trials, and He remembers that they are dust.

This is just the reason why the very happiest moments of a believer – the moments when he has most actual joy and confidence – are often those in which his cup of anguish is well nigh running over, and when reproach and calumny and persecution have seemed to be striving which shall wound him most, just because at these moments the heavenly Sympathizer in all his sorrows has been more sensibly near to him, pouring His divine consolations without measure into his soul. See to it, my dear friends, that you beware of trying to despise the shame, unless you be at the same time looking unto Jesus. Your heart will soon fail if you cease to behold Him as the endurer of the Cross and despiser of the shame, who is now seated at the right hand of God.

Weak believers, be encouraged by this – that the victory is gained. It is not to be fought for now; it is finished – it is complete; and our head is above. Christ is above, not only accepted of the Father, but set down for evermore at His right hand. Yes, He is enthroned above, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, and He does not forget for one moment the Church on earth, which He hath purchased with His own blood. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” was His language upon the earth; and “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” was His language from the highest heaven. Little does the world think how near He is to every one of the least of these, His brethren. Little does the world think that whosoever toucheth one of them, toucheth, as it were, the apple of His eye. But what affecting proofs have we of this? Do you remember Stephen? Did Christ look on with indifference at Stephen’s martyrdom? Was He an unconcerned spectator when Stephen stood for *His* name’s sake in the midst of his enemies to die the death? Ah, no! Favoured Stephen! The persecuted multitude were doing

their worst, and Stephen was about to die when he lifted up his eyes to heaven. And what did he see? Heaven opened. Was not that a sight worth seeing – an open heaven, a heaven prepared for him, opening to receive him? Beloved friends in Jesus, would not that be a sight worth dying for – an open heaven? I think an open grave wouldn't frighten us if we saw at the back of it an open heaven; nor a burning stake, with an open heaven beyond it. But this was not all that Stephen saw, though, truly, of itself it would have been a glorious sight. Whom did the opening heavens reveal to Stephen? A redeeming Saviour; the author and the finisher of his faith; the glorified One! Yes, He was just going to put the finishing stroke upon Stephen's faith; He was just going to make Stephen perfect, and to raise him to His throne. Was Jesus the same, of whom it is here said that He endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God? Yes; when His people suffer, He suffers too. He could not sit on His throne while a faithful martyr suffered. We are not called to die for Christ, but let us witness for Him, though it be in sackcloth and ashes; and we do not know that the day shall never come – even in our time – when men must lose their lives in this world if they would keep them unto life eternal. The martyr is likeliest to his Lord. Every believer is conformed in some degree to His image, but none are so fully conformed to it as those who die for His sake. Yes, the martyr, in living and in dying, is likeliest to his Lord. Perhaps no one ever died for Christ's cause to whom He did not appear in His love.

But do all obtain this view of an open heaven? Do you think that if the men who were stoning Stephen had seen heaven opened, they would have seen what he saw? Do you think if the kings and judges of the earth who set themselves together against the Lord and His anointed, saying "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" – think you that to them the opening heavens would reveal Christ standing at the right hand of God? Ah, no! they would see another sight. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Oh! could men but see *before* them, when they are going on in their rebellion, how the mighty God smiles at all their opposition. If you could see heaven opened, unbeliever, and Jesus, the crucified one, against whom you are fighting, sitting on the throne of universal dominion, you, too, would see another sight from what Stephen saw. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." Is there not one heart melting under the word to-night? Are you all determined, without exception, to reject Christ, and to make the excuses of corrupt and deceived hearts? Is Christ not to find entrance into one soul to-night? It is with tears that we speak thus. Must we go unto Him that sent us and say, "They will not come in"?

Must we leave this favoured city and turn unto others? Oh! beloved, you've got many a warning, many an invitation, many an entreaty in this place to come to Christ, and you have rejected them all – every one, every one. Are you doing it still? Are you rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father's unspeakable gift, again to-night? Is it possible? Know you not, then, what will be the end of them that obey not the Gospel? "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth." Yes, yes, brethren, fellow-sinners, it is the truth and no lie that we speak. If you reject Him to the end – it may be if you reject Him now – you will be damned. Yes, and you will go down – down – down so fast that none can stop you, and so fast that you can't stop yourselves, into the pit of eternal vengeance – to the devil and his angels. Oh! are we to leave you thus? Can we leave you? Would to God that poor sinners were seeing their awful condition, and fleeing from the coming judgment! Brothers and sisters, it might well melt the coldest heart to come among you time after time, and see you hardening under the preached Gospel, and well-nigh deserted by a striving Spirit, and piercing the heart of Immanuel by resisting His love. Truly, when we think of it and remember the days that are gone by – the days of the right hand of the Most High – the countless warnings since – ah! but *you* must think of it too, or the compassion of fellow men will do you little good. Let conscience testify for God this night. Are there not men and women here who have heard the

Gospel so long that their ears are tired of listening to it, and who yet have never surrendered their hearts to Christ? You have a place for every idol and every lust, but you've no room for Christ – none; and you cannot plead ignorance.

Are there no drunkards here? Yes, I believe it. There are men in this place who have been warned, and warned, and warned till ministers can warn no longer, of what their drunkenness will bring on – ruined body and soul. You know well what I am saying, sinner, and yet you go to the public-house wilfully and constantly to court destruction; ay, and come into the very House of God with the smell of drink upon you. What can we, then, say to you drunkards, or to you unclean, or to you Sabbath-breakers, or to you liars, or to you whose sins we cannot name? Know you not that no drunkard, or unclean person in heart or in life, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God? Know you not that the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone?

Some of you go to the theatre, to get the knife put to your very souls, and to shorten, if possible, your path to hell; or you go and join in the dance and the song, and sing those pernicious ballads that fill the mind with impurity and sin. And you go about as joyously as if no curse were hanging over your head, or as if no pit were ready to receive you. Is this going home to the hearts of any? Are there none who feel that they have been actually persevering and delighting in sin in the very face of light, and of love, and of conscience? Charge yourselves with it. I charge you in the sight of God, who shall judge the quick and the dead, and before angels, ay, and before devils who have marked your downward progress with care and with fiendish joy. I charge you with it as you shall appear before the great white throne – young men, young women, answer to your names. Is that not true? Is it true? Do I speak thus that I may harrow up your feelings? No, but because we dare not leave you rejecting Christ, despising the Holy One, treasuring up unto yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of God's righteous judgments. Will you not now give up your drinking and your songs, the theatre and the dance, or will you dance down to hell, where you will dwell with devils, among lost souls? Confess your guilt, dear young men. Will you not be any more found amid these scenes of vice and sin or on the race-ground – that encampment of Satan around your poor city? You will not be condemned for breaking the law, nor for Sabbath-breaking, nor for drunkenness, but you will be condemned on this awful ground of rejecting Christ. Unbelief is the sin that will sink you into the lake of fire, from which nothing can save you but receiving Christ; and He is willing to receive you. If you but knew Him you would believe *that*. We proclaim to you again, in the name of Jehovah, that Jesus – His unspeakable gift, even Jesus Christ – is free to-night to each sinner within these walls. Any one who wills, whosoever will, let him come; let him accept it this moment. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; believe, receive Him, and be saved. Does any one say that he does not know what we mean by receiving Christ? My dear friends, there is nothing more simple. It just means that you are to open your hearts to Him – to act faith upon Him – to say, "Come quickly" – to cry, "Help thou mine unbelief!"

Do you not understand it yet? Take an illustration. Do you understand this – what it would be to possess a thing without having it in your hand; to possess a thing at a distance – a thing you had never seen? If a friend were to say to you that he had made over to you some particular object, would you not consider it as much your own before you saw it as after? If I met you in the street and said I had a book for you, had put your name on it, and that it was lying ready for you at home, and bid you come for it, then if you went from me and met any one you would say, "I've got a book; the minister has given it to me – it's mine"; and you would feel *that*, though the book were still at my lodging. Or if you had no shelter for the night, and I met you, and said "Come to my lodging to-night – there is room for you there," and then you went into a house, and any one asked if you had shelter for the night, you would

say “Yes, I’ve got shelter; I’ve got it; I’m going to a house where I’ll get it.” And you say *that* without ever having seen the house, or knowing much about where it was, if only you had directions to find it. Or if a hungry man were told to come at a certain hour for food, he would say “I’ve got food,” though he had not seen it. And this is just what a sinner feels when he has accepted Christ as the gift of God. He feels his need of the Saviour. God says “Here is my beloved Son; I give unto you eternal life and all things in him.” And so the sinner says “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.” And then he feels, and says “*Christ is mine* – the Father hath given Him unto me; eternal life is mine, and none can pluck me out of the Father’s hand.” Now, is not that blessed? Is it not simple? Simple and free as air to every soul under heaven, and to every sinner in this house to-night, to be his to all eternity – *a free gift*. The very word *gift* implies freeness. Will you not accept it, and take the gift from the Father’s hand? Cry to Him now and He will answer you. Do you say you are too vile? What! too much lost to be saved! Is that possible? Can it be? Beloved friends, have you no reason? By saying you are too vile you just say this: “I cannot take God’s righteousness, because I’ve got *no* righteousness; I cannot take salvation from Christ, because I’m unsaved; I cannot pray, because I have not got what I need from God yet; I cannot eat the Bread of life, because my hunger is not satisfied, nor drink the living water, because my thirst is raging still.”

Apply that to the previous illustration. I meet a man wandering about, without house or home, and offer him a lodging. He says “Thank you, sir; but indeed I have no lodging, so I cannot take it.” I meet another, starving with hunger, and say “Here is bread; take it.” He says “Oh! I would be so thankful, but I have not a morsel of bread; I cannot take it, for I have none.” Or if one were dying of thirst, and you gave him drink, and he were to say “I cannot take it, for I have no water.” What should we say to them? “Man, how foolish you are. I don’t ask you to take lodging from me because you have lodging, but because you have none. I didn’t offer you bread because you have bread, or water because you have water. I offer you them because you have none; that is my very reason – my only reason.” Or if you went to a diseased man, and offered to run for a physician, and the sick man said “Oh! I can’t see the physician, because I’m not well!” I should say “Man, that’s why you need the physician – because you’re ill and dying, and will soon be gone unless he come to you.” But no man in his senses will meet you with reasoning like this. Never was such a thing heard of when temporal need and temporal mercies are in the question. It is left to the spiritually hungry to cast their food from them, for no other reason than that they are too hungry to take it. It’s left to the sin-sick soul to shut its door on the physician who comes to heal and save it. Don’t imagine that we overdraw the picture. For what else does the sinner virtually do, when he meets the offers of pardon with the sorrowful assurance that you need not speak to him of pardon, for he has never got pardon; that you need not offer him all things in Christ Jesus, because he has as yet got nothing from Him – no bread on which to feed a starving soul; refusing water because he is too thirsty to drink it; and when you ask him to cover his filthy rags with Christ’s garment of salvation – as we now entreat every sinner within these walls to do, and as in Christ’s name, and as ambassadors of God, we now command you to do, saying “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (and, sinners, oh! do it now) – he says “I can’t take this clothing, because I’m naked; I can’t take Christ’s garment, for I have none.” What does this mean? If you knew your own hearts, it just means this, “*I am not willing to give Him my heart.*” Seek, beloved friends, to yield it up to Him this night. Wait on the Lord continually.

