

A Sermon.

By the late MR. DONALD MACKAY, Student, Strathy.
Preached in St. Jude's Free Presbyterian Church, Glasgow,
on Sabbath, 13th March, 1898.
(Taken verbatim by a Hearer.)

“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me” – John 14:1.

In this portion of the word of God we have the Lord of glory blessing His own poor remnant in the world – His own disciples, who were at this time much cast down, and who might well say that they “downward in deep mire did sink.” Thus their Lord and Master, who had compassion upon them, was willing that they should be raised from the dust, and was fulfilling the promise of His word: –

“He from the dust doth raise the poor
That very low doth lie,
And from the dunghill lifts the man
Oppress'd with poverty.”

In this portion of God's word we have: –

- I. – The troubles that the disciples had, and the causes of their troubles.
- II. – The reasons why they should not be troubled, and there were three special reasons why they should not be troubled, viz.: –

- (1) what God had done for them;
- (2) what God was doing for them; and
- (3) what was in the heart of God to do yet for them.

I. – “Let not your heart be troubled.” It was not for anything in themselves; they had every reason to be troubled for what was in themselves. It is said of the troubles that afflict the just that they are many. The disciples were at this time much bowed down, and that because of the teaching of Christ, for He had said in the chapter which we have read that one of them should betray Him, and that another should deny Him; and they had so little confidence in their own hearts that each of them feared exceedingly lest it should be he. They had no trust in their own hearts. It is written, “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool,” but these were wise men – men that were partakers of the wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. So we see the cause of their trouble. Within were fears, and also without, and this was a blessing to comfort them. But it is not only true that they had fears as a company, but they had personal fears as well, and we might ask Peter, what were his fears and what was the cause of his trouble. What would he say to us? He would say that one cause of his trouble was manifold temptations. But what does his Lord say? “Be not troubled, Peter, because of this, for though you have manifold temptations they are only the trial of your faith, which is much more precious than that of gold that perisheth, and therefore you have not so much reason to be troubled.” The power of temptation was one great cause of Peter's troubles – the power of an evil heart that was enmity against God, for we hear him say, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” His own unholiness was a cause of his trouble, and it is a blessed trouble that arises from a sense of unholiness. David cried to Heaven, saying, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me,” so that unholiness of heart was David's trouble also. And why should he not be troubled? Because of this, “I will give you a new heart.” It was the promise of God. Not only that, but at death his soul would be made holy as the ransomed of the Lord, and at the resurrection

his body would be made like the glorious body of Christ. These are reasons why, notwithstanding what he was in himself, he should not be troubled.

They have not only troubles within, but they have also troubles without; but the troubles without are light compared to the troubles within. It seems that it is of the troubles without that Paul speaks when he says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." But of the troubles within, what does he say? "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" So that the troubles within were greater by far and more difficult to bear than the troubles without. Their troubles were many, and we might ask David what was his trouble, for this portion of God's word belonged not only to the disciples, but belongs to all the Church of God from the beginning to the end of time. "All things are yours." Well, we were just singing of David's troubles: –

"Of death the cords and sorrows did
About me compass round;
The pains of hell took hold on me,
I grief and trouble found."

These are the causes of David's trouble: the power of hell in his own soul, the cords of death, and the prison. But he has more troubles still, for he cries: –

"Save me, O God, because the floods
Do so environ me,
That ev'n unto my very soul
Come in the waters be."