You say “I don’t see Him; I cannot behold Him.” Oh no! for He’s passed into the heavens; but He lives, He lives to save you and to fight for you, having gotten the victory. Join Him, and you will be on the winning side. It is a great encouragement to an army to go on fighting if they know they are to get the victory. How should it not encourage you to know that Immanuel has conquered, and is now set down on the right hand of God, and is offering

salvation as a free gift – for it is as free in the nineteenth century as it was in the first. Oh! if I could but tell you how free it is. I know well that this is all foolishness and without meaning to the natural man, but still if God reveal it to your souls this night, it shall not be so to you. If you would accept of Christ, you would find this to be a new world to you. The sun would shine doubly upon you; the moon would shine upon you, as you go forth this night, as it never shone on you before. All creation would be your friend, because its Creator's smile would rest on you for ever. Strange it is that such doubts and fears still harass us. Strange it is that you cannot behold the unclouded glory of the Eternal Sun. But it has always been so, and it is so still, although at this time there is more light upon the road than there ever was. Do you recollect how Bunyan expresses that when he speaks of the Slough of Despond? How the king's servants had, at his command, been continually trying to fill it up with cart-loads of promises, and yet it had never been made firm ground. So is it with the path to glory. Successive generations have traced on it the marks of joy, and confidence, and hope, and of final triumph in the God of salvation, but still it is overshadowed with doubt, and uncertainty, and darkness, and shrouded by the fear of death. Yet lift your eyes above the intervening mists; believe in God's love; look unto Jesus! His merits and blood are a sure foundation. They are strong enough to bear any sinner here, and if you would come over and plant your foot on them, you would find that there is a good foundation for the heavenly race, and one on which you may safely fight the good fight of faith, and overcome the enmity of Satan and the world!

A sore fight you will have with the world. How sharp-eyed it is to the sins of God's people; how quickly are their failings detected, exposed, and cried down. The least slip in their hard race is marked and noted. And when tempted by their enemies into an open sin, it is never lost on the sharp-sighted world; such an outcry is raised about hypocrisy and pretence that you never hear the last of it. And why does the world expect God's people to be so holy? How does it raise such a high standard for them, and marvel that men of like passions with itself should ever fall or stumble? Why does the world watch believers so narrowly? If one of themselves sins openly, that is no wonder to them; they feel no surprise. They never expect to find a holy Atheist or a holy Deist; when *they* do wrong it is considered a very light matter, and quite natural. But ah! if a saint walk inconsistently – if but a single blemish be found on his profession or a stain upon his character – it is soon noticed. True, they have often too much room to speak thus of God's people, but what does their anxiety to do so prove? Does it show that Christ is not worthy of confidence, or that He cannot keep His people holy? No! The world's anxiety to find fault just proves that Jesus *is* a holy and an all-sufficient Saviour. Does it not prove that Jesus lives? It does, it does. Does it not prove that the Spirit is a sanctifying Spirit? It does, it does.

Oh! brethren, I have often myself felt that when, through the prevalence of sin and the depth of unbelief, I have scarce been able to believe *that Christ is living still*. That very opposition of the world to Christ's people – that very outcry that is raised when they sin – that eagerness that is so evident to lay any sin at a believer's door, and to spread it and triumph in it, as if they had really got a victory through the man's fall – I say, that very shout of joy that follows his fall – has convinced me and made me feel what a reality there must be in the being of Immanuel – what an almighty power in His arm, to save – what a boundless grace in His Spirit, to sanctify! If the very unbelieving and God-denying world expects *that* grace in His people which they would never look for in themselves or in the world around them, shall *you*, believers, think so lightly of the power of the Spirit of God, as not even to expect *that* from Him which the world expects all His people should possess? How it should also warn you *to beware how you act!* Remember that many eyes are upon you, and many snares are about your feet, and many hearts will triumph in your fall, and try to cast the shame and disgrace of it upon your great High Priest. Walk wisely then, and remember that if

a saint in walking through the street do but cast a side-look at any vanity, it is treasured up and remembered, and charged upon the spotless name and on the holy cause of Christ, who is your King.

You need not attempt to keep your garment white, or your profession unstained, in any other way than by looking unto Jesus. Look to Him continually, and do not fear what man can do unto you, nor that you yourself will be left openly to disgrace your profession or bring reproach on Christ. When you do lose sight of Him do not despair. Remember that night when Christ sent the apostles out upon the sea, and let the storm arise, and tried their faith by not going to them till the fourth watch. So has His Church since then been often left. Many, many a long night she has toiled and watched under the seeming frown of an absent Saviour. Did she watch in vain? The morning dawned, and His love was revealed. You who feel as if you were seeking Him in vain, plead on till the fourth watch. He will come walking on the waters; and when He does come, do not refuse to recognise Him, as Peter did. Receive Him; open your hearts to Him, that He may come and dwell there for evermore!

[June 1907]

Brief Notes of a Sermon.

By the Late REV. DR. KENNEDY, Dingwall.

Preached in Gaelic at Creich.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

“Remove not the old landmark; and enter not the fields of the fatherless: for their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee” – Proverbs 23:10,11.

Let us consider the two prohibitions in the text: –

- I. – “Remove not the old landmark,” and
- II. – “Enter not the fields of the fatherless.”

Though fatherless, he has fields and a Redeemer who is mighty.

I. – “Remove not the old landmark.” The landmarks, if rightly set, should not be removed; if not so set, they require to be so by the charter of the estate. And when this is done

and they are set according to the plan by him who has authority to do so, they should not be removed. It was so with the land of promise; it was divided among the tribes and families of Israel according to the commandment of God, and the generations to come required to respect the marks.

We have landmarks in the Word of God, and respect must be had to them in connection with four things:

- (1) opinions or views,
- (2) hopes,
- (3) experiences, and
- (4) practices.

(1) *Views* must not go beyond the mind of God a hairbreadth. We require to be kept in reverence of the anointing from the Holy One. For there never was a sheep more ready to follow another over a fence than you are to go beyond this landmark without “the unction.” Self makes some to be careful about their views being the same as those of the people of God, but that is very different from having these under the unction of the Holy Spirit. Some would pervert the Word of God to suit their views instead of seeking their views to be conformed to it.

(2) *Hopes*. Some have a hope, but it is without the landmark of the Word of God, and they will cast aside the Word rather than their hope. What madness! How poor the hope upheld by the devil and falsehood! “Remove not the landmark,” though you had not a hair’s breadth to stand upon.

(3) *Experiences*. Lay not to the charge of the Spirit what He did not do, and on the other hand, deny not what He did. Think not that the Bible sides with your experience unless it is according to His mind.

(4) *Practices*. The Word condemned your practice, and you set the Word aside. You removed the landmark to give an opportunity to the flesh. Who can free himself of this?

There is especially a call to a Church professing God. There is guilt in removing the landmarks of truth, and in backsliding from God. What are the landmarks

- (1) between the Bible and all other books;
- (2) between truth and error in the views of the Church;
- (3) between formality and the power of godliness;
- (4) between what is scriptural and carnal in worship;
- (5) between Church and State – the distinction and relation between them?

(1) The Bible is apart from all other books, because it is inspired by the Spirit, because there is in it what is provided as food to His people to the end of the world, and because it is the glass in which the glory of God is revealed. How awful to break this glass! Your looking-glass got broken, and it would not suit you, because you had respect to your own countenance. How much more should God prohibit the removing of this landmark!

(2) Truth and Error. A housewife has a child and a pig to feed. The same cooking would not suit them. Care is required for that for the child, while a mixture of all refuse suits the latter. Another housewife has only a pig to feed, and therefore, does not need to be so particular in preparing the food. I fear the day is coming upon us, in which there is little regard for sound doctrine, and I fear the day is coming, when, as one said, there will be no wholesome food to be had from sea to sea in Scotland, but a revival will follow that.

(3) Formality and the power of godliness. Discernment is so blunt in our day that the two cannot be distinguished by many. One comes with a musical instrument, and another pours legal doctrine on the natural affections, stirred by the music. The person is led to exercise a faith of his own making, and is then told that he is saved. They say it is a sign that this day is as good as ever was, when there are hundreds of such cases, and they sing over it

while judgment is at the door. Instead of the song there should be weeping, because God's power is withheld.

(4) What is scriptural and carnal in worship. The Old Testament form of worship has been done away with by Christ, and the New Testament worship is free from all that is carnal and formal. That is the example left by the Apostles and the teaching of the New Testament. Now a thirst has come into the Church for a change. It is not from the life of God in the soul or from the mind of God in the Word, but from the flesh. Some are saying that the sound of the music is blessed and has done much good, and must be brought into the Church. What can follow this but the displeasure of God?

(5) Church and State. Both are within the ruling of Christ, He being universal proprietor. Church and State are surrounded by a wall, and are also divided into two parts by a centre wall. The Owner's house is in one part, and He may be said to reside there, as He does not in the other. But on the other hand it cannot be said but He owns the whole estate. Christ rules in Zion as nowhere else, but as certain it is that He also rules over all the nations of the earth. Church and State are distinct, but cannot be separated because under the same King, and are intended to be useful to each other. The boundary between must also be looked to. The one is not to encroach on the other. The State is to help the Church, not to make it a slave – a mark of condemnation on the word Voluntaryism.

II. – “Enter not the fields of the fatherless.” Here are three things to be considered – the fatherless, his fields, and the prohibition against entering them. “Their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.”

1. The fatherless. Such a person, literally, is one without a father. But it is true of him still that he is alive, that the nature of the child is in him, and that he has a desire after father and mother. Because of this, he cannot see other children more highly favoured without it making him sad.

What about the child of God that is experimentally – though not actually – fatherless? There is spiritual life in him from the moment of regeneration, and it cannot be taken from him. There is a desire after saying, Abba, Father, to God, and he is sad when he cannot say it. He is sad when the plagues of his heart get the upper hand, and God is silent to him in secret. It is true of him that when he reads of the communion of God's children and their language, and finds himself a stranger without, that he feels sad. From fightings without and fears within, he feels a fatherless one, and when God hides His face, he cannot say, Abba, Father – may feel that he might as well create a world as attempt to say it.

2. There is true, however, of his *state*, what is not true of his *experience*; he has “fields.” What are they?

(1) The provision of the love of God in the covenant of grace. All this is his through union to the Head, Jesus Christ. There is no proprietor like him.

(2) The Word of God. The two Testaments, Old and New, contain a revelation of the covenant, and the provision of it is brought near to him in doctrines, calls, and promises.

(3) The Church, the means of grace, and the ministers of the Gospel – Paul, Apollos, Cephas – are his. The Church is set apart for his use, that he may be prepared for the home above.

(4) The special lot he has in the world. This is a bountiful field, because nothing is in it but what was appointed in wisdom and love. If anything else were in it, it would not be perfect. The spirit of the world would take an estate, but would despise the love that gives only a thatched bothy. It is lawful only to ask for grace to make use of what is appointed – a spot on which there would be union to Christ and a spot for communion with Him and service for Him. What need of more than this? There is nothing outside the child's covenant

right that he would be the better of having – “All things are yours.” What can be added to that?

The child of God is a wonderful person. The difference between his experience and his state is a riddle to him. Looking from “the dunghill” to the world, the Church and Heaven, he says, “All are mine.” O for a moment of this!

3. The prohibition – “*Enter not* the fields.” This stands against teachers in the Church who weaken the opportunity of the child of grace of feeding in the fields by keeping back from him his portion. It also stands against all evil-doers on earth who trample his fields under their feet and try to make his lot harder than God has made it. The Lord is as careful of you as if there were none in the world but yourself to look after. Christ is a Redeemer set apart for the work. He requires to plead His right and yours, and will make it sure that it will not be forgotten. Everything needed to be done is in His hand. He is almighty against all intruders and opposers, and will plead your cause, and that effectually.

Thanks be to God for “the fatherless” here! I would wish to give them all over to the keeping of the Redeemer who keeps Israel.

[July 1907]

Notes of a Sermon.

Preached by the Rev. EWEN MACQUEEN, Moderator,
At the Opening of the Free Presbyterian Synod at Inverness,
on 9th July, 1907.

“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them,
Occupy till I come” – Luke 19:13.

As you can see, this is a part of the parable spoken by the Redeemer on an occasion when those who followed Him expected that He was to set up an earthly kingdom. For it appears that the Jews expected that the Messiah was to gather the outcasts of Israel into Galilee, having His seat in Jerusalem, and that He was often to frequent the Mount of Olives. Instead of encouraging them in this belief, the Redeemer here seems to bring before them the nature of His kingdom, and indicates that instead of remaining among them He was to depart into a far country. In our text, then, we shall consider: –

- I. – The One who is brought before us as calling His servants;
- II. – Those whom He called;
- III. – What He committed unto them; and

IV. – The charge given in connection with the thing committed.

I. – The One brought before us as calling. He is in the context called first a nobleman. There can be little doubt but Christ Himself is the person so named. It may be said that He is the fountain of all true nobility, for whatsoever is noble in angels or men is all from Him. Some claim to be nobles because they belong to ancient notable families. But He is ahead of them all in this. He is styled in the Word of God the Ancient of Days. He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His Person. He is said to be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not. He is fairer than the sons of men. He is "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His head is as the most fine gold; his locks are bushy and black as a raven. His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set. His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers; his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. His hands are as the gold rings set with the beryl. His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires. His legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold. His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely." Isaiah speaks of Him: – "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The Apostle John's testimony concerning Him is, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory – the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And again, the Apostle Peter said concerning Him, that "he was the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Nobles are counted all the more noble when they condescend to men of low degree. Surely in this respect Christ is above all creature-nobility. It is said of Him that although He was of the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, that He made Himself of no reputation, taking upon Him the form of a servant; "yea, he was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." He calls unto Himself the weary and the heavy laden that He may give them rest. By His enemies He was styled "the friend of publicans and sinners." In Him the friendless find a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He wept with those who wept, He was eyes to the blind, hearing to the deaf, a healer of all manner of disease; yea, it may be said that He brought Himself to the greatest poverty that He might enrich those who were poor. He sweat drops of blood, and died the accursed death of the Cross that He might reconcile sinners unto God. He wept over impenitent sinners, showing that His noble bowels yearned over them, although they hated Him, and He prayed, as they nailed His holy body to the barren Cross, that this sin might not be laid to their charge. Surely this, dear friends, reveals Him to be noble in deed.

Again, this nobleman is said to "have gone to a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." This we take also to be true of Christ. It is said that after His resurrection He was taken up from this earth, and that a cloud received Him out of His disciples' sight. And again we find the Spirit, through the Apostle Peter, saying that the heavens must receive Him until the time of the restitution of all things. He is said to be sitting at the right hand of the Father, far above principalities and powers, might and dominion, not only on earth, but also in heaven. Without enquiring into the location of heaven, let us view certain aspects in which heaven may be considered as a far country.

On account of sin we can say that a distance was put between us and God, which neither angels nor men could ever bridge. And taking the parable wherein Abraham is brought before us as speaking to Dives – telling him that there was a great gulf lying between them, so that none of those who were with Dives could ever go to the place where Abraham was, nor could any go from Abraham to the place where the rich man was – we may learn the nature of the separation which sin caused between God and men. Again, Christ Himself, in speaking of the

kingdom of God, revealed that except a man should be born again, he could in no wise enter into that kingdom. And again – as the Apostles speak about it – when the Lord is to receive His people unto Himself, they are said to be caught up with the Lord in the air. And it is very manifest that there will exist a great distance between Christ and His redeemed on the one hand, and the devil and the lost on the other hand. For the latter are said to depart from Him into the place prepared for the devil and his angels.

Again, it is here said that it was to receive for himself a kingdom that this nobleman went into a far country. This is surely true of Christ. We find Him in the intercessory prayer praying that He might be glorified with that glory which He had with the Father before the world was; and that as He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, He might now be put in possession of that reward which He merited. We find in Psalm 2 that the Father is brought in as saying to Christ: “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” And again, it is to Christ those words of Psalm 24 are addressed: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.” And again, He speaks Himself to His disciples that as He got a kingdom from the Father, He was appointing them a kingdom. Some are of opinion that Christ will not continue a mediator for ever and ever, but that His mediatorship will come to an end when His Church is made perfect. This we cannot take, for we are led to understand that as He is said to have the key of David, and openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth; it is from Him as their King that His people shall receive all the joys which they will ever have in heaven. It is said that “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto fountains of living waters.”

The third thing brought before us about this nobleman is that he is “to return.” There is no doubt here as to his returning. Other noblemen might doubt when they leave if they should ever come back. Death might prevent them, troubles might keep them from returning, many a thing might come in their way, but none of those can prevent Christ returning. He dieth no more. He is eternally above troubles. He is disposer of all things. His returning is sure. “Our God shall surely come.” We find that this was a theme upon which the Apostles dwelt with the utmost delight, and ever prayed fervently that it might be accomplished. Yes, dear friends, He shall return, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all the nations of the world shall wail because of Him. Some indeed live as if Christ was never to return, but we find Him often warning his disciples to be always watching, because they knew not the hour when He might appear; and those who are taught of Him are made to understand that they are all yet to stand before Him to give an account of all the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad. May we so live as men who are expecting Christ to return!

II. – We proceed to observe some things concerning those whom He is said to have called. They are said to be His servants. We have to notice in the context that His citizens hated Him, but it is not those who hated Him that He at this time called. Not that we think that there is any difference by nature between those who are said to have hated Him and those whom He called. Yet, by the term used concerning servants, we are led to understand that they were men who were bought with a price. The Apostle styles himself as the bond-servant – the *doulos* – of Jesus Christ. Again, the Church of God is spoken of as bought with His own blood. Again, the Spirit through Peter testifies that they knew that they were not bought with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as that of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. And yet again, they are said to be not their own, inasmuch as they have been “bought with a price.” Oh, that we always carried this in our minds, that we were so dearly bought. Now, this buying may be regarded as something taking place without them. Something more was needed in order to make servants of them. Christ, in speaking to His disciples, said that it was expedient for them that He should go away, for if

He would not go away the Comforter would not come unto them, but if He would depart He would send Him unto them. When the Comforter came he was to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. We noticed already that there was no difference by nature between them, and those who continued to hate Him. It was the Spirit that revealed to them through the Word of God the slavery they were in serving sin and Satan, and that if they continued the servants of sin they would get the wages of sin which is death. This gave them to be concerned to get another master. It was the same Spirit who revealed to them their lost state that also revealed to them Christ in the glory of His person, and of His finished work, and that enlightened their minds in His knowledge, persuading and enabling them to embrace Him as their Lord and Master, and to say with others, "Thine are we, O David, and on thy side, thou Son of Jesse." They were constrained by His love. As the Apostle says, "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all then were all dead," so that those that "live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." And we may say that they all mourned that they served in the devil's ranks so long. We find the Apostle of the Gentiles casting a sorrowful glance over his past life, bewailing bitterly the time he spent fighting against Him who loved him and who gave Himself for him. And may we not say to this very day that we meet with some – although they are few – who look upon the time spent in the service of sin as seasons they would fain erase from the number of days, for they have become bitter to them as the ashes of the golden calf which Moses caused the children of Israel to drink.

This much as to their being servants in a sense common to all the Lord's children.

Now, we find that it was those who were His servants whom He at this time called. And although I do not lay emphasis upon it, nor do I mean to say that the Redeemer specially meant the call to the ministry in this place, yet as I am addressing this Synod, I may refer to the fact that it is necessary for those who enter the ministry to have Christ's special call to that office. Some, we read, ran, without being sent, and without being the servants of Christ in the sense first referred to. Of such we would say that they praise One whom they neither know nor love. What drudgery must it be to them to go from Sabbath to Sabbath to the house where prayer is wont to be made, with a cold heart, worldly affections, and but like the blind leading the blind to fall at length both into the ditch! Some because of earthly emoluments enter the ministry, but they are only hirelings and flee when the wolf cometh. But Christ's true ministers have a special call from Himself. It was after the apostles were genuine believers that Christ called them to the ministry, saying: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." We believe that to this day such a word may have moved others to go forward to this sacred office. With such He has promised to be to the end of the world. They may be known in the world, for Satan will be against them, when those who please him, in lulling sinners asleep, get on as their hearts would wish. But Christ's true ministers will be tempted, and Satan's emissaries will accuse them in their endeavour to preach Christ crucified of being vainglorious and self-righteous. But they may well bear it, for Christ forewarned them that such should be the case: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore, the world hateth you." But sufficient is it to the servant to be as his master, and certainly the more closely one follows Christ, the more the spirit of the seed of the serpent shall be revealed against him.