What are these waters, David? "Ah, these are rivers that were accustomed to run through my soul in the days of my ignorance, and they now seek a way back again through my soul, so that the waters are likely to drown me. Some of these waters are the love of the world, for where that is, the love of the Father is not. The love of Christ kept the waters back in the day of regeneration, when God revealed Himself to my soul; but now God has withdrawn from my soul, and these rivers of death have returned again. "And these," says David, "are my troubles." They are a blessed people who are afflicted with such troubles. If you have these troubles your fellowship is with the Church of the living God: your fellowship is with David, and you shall as surely inherit the kingdom as David inherited the kingdom. But David says, "My troubles do not end there, for I downward in deep mire do sink where standing there is none" What is that mire, David? "Ah, the mire that I sink down into is the power and the love of sin." But let not your heart be troubled, David, for "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world, and though "Weeping may for a night endure, at morn doth joy arise." Joy in the morning. What morning? Life is compared to a vapour or night, and joy comes in the morning when the soul enters into the fellowship of God – into the fellowship of the God who is love. The Apostle John says, "God is love," and "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." But even the soul that has got the most of the love of God on earth has only got a taste of the inheritance that awaits him. This is what awaits you when you enter into the full fellowship of God – the God who is love, who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all; you who have only *tasted* of this love on earth, you shall spend eternity *bathing* in it. It is as natural for the new-born soul to seek after the God who is love as it is for the fish to seek the water – the fish is never at home unless in the water – and so at death the soul of the believer enters into the ocean of the love of Christ. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God." This was another cause of David's trouble: His want of rest, for the powers of darkness would not give him rest day or night, for he cries: –

"Woe's me that I in Meshach am
A sojourner so long;

That I in tabernacles dwell
To Kedar that belong.

My soul with him that hateth peace
Hath long a dweller been,
I am for peace, but when I speak,
For battle they are keen.”

But be not troubled, David, for a rest remaineth to those who sojourn in Meshach, not for one or a few of them, but for all of them who must pass through great tribulations before they inherit the kingdom. Oh, then, “Bless’d are they in thy house that dwell; they ever give thee praise” to endless ages of eternity.

But David says, “Not only do the waters come into my soul, and I sink into the mire, but worse than that, the waters go over my head.” What does he mean by that? The power of the spirit of the world is the water that comes into his soul, and when it does not return again it goes over his head, so that he is in his own experience drowning, and therefore he cries: –

“For ever will the Lord cast off,
And gracious be no more?
For ever is his mercy gone?
Fails his word evermore?

What does the Holy Spirit say to those who have fellowship with David? This is the voice of God: “Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

“For sure the Lord will not cast off
Those that his people be,
Neither his own inheritance
Quit and forsake will he.”

“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee: neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.”

II. The second thing which we desired to speak upon was the reasons why they should not be troubled. The first reason was what God had done for them; the second, what God was doing for them, and the third was what God purposed to do yet for them.

It is written, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;” or, it might be said, “for them that truly desire to love him.” Paul says, “This crown is not reserved for me only, but for all them also that love his appearing.” They are a people that are troubled on every side, but they are a people that wait upon Him more than they that wait the morning light to see. They are a people that thirst after Him; they are a people that are tried and worried in their own experience. But what does the Holy Spirit say to those tired and worried ones? “Be not troubled.” “For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.” “Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely”; that is, from the “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” He will give them of His own love, and to the soul that has once tasted of it, one drop of the love of Christ is more valuable than the whole created world, for it is only by the love of Christ shed abroad that the soul is enabled to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness.

Now, their troubles were very many. We were endeavouring to speak to you this morning concerning the death and resurrection of Lazarus. Now, Lazarus had a two-fold resurrection, and he had experience of being clothed with the clothes of death in a two-fold sense, that is, in soul and in body. All those who have got the “white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” They all have fellowship with

Lazarus in this, that it was through the voice of the Son of God that they were raised again from the dead; and those who have been once raised by the power of the voice of the Son of God putting life into their souls, often in their experience go back again to their graves. This is their trouble, that they dwell so often in the grave in their own experience, that is, “among the dead.” But what does the promise say to them? “Be not troubled.” “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” These are a people who were in the midst of trouble, and yet they say, “Though I in the midst of trouble walk, I life from Thee shall have.” The apostle says, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One.” Now, no teaching has any effect but the teaching of the unction. It is the unction that cometh from the Holy One that makes the soul realise the shortness of time. However much the creature may be taught by men, he never realises the preciousness of Christ, he never realises his own state, he never realises the shortness of time nor the length of eternity, until the Spirit of God teaches him. “They are all taught of God.”