III. – This leads us to consider briefly what he committed unto them. The word here used, "mina," is rendered "a pound," although that may not be its exact equivalent in our money. The Lord's servants differ as to gifts, but without entering upon that, we shall take the "mina" in this way, that he Lord has committed a whole Bible unto each of them. It is said of the Old Testament Church that unto them were committed the oracles of God, and, certainly, what is committed unto us is the completed canon of the Old and New Testament Scriptures. This

may be said to bear the King's image. We are told to "search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify" of Christ. Without the written Word we would have no knowledge of the Father's love in the gift of His only begotten Son, nor could we have any knowledge of the Son, as our representative, and propitiation for our sins; nor could we learn our own total depravity, and our absolute need of the Holy Spirit in order to our forsaking the ways of sin and the slavery of Satan, and embracing Christ as our Lord and Saviour. The "pound" is for trading, and we may say that Christ gave it to trade thereby with God himself. Among ourselves, ships will trade between Glasgow and New York and bring home their cargoes. Similarly, in spiritual matters, Christ's servants must trade between the covenant of grace and their own as well as their hearers' needs. Some may think it strange that we say that they trade with the covenant of grace, but the Lord Himself comes to our aid, putting words into our mouth when he saith, "Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red as crimson they shall be as wool." And again in Hosea, "Take with you words and say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so shall we render the calves of our lips." Yes, dear friends, it is true of those into whose heart Christ has put His Word by His Spirit that they cannot but be daily knocking at His gates, waiting at the posts of His door. It is in the Word they find life for themselves. "Unless," said the Psalmist, "in thy most perfect law my soul delights had found, I should have perished whereas my troubles did abound."

It is with "the Word" they would like to trade with their fellow-creatures.

It is by the Word they seek to comfort the feeble-minded. It is by the Word they desire to relieve the oppressed, to console the bereaved; and in whatsoever state a child of God may be, those to whom He committed the "mina" of His own Word, see that it is well adapted to meet all the cases of His own children. It is this "mina" they would like to use in dealing with the unconverted. They know that nothing will break down the ramparts of Satan but that Word which is as the hammer that breaketh and as the fire that melteth. Some hide the Word of God amid the dross of flowery language. Some take the edge off it by using apologies for quoting it in the ears of their fellow-sinners. But if the Word of the Lord was used as it is given to us by Himself, it is adapted for the conviction of sinners as well as for their conversion. Even our British coins are not accepted all over the world at their worth; but the Word of God is a coin that will be accepted in heaven, that must be accepted in hell, and, whether willingly or unwillingly, evil spirits and men must acknowledge it. "The devils," we are told, "believe and tremble," and that because it is revealed to them that there is a day of wrath to come upon them greater than they have experienced yet, though bound in chains of darkness. And those who are lost of mankind, who had the Bible in time, must acknowledge that it is the Word which they were called upon in this world to hear and to believe as the Word of God. And on earth it is received by some with their whole hearts as the Word of God, which liveth and endureth for ever, and although heaven and earth should pass away, this Word shall not pass away. Even those who find fault with it – such as Professors, who might be called daylight dreamers, fancying that there is this and that wrong in it – have still to acknowledge, as they say themselves, that the "Word of God is in it."

IV. – This leads us to consider briefly, in the fourth place, the charge given in connection with what He committed unto them, wherein we find

- (1) how they were to use what He gave them, and
- (2) that He was come to reckon with them for this which He committed unto them.
 - (1) The word "occupy" means
 - (a) that they were to be interested in it, and
 - (b) to be working with it, and
 - (c) to take care of it.

(a) We find that Christ speaks about His people as abiding in His Word, and His Word abiding in them, so when He committed the Word to His people, it may be said that it was for this very reason that they should abide in the Word, as we find the Psalmist speaking about the Word of God as being a covert to him. We ought to abide in the Word of God, for it is the only guide we have to lead us to Christ and to remind us of Christ, for if we go out of the Word of God for a moment in our thoughts we have nothing but what the Word of God terms vanity: – “Man’s thoughts to be but vanity the Lord doth well discern.” It is sad to see in our day people who profess to be the followers of Christ abiding not in the Word of Christ, but abiding in what is termed “Higher Criticism,” and faultfinding with the Word of God.

(b) They were to be working with it. We find the Spirit calling upon the followers of Christ to preach the Word, to be instant in season and out of season. We mentioned already that it was to trade with they got it. Man really taught of the Spirit feels himself at times somewhat like the prophet who declares that the Word was like fire in him. Nowadays it is not the Word of God that appears to be setting people on fire, but we find the most fired with the love of property. We do not find that Christ said to any of His disciples, “Shew great zeal for things of the world.” Neither do we find His apostles entangling themselves in the things that perish in the using; but we find them assuring us that there was a woe upon them unless they preached the gospel of Christ. Those in the highest stations in the churches of the present day appear to think that Christ calls upon them to spend their time searching for what is genuine in this “mina” and what is not. Some will tell us that some parts of it are a wilderness: others will tell us that there are errors and immoralities in it: another will tell us that he finds only one demon, where this “pound” tells us that there was a legion, and that it was superstition that caused that woman who had the issue of blood to say, “If I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be made whole.” Surely it is not with the coin which Christ gave to His Church they trade when this is the interest they seem to get from it. We may be a despised few in the land, but although we are few, if we, by the grace of God, trade with what He has given us, we may hear at last, “Good and faithful servant,” although not successful servant.

(c) They were to take care of it. It is in order to take care of His Word that He committed His Word unto them under the Old Testament dispensation. He was charging them to have it as frontlets between their eyes, to be reading it in their lying down and in their rising up, that one race should teach it to another race, “that so the race that was to come might well then learn and know, and sons unborn who should arise might to their sons them show.” When they were forgetting it, and getting careless what was to become of it, He was manifesting His displeasure against them. He calls solemnly upon those who appeared like “the earth” to hear the Word of the Lord. He tells us to buy it and to sell it not. We find the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Spirit charging his son in the faith to take care of that which was committed unto him, which meant the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He warns him against the days that were coming in which they could not endure sound doctrine, but their ears would be turned to fables. This we find to be very prevalent in our day, for they cannot endure the Word of God, but whether they hear or forbear, what we got to occupy till He comes is His own Word. We may be called narrow-minded, selfish, and vainglorious, but may our ear ever be open to those words of Christ, “occupy till I come.” If we were impressed with the greatness of the Person who is revealed in His Word, and the importance of His Word to us, we would be as immovable before the cavillings of sinners and the backbiting of false professors, as the moon is before the barking of dogs. We must seek to follow and to take care of the Word of God before our own interests. We are told by Him to consider the lilies how they grow. They are very fair to look upon. It was Christ who made them so, and if He thus clothe the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cut down, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? Let us then, dear friends, seek

to mind the Word of God, and we have His promise for it that He will remember us. This leads us to the second thing mentioned.

(2) He was to reckon with them for what He committed unto them. It is not said “till I return,” but “till I come.” His first coming was a humble coming. He came as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. None could see any beauty or glory in Him but those whose eyes were opened to see His glory; but His second coming will be so glorious that the very heavens and the earth shall melt away to their original nothing before the rays of His glorious countenance; yea, it will eclipse all the outward manifestations that were ever given of the glory of God.

“Before Him fire shall waste, great storms
Shall compass him about.”

It is said that He shall fold the heavens as a scroll, and that the earth shall wax old as doth a garment, that every mountain and island shall be removed, that men shall be crying to the hills, “Fall on us,” and to the rocks, “Cover us,” that their hearts shall be failing them, and all on account of that terrible majesty in which Christ shall appear; “Every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.” Oh, dear friends, let us seek grace to think of this day and to commit the keeping of our souls unto Him that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming. You will find in the context that the nobleman referred to called unto him his servants in order to find out what they did with what he committed unto them; and we are assured that we are to appear at the judgment seat of Christ to render our account. It is clear from the Word of God that, at the resurrection, the righteous are first to rise and to be brought before Christ, and all are said to be judged according to that which is written in the books; and, think you, dear friends, if we shall be among them, shall it be a grief to us that we adhered to the Word of God? No. We find Him assuring them that whosoever forsook houses or lands for His sake shall, in this life, receive an hundred fold, and at the resurrection life everlasting. Property and the favour of men will be little thought of then. In our day, the minister that does not please all classes is not considered a man or a Christian, and the Church whose creed cannot receive all-comers is not considered worth following; but at the coming of Christ, it is those who follow His Word and occupy themselves in it and with it that shall have boldness to look up. We have to acknowledge His goodness to us in the past and may say with others, “Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped.” May we get grace to trade with the Word till He comes for us at death and then commit it to faithful men who will be able to teach others also, and His name shall have the glory, and our souls shall have the salvation that is world without end!

[August 1907]

A Sermon.

By the REV. JOHN R. MACKAY, M.A., Inverness.

Delivered at the Opening of Dingwall Free Presbyterian Church,
on 24th July, 1907.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” – Hebrews 9:15.

Dear friends, although these are the opening services in this house, which is set apart for the worship of God, you are not to think that we associate any idea of consecration with them in the sense in which that word is oftentimes used. There are some that entertain the notion that, when a house is consecrated by the proper parties, henceforth worship is more acceptable to the Creator of heaven and earth in such a consecrated place than it would be in any other place. We repudiate notions of that kind. We believe they are not properly associated with New Testament worship, as it is said that “neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem” we should worship the Father, but that true worshippers must worship Him “in spirit and in truth.” And we think it is an idea that is very far astray indeed when people entertain such a fancy as that the mere fact of their worshipping under a certain roof renders that worship more acceptable to God, who is a Spirit. We, doubtless, are of the opinion that, when, in the providence of God, it is possible for His people to erect and to have a suitable place of worship, it is becoming and appropriate that such a place should be set apart and devoted exclusively to the public worship of God, but we do not on that account associate with such an house any idea of consecration in the sense in which we have just explained; nor do we consider that the services of this day consecrate this house in any other sense than that in which it may be said to be consecrated whenever the Word of God is preached in it. On this account we do not purpose, nor need you expect us, in speaking from this portion of

God's Word, to say anything but what might be said on any ordinary occasion on which it should be our privilege to speak that word.

Dear friends, the gospel is the only instrument for the salvation of lost sinners, and that gospel is presented to us in the Word of God under various aspects. In our text it is presented to us under the aspect of a testament, that is, a will. You know that people possessed of estates as a rule before they die dispose of those estates for the benefit of their friends by means of a written instrument or document, which is signed by the person who thus disposes of his estates, and also by at least two witnesses. Such an instrument or document is, as you know, commonly called among us a last will or testament: and that is the representation given to us of the gospel in the words of our text. That it is so, will be, we think, evident to anyone that carefully considers how the apostle goes on to speak in the verses succeeding our text, for he says, "Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." These are circumstances that are perfectly well understood among ourselves also, and circumstances that make it quite evident that the apostle here represents the gospel as a last will or testament. In meditating, then, upon the gospel as a last will or testament, we shall, as we may be enabled on the present occasion, consider: –

- I. – The legatees, or those that benefit by this will;
- II. – The will or testament, which is spoken of here as a new testament – "He is the mediator of the new testament";
- III. – The Testator, to whom the estate belonged; and
- IV. – How the legatees benefit in virtue of this will or testament.

I. – In endeavouring to understand the mind of the Spirit of God in this portion of His Word, we are called upon to consider the legatees; and inasmuch as there be many that seek to deprive these legatees of what is theirs, we must be careful to indicate who they are exactly, so that those who oppose them may fail in their end.

(1) The legatees are sinners of mankind. We should listen to what the Spirit declares regarding the provision and arrangement of this testament, that we may ascertain whether we ourselves have any interest in it, and if so, to what extent we have an interest in it. Well, then, it ought to be glad tidings to us that the Testator, to whom the estate of an eternal inheritance belonged, passed by the angels that sinned, but did not pass by the human race, although we deserved to be so passed by. He willed that sinners of our race should be made legatees; and do not think that the Testator will be grieved at you – be you who you may – if you seek an interest in Him as a near kinsman. He is displeased rather at those who seek no interest in Himself as to His person, nor an interest in His estate as a legacy; and we should rejoice to say, "I am a sinner of the human race, and I am glad that I am not excluded at the very first intimation that is made concerning those who are to be legatees."

(2) Another thing to be noticed is that this "will" differs very much from the ordinary wills of men. For when people possessed of estates think of disposing of them, they generally call to mind those who are their friends; but it was not so with regard to this Testator. It was not of friends that He thought. "God," it is said, "commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. . . . For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The fact of our being enemies implies that we owe a debt to the justice of God which we are for ever unable to pay. But "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." If we have reason to say that we are not excluded at the first intimation that it was on behalf, not of angels that fell, but of the human race, that

the will was made; so also ought we to say that we are not excluded because of its being made on behalf of enemies. And if we have not yet come to regard ourselves as enemies, and as people who, because enemies, owe an infinite debt to the justice of God, it is just owing to the greatest stupidity in the light of God's Word. We do not think there shall be any who take to heart in time their own true character, and look simply to the grace of Him who could have thought, not of friends, but of enemies, in order to bestow an eternal inheritance upon them – we do not think that any of these shall go without an interest in the benefits of this will. And we proceed on that account, in the second place, to speak something regarding the will itself.

II. – You will observe that this will is spoken of as a new will – that this testament is spoken of as a new testament. This fact implies an older testament going before, and our very text speaks of such an older testament when it indicates that the sufferings of Christ's death were for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament or first will.

Dear friends, we have thought of the Church of God as a family that fell into very poor circumstances, yea, into worse than poor circumstances – into deep debt, and who, on account of that debt, were in danger either of dying of starvation or of being imprisoned to their shame. Just when they were in such a state as that – ere the worst had come to the worst – news came to them that a friend of theirs had died in a distant land, that he had been wealthy, that before he died he had disposed of his wealth by means of a will, and that in that will they were mentioned as large sharers. So may we say with regard to the Church of God. They were a people who were in danger; they had exposed themselves, on account of the debt they owed to the justice of God, to the liability of being imprisoned in an eternal prison-house, which is the second death; and it was in due time – ere the worst had come to the worst – that intimation was made concerning a Testator who thought upon them in their low estate, and made a will on their behalf, and that, through His dying, it was possible they should now realise the benefits of that will. We should consider this – that there is no other way in which a sinner of the human race can have his debt to the justice of God cancelled, or can be made truly rich, but just by becoming interested in this last will or testament of which our text speaks.

We may say with regard to the Church of God, that they are a people who have been concerned with two or three wills in their history. There is a will that is in a manner still earlier than that which is called here the first testament. We take it that the new testament and the first testament are really two wills that belong to one Person, but there is another will that is still earlier in the sense in which it concerns our race, and it is what may be spoken of as the will of the first Adam. You know there are some estates that fall so deeply into debt that, instead of being a benefit to the heirs, they are only a burden and a loss to them. So may we say with regard to the estate which became ours in virtue of our union with the first Adam. What is the nature of that estate? "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." We come into the world with a corrupt nature. That nature itself, as one has put it, is sin or guilt, and at the same time the punishment of sin, inasmuch as it is because of Adam's breach of covenant and our union with him in that breach that we inherit this corrupt nature, and it is certain that this corrupt nature binds us over to suffer punishment. It is thus both sin and the punishment of sin, and, it may be added, the cause of much more sin. For out of this evil heart proceed evil thoughts and all things that defile, by which we are bound more and more deeply in our debt to the justice of God. That is the kind of inheritance with which we enter this world, and as if we were not pleased with our deep debt, we go on by actual transgression to accumulate more debt. That, then, is the first will of all!

But when mention is here made of a first testament and again mention is made of the new testament, we take both to be the testaments of Christ, who alone thought of us in our low estate. Now, we sometimes find that a man possessed of an estate makes a will, and then after writing it out, he is somehow displeased with it, and disannuls it altogether, or adds new

clauses to it. As long as he lives he has perfect power over it; but when he dies, according to the law of the land, the last will written and signed, and that in the presence of witnesses, is taken as his irreversible testament. So, although there is no variableness nor shadow of turning with Christ, because He is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, yet we think the Spirit of God suggests to us that we may make use of the illustration of which we have been speaking even in regard to Christ Himself: for He made a will first, and then, “finding fault” with it He made a new will, which new and last will He confirmed with His death, and because He did so, it is irreversible in its nature. What, then, was Christ’s first will to His church? It was just the covenant He made with Israel in the day in which He brought them up out of the land of Egypt. That was of the nature of a will, for you find the apostle here speaks of it as a will or testament, for he says in the 18th verse “Neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.” And so Christ, though there is no variableness nor shadow of turning with Him, is here represented to us as being, as it were, dissatisfied with the first will, and consequently as making a new will. With regard to His first will, we may say that there was in it a resuscitation or revival of the covenant of works, and at the same time a shadow of better things to come, or of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Now, you see how much better this new will of Christ’s is. In the first will He said as much as that He would write His law upon two tables of stone – that was certainly a great benefit – but now in the new will He says, “I will write my law upon their hearts, and I will put my statutes in their mind, and I will give them of My Spirit that they may walk in my statutes.” I am not just now to enter upon the question of the extent to which the Church under the Old Testament participated in the benefits that truly belong to the New Testament, but we speak of those wills here merely to contrast the one with the other. By the first will He bequeathed this unto them, that on one day in the year, the tenth day of the seventh month, their representative, the high priest, should enter into the holiest of all with the blood of bulls and of goats, and have nearness in that sense unto God. But by the last will the nature of the benefit is that through Jesus Christ all believers should draw near in truth unto God and the Father.

Again, in the first will He gave them the land of Canaan as an inheritance. He promised it by oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but now He considers that is not good enough, if we may use such an expression. It was good enough for a shadow, but He says, “I will give them an eternal inheritance”; “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.” And this will be their song –

“God is of mine inheritance and cup the portion,
The lot that fallen is to me Thou dost maintain alone.
Unto me happily the lines in pleasant places fell;
Yea, the inheritance I got in beauty doth excel.”

These, dear friends, are only some of the things in which this new will is better than the former will. Certainly the first will was also Christ’s will, and it served an excellent purpose, only time would fail us on the present occasion to enter upon the good purposes it actually did serve. Yet, notwithstanding, He acted as one that had power over it, and could disannul or add to it, and so He made a new will, in which He bequeathed to them such benefits as that He would write His law upon their hearts and put His statutes in their minds: “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: they shall all know Me from the least unto the greatest, for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.” Thus, my dear friends, is the great debt which we owed to the justice of God cancelled. It could not be cancelled by means of the blood of bulls and of goats, but it

was cancelled by the blood of Him Who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot unto God. That, then, is the nature of the new will, which is rendered of force through the death of the Testator, which death is itself the ransom by which the infinite debt to Divine justice was paid. And that brings us, in the third place, to speak somewhat concerning the Testator.

III. – You know that no testator, in his right mind, would, by a will, dispose of goods of which he was not possessed. This, then, must surely have been a wealthy Testator who was capable, not only of cancelling the infinite debt to the justice of God, but over and above that, of rendering His people eternally rich. He promised this in the testament: – “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” He promised to bestow upon them spiritual and eternal riches, when He said that they would all know Him from the least unto the greatest; that He would be to them a God; and that He would write His law upon their hearts. None other than God was adequate to be the Testator in such a case, and yet here you will observe that when the gospel is regarded as a will in contradistinction to a covenant, we must consider the gospel as having for its Author the Second Person of the adorable Trinity. When the gospel is regarded as a covenant, we may say that God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Author of it: but when it is viewed as a testament or will, we must say that the Second Person of the Trinity is the Author of it, because a testament or will is of such a nature that it is of no force while the testator liveth. Now, God, in the Person of the Father, did not die: it was the Son of God Who died: and so we must consider that it is the Son of God Who is here represented to us as the Testator. This will of the Son of God is more ancient than the everlasting hills. It is spoken of as the book of life of the Lamb that was slain. This is the Lamb’s own book of life, in which He wrote out His will before the mountains were brought forth, and if we may venture to use such boldness we may say that He signed it before the foundation of the world, and that He promised He would see to it that the proper legatees should be put in possession of everything promised in this will, for He regarded them as a people that had fallen into infinite debt, and yet as a people upon whom He purposed to bestow an eternal inheritance. And although there was no creature in existence, the will was not on that account without witnesses, because the other Persons of the Godhead were witnesses to this will. This was a wonderful will, because, as we have said, before legatees can benefit by a friend’s will, that friend must die: and so it was in this case. But, ah! that itself was a wonder greater than could have entered the thought of any finite creature, for He had not a nature in which it was possible for Him to die, and in order to His dying it was absolutely necessary that He would have a nature that should be His own nature, and yet a nature in which it would be possible for Him to die.

Again, ordinarily, friends benefit by a will when the testator can no longer help it. He tries, and that rightly, to keep himself alive as long as he can, and when he can no longer help it, his friends benefit by his last will and testament. But it was not so with regard to this Testator, because it was willingly that He died, and if He had not been willing to die, He would never have died; therefore says He, “Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do Thy will, O God.” And this is the will by which “we are sanctified through the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” But not only was it a willing death He died, it was a painful and a violent death. So the prophet views it, “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him: for the iniquities of My people was he smitten.” There was no death so painful as His, because it means that He endured the infinite wrath of Jehovah. And yet, notwithstanding all that, He was willing to endure it, because there was no other way by which this will should become of force; no other way in which the debt could be cancelled; and no other way in which it was possible, consistent with the glory of the attributes of Jehovah, that this poor people should ever become interested in what He had, in unmerited love, designed to bestow upon them.