But Lazarus was a man who had troubles not only in his death, but he had troubles also after he knew that there was a resurrection. And what were these troubles? The death clothes being about his hands and his feet, and his whole body bound with death-clothes. And what are the death-clothes that bind the soul? The old man. Oh! the old man may be called the death-clothes. It is the power of the old man that keeps the soul from walking in the ways of God, and there is a strange thing in connection with this, in that when Jesus desires Lazarus to be free, He does not do it Himself. He commands His people to “loose him and let him go.” He may often use His people to loose your bonds. For instance, supposing that there was another soul twenty miles, or it might be a hundred miles, from you, if it were given him of God to come near your soul in prayer, it might be the means in the hands of God to loose the cords of death, so that you would get a measure of God’s presence in the light of those that living be. Blessed are they who have got the resurrection with Lazarus!

The next thing we had to speak of was what God had done for them. What was that? Well, He elected them in Christ from all eternity. “Ye have not chosen me” (you would never have made choice of Me: that was not your nature, for you were enemies), “but I have chosen you.” This was a reason why they should not be troubled, because God made choice of them from all eternity to become members of the glorious body of Christ. And think you how that soul is exalted and will be exalted throughout the endless ages of eternity, that becomes a member of Christ’s glorious body, or a stone in the temple of the living God. They are not to be troubled, because God made choice of them in Christ Jesus before the world was. The love of God to them was as a flame that could not be quenched. It is true of a single drop of this love that falls into the souls of His people that all the powers of darkness cannot destroy it, and if that be true of one drop, how much more is it true of the ocean itself, that is, the love in the heart of God to them. The Apostle says, “Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he first loved us.” “To him that loved us and washed us in his own blood.” Was not that a sweet feast to John? The Apostle Paul also was taught of God that Christ died for him: not only that He suffered the cursed death of the tree for His elect, but that he himself was of the number. Oh, are they not then a blessed people, a people to be envied above all people on the face of the earth, those of whom it is true that they are crucified with Christ? The Apostle Paul says, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me.” It was a sweet feast to the soul of the Apostle when the Holy Spirit took him into the depths of the wisdom of God in such a way. The love of God, then, was as a flame that could not be quenched. All His sufferings in this world could not quench it, and not only did He love them, but He also took their curse upon Himself. Can you realise such a thing as this? He was made a *curse* for them. The curse of the law due to them was laid upon Him, and because of the love He had in his heart for them, He took their curse upon Himself – the Just for the unjust. The curse due to them was poured out in His cup.

It is not only true that He did these things for them, but He also worked a work in them. They are said to be the workmanship of God. The apostle says, "We are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," and at the same time it is true that they are to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. God does not deal with them as a man works with a stone, but He deals with them as with reasonable creatures.

"God doth build up Jerusalem,
And He it is alone
That the dispersed of Israel
Doth gather into one."

He shall gather them at last to be an holy temple to the Lord. They shall come from the north, south, east, and west, a multitude that no man can number, and oh! how fearful for your soul and my soul, if in that day we shall be separated from Christ and from His chosen people! For, as it is true that no man can understand what happiness and what peace awaits those that are brought nigh to God in a day of mercy, so it is also true that no man can understand the troubles and the miseries which await those whom death and the judgment will find separate from Christ.