Now, you will observe that our text speaks of Him as the Mediator of the New Testament. When mention is made of a mediator, it is implied that there has been some disagreement between parties, and that there is a desire on the part of such parties that that disagreement should come to an end. Now, the parties here were God and sinners of mankind, between whom there was a disagreement, and Christ is the Mediator in this sense – that through Him and through His will the benefits of the everlasting covenant are mediated to such sinners in a way that is consistent with the glory of God. Well, we see that the Gospel may be spoken of as a covenant, or it may be spoken of as a testament; and when speaking of it as a covenant, we say that God the Father is the Author of it, and when speaking of it as a testament or will, we say that the Son of God is the Author of it. The way that Infinite Wisdom found out in order that the benefits of the everlasting covenant should reach sinners consistently with the glory of the attributes of Jehovah, was as follows: – The Son of God must take a nature which would be His own as truly as the Divine nature which was His from all eternity, and yet a nature in which it would be possible for Him to die, yea, the nature of the legatees. In this nature He must die the accursed death of the cross, in order that His own will may be rendered of force, and that the promises and benefits of the everlasting covenant, which have their source in the goodwill of God – even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, would be mediated to hell-deserving sinners, and all in such a way as would redound to the glory of every attribute of Jehovah. And now, dear friends, what we are called upon to do in the Gospel is this. Christ is indeed the Son of His bosom, and God wishes us to come to His bosom by leaning upon Him who is the Son of His bosom. It was just through this will that the covenant was mediated. That is to say, it flowed from an infinitely holy, sin-hating God to hell-deserving sinners in a way that was consistent with the glory of all the attributes of Jehovah. In the Mediator all His promises are yea and amen. “I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” As all things are of the Father, all things are through the Son; so all things are of the covenant, and all things are through the testament. On that account Christ is spoken of as the Mediator, and it is just in the very act of His thus mediating that the covenant passes over into a Testament. So much then with regard to the Testator. A wonderful Testator truly, as John Bunyan puts it, having “two natures in one Person, easy to be distinguished, but impossible to be divided,” by Whose incarnation, humiliation, and obedience unto death the promises of an everlasting covenant, made before the eternal ages, are mediated to hell-deserving sinners in such a way as that there should be in connection therewith, “Glory to God in the Highest, peace upon earth, goodwill towards men.”

IV: – We now come, in the last place, to speak concerning the way in which the legatees benefit through this will. “By means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” You see the first testament was like a two-sided instrument; on the one side there was the law of God, and that was heavy enough, but on the other side there was only the shadow of good things to come, and the shadow was not of itself adequate to meet the necessities of creatures who, by breaking that law, had come short of the glory of God. But now, in virtue of this new will, which is entirely made up of promises, things are so arranged as the better to meet the condition of those who were “without strength.” You find that mention is here made of them as the “called,” and this call is no doubt a call according to a purpose, and we may speak of it as an irresistible call. Not in the sense that it is not in any degree resisted, but that, notwithstanding the resistance it meets, it finally triumphs, and wins over those that are the objects of it. Being a call according to a purpose, it is more than an outward call – it is an inward call. It is a call that affects the understanding; it is a call that affects the will; it is a call that affects the conscience. But do not think that there is any inconsistency between grace and duty; between the call which we have explained as

irresistible – the inward call – and the outward call, which is to everyone whatsoever that hears the word of the truth of the gospel. There is no such opposition. For, what is grace? For my part, since I regard grace as unmerited favour, I cannot think of grace unless I first realise duty, and then impotency in regard to that duty, and finally, strength vouchsafed from without to perform that which I ought but cannot myself perform. And what really is the meaning or result of this inward call? It just means that you and I cease from contradicting God. God charges impenitent, unbelieving sinners with contradicting Him when He says they are sinners, hell-deserving. They, in heart, say “No.” And when He says that this is His beloved Son, and worthy of all acceptance, and that if they come to Him they are welcome, they contradict Him. Now, don’t you think it is the duty of every rational creature to cease from contradicting God? The people here spoken of, in common with the whole human race, or at least so many as heard the word of the truth of the gospel, at one time contradicted God, that is, “made God a liar,” with regard both to His law and to His gospel. But now they have ceased from contradicting Him on these heads, and that they owe to divine grace. They are distinguished from others by the very fact that when God says they are sinners they do not contradict Him, and when God bears such a testimony concerning His well-beloved Son as that He is worthy of all acceptance they do not contradict Him, but rather they fall in heartily with it; and that is just their calling, and Christ, the Testator, becomes precious to them. Ah, dear friends, you should consider this – that it is your bounden duty to accept of Christ, and, as we said at the beginning, God is not displeased at your claiming kinship with Him. May you not plead that He is your Creator – that you are the work of His hands? May you not say that He has your nature – that He came under the law you broke; and if you thus persist, He will one day come to you – He will intimate to you His love: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” You will be brought to apprehend that there are such excellencies in this matchless Testator, who willingly died such a painful death in order that such eternal benefits might, in such a glorious way, accrue to sinners that deserved to eternally perish, that you cannot but cleave to Him as to your kinsman-Redeemer.

This people are said to have a promise of an eternal inheritance. Well, in their Head they had the promise of God, who could not lie, before the foundation of the world, but, as creatures, they were not then in existence. But in the fulness of time, through this very way of which we speak, they became members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and the promise of eternal life now flows down to the members. “This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.” Thus we see God is willing to become their Friend, and to manifest His faithfulness, not only to Christ the Head, but also to every member of His mystical body. And you will find that the well-informed Church of God was wont not only to plead His mercy, but also His faithfulness. “Remember, Lord, Thy gracious word” (remember it Thyself because Thine honour is bound up with my salvation) “which, as a ground of my sure hope, Thou causedst me to take.” “Let thy loving kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.”

We have already spoken of Christ as the Mediator of the New Testament in the sense that He, consistently with the glory of the attributes of Jehovah, mediates its benefits to hell-deserving sinners. On the other hand, He is the Mediator in this sense, that, as to this people was promised an eternal inheritance, He should so reign over all things in Church and State, in heaven and on earth, on their behalf, as that He should not suffer any of those promises to fail, nor suffer any of His people to fall in the wilderness through unbelief. And so you see in this world they get grace. He gives grace. They are often not

rich in this world, but they are spoken of as those to whom all things belong, “As having nothing, and yet possessing all things: As poor, yet making many rich.” And so they have their ups and downs, according to whether they look to their own poverty or to the riches that are in Christ; but they shall receive a competent portion of grace throughout their wilderness journey, and, in the end, an eternal inheritance. It is a wonderful thing that a people, in themselves finite, should be heirs to an inheritance that is infinite. However large an earthly inheritance may be, it has an end, but although these creatures are finite, there is an eternal inheritance awaiting them, and they shall have an endless eternity to enjoy it.

And now, dear friends, some of you may think our subject is not a very appropriate one for the opening of a new Church, yet if you consider the matter, it is more so than you may imagine. For what is the object of setting up a Church? It is in order that the news of this eternal inheritance may be proclaimed in the ears of perishing sinners of mankind, so that through grace a multitude of heirs to this inheritance may come, in a spiritual sense, into being, and that those thus born heirs to the eternal inheritance may be fed with the hidden manna that is in Jesus Christ when the arrangements and provisions of this new covenant or testament are expounded. We may, indeed, say that one of the main reasons for our having taken up – some fourteen years ago – a distinctive position as a denomination was a wish to adhere to the theology of the covenants, and to the doctrines of the covenants. But as Mr. MacFarlane, after prayer and a psalm, will make a statement in regard to this, and I may perhaps say a few words before concluding, I shall not enter upon that aspect of things just now.

Dear friends, we have been endeavouring to bring before you that by nature there is not one of us but has fallen into infinite debt to the justice of God, and that if we do not get that debt cancelled in time we must eternally die the second death. God will be true and every man a liar, and the only method whatsoever that has been revealed under the heavens of God as to a way of salvation is that we should get our debt cancelled by a will that has been confirmed and made of force through the death of a near kinsman, Who is living, and was dead, and is alive for evermore. Every one who seeks to be rich in this way can and will be rich. If it be yet asked, “Who are the legatees?” Well, we say, everyone willing to be a legatee shall be a legatee: and in the day of judgment it will be found that there is a perfect conformity between those who are willing to take Christ as their kinsman, willing to be rich through His poverty, and those whose names, before the foundations of the world were laid, were written in the Lamb’s book of life. There will be a perfect correspondence between them: and don’t you at all think that Christ will be displeased with you, whosoever you be, for looking upon Him as your kinsman and your Redeemer: and don’t think that by your doing so, you will be out of conformity with what was in the purpose of God before the eternal ages. These two will agree very well together: and rest assured there is absolutely no other way whereby you can be eternally rich but by the death of the Friend of enemies.

[September 1907]

A Sermon.

By the late REV. ALEXANDER GUNN, Watten, Caithness.

[This is a sermon by the second Mr. Gunn of Watten, who died on the 14th December, 1892, in the 83rd year of his age, and 55th of his ministry. His father was the well-known "great Mr. Gunn" who died in 1836, and whom he succeeded in Watten, the following year, being ordained on 31st March, 1837. The latter Mr. Gunn, though not so eminent as his predecessor, was a man of considerable gifts, and a weighty and edifying preacher of the gospel. The present discourse was preached when he was about 80 years of age, and exhibits the prolonged vigour of his mental powers, as well as the excellence of his views of truth. – ED.]

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

"Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of Thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple" – Psalm 119:129,130.

It is very remarkable to observe the strength of language David uses in this Psalm, and in many other Psalms, in expressing his love for God's Word, his admiration for the divine excellence, and his constant observance of the Word as the rule of his life and conversation. O what a pattern we have in David! He was truly a man after God's own heart, and he had in his day very little of the Scriptures, except the five books of Moses; he had very little beyond the dawn of divine revelation. How astonishing, therefore, is it to find him exclaiming in the language of the text, "Thy testimonies are wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them!" And, my friends, this is the uniform testimony of all God's children from first to last. They all have the same high esteem for His Word; they all find much delight in it as David did. And, if God's Word be not wonderful and precious in our eyes, it is a sad token that we do not know it, or at least, do not understand it.

How many there are, even in this congregation, whose knowledge of the Word of God is next to nothing, although they have been all their lives hearing and reading it! Many have scarcely even the elements of Christian knowledge. No one would believe it until he would come to examine a man for baptism; no one would believe the ignorance that there is of the Word of God. I remember an elder's son, not belonging to this congregation, but nevertheless of the Free Church, who came to me for baptism. I began to question him regarding his knowledge of God's Word, and asked him several simple questions about the Saviour, but he was so utterly destitute that he could not even tell me where Christ was born, what He did on earth, or what befell Him. And yet this man was the son of an elder in the Free Church! And when I refused him baptism, he said, "O, just give it to me this once, and I will do as much for you again." How scanty is the knowledge of the Word of God!

There are two things we may see in these words in the 129th verse. We have *the practice of the godly* and *the reasons* of it. The practice of the godly is this: – "Therefore doth my soul keep them." Their souls keep God's testimonies. Now, this should be a question with everyone, "Doth my soul keep His testimonies?" No doubt the *memory* of many here keeps God's Word, but it is the soul's keeping that is spoken of. Does your soul keep them? David says, "Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of

my heart.” It is the inmost soul that works in the keeping of His testimonies. This is the practice of the godly: – “Therefore doth my soul keep them.” Now, the word “keep” here implies that the person who keeps them has got a charge to do so. He has got a charge, and a charge from God. He said by Moses to the children of Israel: – “These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.”

“His testimony and his law
In Israel, he did place,
And charged our fathers it to show
To their succeeding race.”

And again, in the New Testament, it is written: – “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things.” The word of salvation is commanded by Christ to be spoken to every creature, and everyone that hears the Word gets a charge from God to keep it – to make the use of it God intends and designs. And the Word is to everyone that hears it, not to believers alone. “To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man.”

Now, in the soul’s keeping of God’s testimonies it is implied that all the faculties of the soul are engaged in the work. The memory is engaged in retaining them; the understanding is engaged in knowing them; the heart is engaged in loving them; the conscience is engaged in reverencing them; and the life is engaged in practising them. All the faculties of the soul are engaged in this exercise. This can never be done until the soul is in real earnest. Men may retain the words in their memory, and yet have no care to understand the spiritual meaning of them. They do not love them in their hearts, nor practise them in their lives. “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” “For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.” When a man becomes a Christian, like Paul, he can say, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man,” although “I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

Christ was an example to all His followers in the keeping of God’s commandments. He says, “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8; Hebrews 10:7). “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work” (John 4:34). His chief delight was in doing God’s will and in keeping His commandments; and the same command He lays upon His followers – “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” Now, the Catechism says, “No mere man since the Fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.” But, in the case of the believer, where there is a hearty and sincere endeavour to keep God’s law, God accepts of it. Evangelical obedience consists in this. Although there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not, if there be first the willing mind, he is accepted according to that he hath; and the perfect obedience of Christ covers all shortcomings.

Now, there is nothing that will make a sinner thus keep in his soul the testimonies of God but the love of God dwelling in his heart. It is not a man’s own uprightness or resolutions that will keep him in the way of God’s commandments, for man is unstable by nature, unstable as water. This can only be done by his heart being established by grace, and through the love of God shed abroad in the heart. It is by God’s keeping us that we can keep His commandments. “Uphold Thou me: guide my footsteps that they may not slip out of those ways of Thine.” Well, that is the practice of the godly.

We now come to *the reasons* of that practice. There are two reasons here in the text.

The *first* reason is contained in the words, “*thy testimonies.*” That is the first and great reason why we should keep them: they are God’s testimonies. They are the sovereign commands of the great Lawgiver to all His creatures – to all His subjects. “Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts carefully,” and “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” It is not left to their choice whether they will keep them or not. They *must* keep them, or be regarded as rebels, and be liable to punishment. Adam was cast out of paradise for not keeping God’s commandments. And like as Adam was cast out of paradise, so shall all disobedient sinners be shut out of heaven. He is the great God, upon whom all creatures depend. His favour is as the early dew; in His anger is destruction. “He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the mountains, and presently they smoke.” Who then can abide His indignation or stand before the fierceness of His anger? “By thy wrath we are consumed.” Christ says, “Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” “Yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” And let His authority rule over your heart and over your life.

And what are the testimonies and commandments of God? He commands all men everywhere to repent, to believe in Christ, and to flee to Him for refuge. He also commands all men to walk in obedience to His holy law, as they shall answer at the great day. If sinners had the true fear in their hearts, O what manner of persons would they be in all manner of holiness! When everyone shall stand before Him to receive their final doom, blessed shall they be that do His commandments; they “shall enter in through the gates into the city,” and shall be received with joy and gladness, and all sorrow and sighing shall be swept away for ever.

The *first* reason, then, why we should keep the testimonies is that they are God’s testimonies. They ought to be chosen and obeyed in preference to everything else, as Peter said, “Whether ought we to obey God rather than men, judge ye.”

The *second* reason is their own intrinsic excellence. “Thy testimonies are *wonderful.*”

God’s works are wonderful. They reveal many of the perfections of Jehovah – His wisdom, His power, and His goodness. But His Word is still more wonderful. He hath magnified His Word above all His great name (Psalm 138:2). It is a treasury of divine instruction, revealing the operations of Jehovah before man was upon the earth; revealing now to man the right way of worshipping Him and gaining access to Him, which man could never have found out himself; and revealing the way in which a guilty sinner can be saved. What a mystery! The wisdom of the creature could never have found it out. He hath magnified His Word above all His great name.

Now, the testimonies of God in the Bible are not silent regarding the mysteries of nature, but, although they are not silent regarding these, yet they were not given to teach men natural philosophy and human science. And, though they abound with the mysteries of nature and providence, yet their chief purpose is to reveal the counsels of His grace and love for the salvation of lost sinners. Mysteries, that never could be known by human creatures, are revealed in the Word so plainly that he who runs may read. There is in it, milk for babes and strong meat for men, and mysteries that the very angels desire to look into, as Peter says, “which things the angels desire to look into.” The chief subject which appears in the Old Testament and in the New, is Christ and His salvation. The Old Testament shows us the preparation that God was making for 4,000 years for the coming of Christ – how He was preparing the world and the Church for His coming. And, then, the New Testament tells us of His coming, what He has done for us, and what He is now doing for His redeemed. These things are revealed in the Word – in the letter of the Word – but they are revealed savingly to

the soul only by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. “He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

We may gather from these and the subsequent words of David that the more he understood and knew of God’s testimonies, the more wonderful they appeared to him, for as David grew in knowledge and experience of the Word of God, it was always getting more wonderful and precious to him. I remember the late James Macadie saying to me, when he began to read the Bible over the last time before he died (he read it over several times), how wonderful and precious some parts of the Old Testament appeared to him. He never thought them so wonderful before. And it appears from various expressions of David that the more he studied and knew of the Word of God, the more wonderful it appeared to him. Now, David was a man of deep wisdom and large experience in all matters human and divine. And what does he say about all human things, about all he had seen in the world? He says: – “I have seen an end of all perfection,” – that is, in the world – “but thy commandment is exceeding broad” – so broad that he could not comprehend it. That is what every person will have to say who is taught from above. Outward joys and pleasures do not reach or satisfy the soul – the higher nature of man. “Miserable comforters are ye all, physicians of no value.” It is good for a man to learn this. It is good for a man to come to such a conclusion, and when he can say with the heart, “I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.”

Let us now observe in what respects is the Word of God wonderful.

1. It is wonderfully suited to man’s need and man’s present condition. It is wonderfully suited to man’s need as a sinful creature. In the Psalm that we were singing – the 19th Psalm – it is said: –

“God’s law is perfect and converts
the soul in sin that lies;
God’s testimony is most sure,
and makes the simple wise.”

That is one thing we need to get – the soul converted. The testimonies of God have a wonderful power in converting the soul. The commandment of the Lord endureth for ever. We may sing praise to the Lord daily, but O can we join with the Psalmist and say this from experience, “God’s law is perfect, and His testimonies are perfect, even as He Himself is perfect?” Nothing can be added to His Word, or taken from it. His testimonies are suited for all persons in all ranks and conditions, in all countries and in all ages, old and young, high and low, rich and poor. The Scriptures are equally suited to them all, whatever they may be. O, surely, that is wonderful! The Bible is a looking glass that shows to every sinner his own real picture – what he is inwardly and what he knows not himself.

2. There is another respect in which the Word is wonderful, that is, the way in which the Lord has recorded it in human language. There is in the Bible such a union of majesty and simplicity that it is without any equal. There are no such majestic passages to be found in all human writings as in the Bible, and none so plain and simple. O, what overwhelming thoughts, and such matchless majesty and simplicity! That was the character of Christ’s preaching. His very enemies acknowledged it, and said, “Never man spake like this man.” There was a divine majesty about all that he said, and a divine authority, and at the same time, he spoke in words so simple that even children could understand him. “Never man spake like this man,” so that His enemies were astonished at His doctrine. His word was with power. And that is just the character of the written Word. It shows that the same Spirit dictated both. The great character, then, of the Word is plainness, simplicity, power, and authority. Just look at Hebrews, 4th chapter and 12th verse, “For the Word of God is quick (the word ‘quick’ might have been translated from the Greek, ‘living’), and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit,

and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” O what simplicity and majesty, and divine authority have we here! Take again the ten commandments written by the finger of God. Nothing can ever be conceived so concise and so compendious as the ten commandments. It is utterly impossible for the imagination to conceive anything that can at all be compared with them; they are most wonderful. And then Christ sums up the whole divinity and morality of the Bible in one sentence, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.”

We hear a great deal about social science at present. There is a great noise about it. Every magazine and paper contains articles bearing on it. But the whole substance of social science Christ puts in a few words: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” What a depth and comprehensiveness of meaning are in these few words! There is nothing more that is needed to thrill the whole world with peace and happiness. What more is needed to fill it with peace and love than obedience to these few words? If the world was filled with that love, it would be a world of peaceful and happy brethren. No more would nation go to war with nation, and kingdom against kingdom; neither would they lift up the sword any more. Consider, then, and rest your social science upon these words: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” We have thousands and thousands of Acts of Parliament, tons after tons, waggons after waggons of them, and all to keep men right and to make them brotherly to one another. But that sentence contains more than the essence of them all. It makes every man a law to himself. It does not need the law written on paper or parchment. It is a law that is written in the heart. “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” That is very wonderful!

3. Another thing that is very remarkable about the Bible is the harmony of all its parts. You will find no contradictions of one part with another. They are all in perfect harmony, although the books of the Bible were given to the world by a great number of different persons, living in periods far remote from one another. Some were very learned men – men like Moses, skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians – and some ignorant, like the fishermen of Galilee. Many of these books were written a vast distance of time from one another. We know that opinions about many things are constantly changing. Even within our own memory, opinions, that at one time were asserted and believed in, are now greatly changed. If you look back a few centuries in the history of Britain, you will find that the changes of opinion are very marked. But although it took 1,500 years to give the whole revelation that is contained in the Bible – although the first part of it was written 1,500 years before the last – yet you see how harmonious it is; there is not one contradiction in the whole book. It shows the divine care and the superintendence of the divine Spirit overruling all and preventing any inaccuracies or mistakes.

I was reading the other day – I forget where – of one of the most learned men of the present day, I think it was Sir William Dawson, the first geologist in the world, and in natural science before all others, and it was stated that he said, “All the labours of the enemies of the Bible for the last 3,000 years have never yet been able to prove one single error in it, either in point of doctrine, or in point of history.” And you know that of late, during the last twenty or thirty years, there have been great discoveries made on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tagus, and in the land of Palestine, great discoveries of ancient monuments and slabs of stone, engraved with the peculiar characters of the East. Many of these – every one of them, in fact – that bears upon anything in the Bible, goes uniformly to strengthen and confirm its veracity and correctness. They all strengthen and corroborate the divine record of the Bible history. This is very wonderful. It shows that all the books of the Bible were under the careful supervision and protection of one divine Spirit. There is no discrepancy, no jarring and no

contradiction. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The law and the gospel, although they appear to be opposed to one another, both work together for the salvation of sinners.

4. The testimonies of God are wonderful on account of their deep mysteries which could never have been found out by fallen men. For instance, the mysteries of the Trinity, of the Creation, of the Fall of man, of his Redemption by the grace of God through Jesus Christ, and the Regeneration of man through the work of the Holy Spirit. They also reveal to us the future everlasting condition of the good and of the bad, the blessedness of the good and the misery of the bad. These are mysteries that no human being can fully fathom. They sprang from the mind of the Eternal, and they are now revealed to us through the Bible. All that man knows of God comes from the Bible. There is nothing of God seen in the Book of Nature that can compare but very imperfectly with what is revealed of Him in the Book of Scripture. A child, who has the Bible in his hand, may learn more in a half-an-hour of these mysteries, than all the great men of this world, who have lived in the past ages, together with all the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome, all the time they were studying. The philosopher may guess a great deal regarding the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, but he never can know anything about His mercy, grace and love, the mysteries upon which the eternal happiness of man depends, and which even angels desire to look into. What a treasury of knowledge is in such a book!

5. Another thing that the Word is remarkable for is its power. Paul, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, says, "Our gospel came to you not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance." Very shortly after the death of Christ the gospel penetrated almost the whole of the known world. It spread over the earth, and everywhere Pagan idolatry began to decline, and, in a short time afterwards, the Roman Empire – the pagan Roman Empire – began to fall. The little leaven, as Christ said, leavened the whole lump. It was during the apostolic period that the gospel was disseminated so much in the Roman Empire. The whole lump was leavened. The little cloud, at first no bigger than a man's hand, grew and accumulated until at last it covered nearly the whole earth. It was not the eloquence of men that did it; it was the innate power of "the truth" itself, because the Spirit of God was in it. It spread and conquered and prevailed throughout the Roman Empire although it was contrary to the whole nature of man. It called upon men to forsake their sins and their pleasures, to forsake revenge and to love their enemies, to suffer persecution for the Truth's sake, and a variety of other things contrary to the whole tenor of man's nature. And the reward it offers is not outward things but spiritual mercies and everlasting recompense to all those who are willing to forsake all and follow Christ. O what singular, what inconceivable power!

6. There is another very wonderful thing in connection with the Scriptures, that is, the remarkable way in which they have been preserved. Look how wonderfully they were discovered and preserved from being lost in the reign of Josiah, King of Judah. The temple had been corrupted and confused, and Josiah gave command that it should be cleansed. Before this the word of Jehovah had been neglected, and the temple was full of rubbish. When they were cleansing it they found "the book of the law" that had lain hidden and neglected so long that the existence of such a book was almost entirely forgotten. This book comprised the five books of Moses.

In New Testament times, and for a great number of years, God's Word had most inveterate enemies in the Roman Emperors. The Roman Empire then included the whole of the known world. The Emperors issued edicts that were proclaimed throughout the world that every Bible should be burnt, and these edicts they endeavoured to carry out with the most relentless hand. And now the Roman Catholics do the same thing in these days in Ireland. If a Roman Catholic gets hold of a Bible, he is forced, immediately the priest knows, to give it

up. And it is the same in the continent, but at least some parts of it are not quite so bad, which are not under the rule of the Romish priesthood. If any Roman Catholic has a Bible, he is bound to tell it to the priest when he goes to Confession, under pain of all the anathemas and curses of the Church. He is then forced to give it up or burn it. Is it not wonderful then how the Scriptures have been preserved for such a length of time, through such straits and emergencies, until now it is impossible to calculate the number of Bibles in the world? There was a divine power protecting the Bible in all ages. There was a divine power superintending the writing of the Bible and preserving it from error, and now there is a divine hand preserving it from destruction.

In the hundred and thirtieth verse of this Psalm, the Psalmist goes on to commend the Word of God, because of its enlightening power, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."

Though the Word is full of mysteries, yet it is full of light. It makes the simple wise, and reveals even unto babes the things that are hidden from the wise and prudent of this world. It is light upon all things; it throws light upon everything that concerns sinners; it throws light upon the miseries of hell and the glories of heaven and the invisible world. It throws light upon the ways of God towards men, and upon the ways and struggles of men on this earth . . . "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad."

It gives light about the Fall of man. It teaches that men, by nature, have no understanding. "The Lord looked down from heaven to see if any understood and did seek after God," but there was not one. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." From the highest to the lowest all are alike, serving divers lusts and pleasures. And we see that those who have the highest human knowledge and the greatest scientific learning, have the deepest spiritual ignorance combined in the same man. Those who are looked up to and adored on account of their knowledge of science and literature, and everything of which human knowledge consists, and who are admired as leaders and princes, you will find to possess the deepest spiritual ignorance. How strange and wonderful! They are simple and void of understanding. The Apostle Paul was a very learned man in his natural state, but he was a Pharisee and knew nothing of spiritual things. He was instructed in all the human knowledge of his day, like Moses, but O, how dark was his mind! There is no spiritual knowledge in man by nature, no fear of God, no love to God. The world is what he seeks as his portion, not heaven. He sees very little evil in sin, and therefore he is very easily tempted and led by Satan into sin, and his conscience, whenever it awakes, is very easily quieted and lulled to sleep again. It is said that, when the ostrich is pursued, and is almost completely wearied out, she will thrust her head into the sand, believing that when she does not see her enemies, they do not see her. That is the case with the sinner; his understanding is darkened; and he believes that God sees as little of him as he sees of God. Thus they are void of understanding, and think they will escape judgment. They think little of eternity, if their souls are allowed to sail on at ease, and they are unwilling to be taken up with such thoughts. What is the cure for such a state of soul as this? It is "the entrance of Thy words." There is no hope of ever curing the ignorance of sinners but by the entrance of God's Word that has cured millions and millions of dark souls. It has translated them from being the children of darkness to be the children of light, and it has the same power still. When the Word of God comes into the soul it brings light and life with it. When God began the work of creation, darkness brooded over the face of the deep. Darkness and light are the same to him, though not to his creatures. And God spake the word and said, "Let there be light," and immediately there was light. And He has but to speak and there will be light by the Word in the human soul. Job, in the 10th chapter, speaks of the soul and understanding of man as a land of darkness, darkness itself and of the shadow of death, where there is no order, and where the light itself is darkness. These were Job's words, and

they are true to this day. He described the state of the human mind as it existed in his day, and it exactly corresponds with the human mind now.

When the Word enters the soul by faith, then the light of God reveals the Fall and lost position of man by sin, and he sees that all is ruined. Until they get this light, those, who deny original sin, can very easily do so. What they thought was a splendid palace is nothing but a heap of ruins. There is no wisdom in Israel by nature, no holiness, and nothing to fit them for meeting with God and having fellowship with Him. They have nothing on their side but misery, and ruin, and death, and until their false hopes are thrown down, they become vain, empty fellows. You see that in the case of Paul in the 7th of Romans, where he says "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Paul thought that he was touching the law blameless and right at all points, but when the law came he found that he was altogether wrong. And this is a great mercy for the sinner, when he is awakened from his false dream of security and false hope, that he may seek the true peace of God. Then, the law, as Paul says, is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It teaches us that we are self-destroyed sinners, and that there is no refuge for us but in Christ. This is a great mercy, to be convinced of sin, and brought to Christ and His fulness, that we may receive "the propitiation for our sins."

But the word "simple" may have another meaning besides "want of understanding." It may signify upright – an upright man, a one-hearted man. It may mean, according to its original signification, without folding or twisting. The first half of the word is "sim" or "sin," which means "without," and the second half, "pla," signifies "turns" – "without turns." According to this, a simple man is a man without guile – a pure, upright man. Men are not so by nature; their hearts are desperately wicked. But this man is pure, upright, and single-hearted. "As he thinketh in his heart, so doth he truth express." It is what Christ calls, in the parable of the sower, an honest and good heart – made so by the grace of God. Well, then, the Word shall be an enlightening word to such a man, who is, in this sense, simple. The Word of God gives such persons spiritual wisdom, because they "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save their souls." They are enabled by the Word to discern more and more of their own sin, more and more of the character of Christ, and more and more of the emptiness of the world. Thus the Word humbles them; it is a humbling light. The more they see of it, the more humble they are made by this sanctifying light. It makes them to know more and more of their dependence on God's grace. "It giveth understanding to the simple."

Now, my friends, it is because there is so little of this knowledge – this enlightening knowledge – in the world that there is so much profaning of God's name. People go about His worship in the most irreverent and self-satisfying spirit. Their minds are not humbled by the great breadth of God's law and righteousness, because there is little of this light. O! the light manner in which professing Christians go about the worship of God is very grievous to His Holy Spirit. We are told that Jerusalem sinned more than Sodom and Gomorrah, because she had greater privileges. Her sins were more grievous in the sight of God, because she had more means of instruction. With such great privileges the effect ought to have been true fear and true reverence of His name. But Christ says, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

The entrance of His Word giveth light and understanding unto the sinner – light to discern more of the Divine Majesty, that we may bow before Him and His authority. God's Word gives sinners not only light to see their own spiritual malady, but light to know and understand Christ as their great remedy in His various offices, working on their behalf as their prophet, priest, and king, meeting all their needs. He is their atoning righteousness and justification, and by the Word, in the hand of the Spirit, they trust in His infinite merit and power; and through the redemption Christ has purchased, the Lord pardons their sins, renews

their natures, and prepares them for life everlasting. This shows that all the believer gets is from grace – free grace. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

The Word gives them light to find their way to heaven. No man can find his way without the Word of God. “Thy word is a light unto my feet and a lamp unto my path.” The Church of Christ – like Israel of old – meets with many trials, many temptations, and many troubles, but here is their remedy: in their straits they are revived and quickened by His Word alone. The Word shows to them the true hope they have in the mercy of God through the work of Christ.

We may then sum up the effects of the Word of God, and say it is a discovering word – a discovering light – which shows the true nature of man and the true nature of God, the true nature of earthly and of heavenly things, and how we should cleave to the one and despise the other. This is a lesson that all should learn, and learn thoroughly – the perishing nature of earthly things and the abiding nature of the heavenly. It is also a directing light. “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel while I live.” It shows the sinner the broad way, and directs him to the narrow way. It warns him of the one, and exhorts him to strive to enter in at the other. It is a quickening light. As the sun in spring quickens all vegetation and causes it to grow and put forth its blossoms, so in like manner the Word quickens the soul. It is a comforting Word. “Truly the light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun.” How comfortable after the darkness of the stormy night is it to come into the bright sunshine! This is one of the effects of the entrance of God’s Word. It is also a satisfying light. “Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” This light reveals to the sinner the unsearchable riches of Christ and the pleasures that are at God’s right hand for evermore. There can come no saving light into the soul but what comes from God. Seek, then, that blessedness of the soul in which Christ shines by this divine light, that you may see His atoning sacrifice, and may be enabled to rest in Him and His finished work; that you may know by experience the truth of the text, and may be able to say with David, “Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.”

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