But these people are said to be the workmanship of God. They are said to be built upon the Rock Christ. This is the Rock against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. The question might be asked, "What is the first stone that is laid in this building?" Well, the first stone laid is faith. "Without faith we cannot please God." Now, if a stone be laid on a rock without being fixed to its foundation, there is a danger that when the floods come it will be carried away. How, then, is this stone, which is faith, united to the rock? Well, it is by the love of Christ, for it is written, "Faith worketh by love." Now, this is only one stone in the building, but there are many stones, for he says, "Add to your faith virtue." Now, the nature of this virtue of which the apostle speaks seems to be manliness in the cause of God; power given to the heart by the Spirit of God to become a follower of God. It is not an earthly virtue, but a heavenly virtue. "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge." Now this is a stone which all the houses that God builds have. What is the nature of this knowledge of which the apostle speaks? It is a knowledge of the person of the Son of God. Whatever other knowledge the soul may have, unless he has the knowledge of Christ Jesus, it will avail him nothing at death. "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." The nature of this knowledge is that it enlightens the mind. The soul never saw anything of the preciousness of the members of the body of Christ, except in the light of this knowledge. It was in this knowledge they were taught the vanity of all things, and in this knowledge they were taught the shortness of time and the length of eternity. It was in a measure under the power of this spirit that they realised their life was but a vapour, enduring a little while, and it was in this knowledge they saw the glory of God in the works of creation; it was by faith they understood the worlds were created and kept up by the word of God. It was in this knowledge, also, that they realised all flesh was as grass and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.

But they had reason also to rejoice because of what was in His heart to do yet for them, for He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you." It may be said, though it is a solemn thing to say, that He could not be at rest until the time comes when they shall enter into the glorious rest and the glorious peace that remains for the people of God, for He says, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be with me, that they may behold my glory."

It is true of every soul that waits upon Him or that seeks His presence, that he is continually around them as the mountains are around Jerusalem. They are more precious in His sight than the whole creation. They are precious as the apple of His eye, because they are the fruit of His own death.

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A Sermon.

Preached by the late REV. CHRISTOPHER MUNRO,
Strathy, 26th December, 1873.

“David therefore departed thence, and escaped unto the cave of Adullam and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one

that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them” – 1 Samuel 22:1,2.

As David was a type of Christ, many events in his history may be taken as typical in their character, and this event may be taken as one of these. First, let us consider David himself as representing Christ. This typical position he filled inasmuch as the Lord made choice of him to reign over His people Israel, and for filling this honourable position and high rank He commanded Samuel to anoint him and set him apart for the office of king, and at the same time declared that he was a man according to His own heart, who would do all His will.

Thus, we read, was Christ chosen to be the King of His Church – of God’s redeemed people; chosen because He was found fit for the office, one in every respect according to God’s heart, and who should do all His will; not like Adam, who transgressed His covenant, and by this utterly failed to do God’s will. David did not at this time come to the throne, and was only king-elect, which drew upon him the wrath of Saul, whom the Lord rejected as king. He had to flee for his life, and take up his abode in the wilderness, and take shelter in the cave of Adullam, one of the munitions of rocks which were in those deserted regions. This condition in which David was may typify Christ’s humiliation, or the wilderness condition of the Church. Though He is the anointed one, the King of the Church, and King over all, yet He has not as yet taken unto Him His great power to subdue all under Him, and therefore, according to the words of Scripture, we do not see all things put under Him. They are, of course, *de jure* (of right) put under Him, but not *de facto* (actually). The Church, then, from the beginning of the Gospel dispensation till now, is in the wilderness, and the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth; and the powers that oppose His kingdom and His cause bear sway, and Satan is permitted to rule in the children of disobedience. And as Christ identifies Himself with the Church, He, as her King, may be said to be in circumstances somewhat analogous to those in which David was here in the wilderness. I do not mean actually and really, but mystically. Actually He is exalted far above all principalities and powers and dominions, but mystically He dwells in the Church, and from what He said to Saul of Tarsus, we learn that in the latter sense He identifies Himself with His people. I refer to what He said: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?” Those who are said here to have gathered themselves unto him may be taken to represent such as are made a people unto Christ. They were his brethren and his father’s house – his near kindred and relations, who knew him and were aware of his being appointed to be king over Israel. I do not think that it is anything fanciful to suppose that these may be taken for the people Christ called from among the Jews (of whom He was, according to the flesh) – the apostles, and evangelists, and the primitive Church; and that the other classes mentioned may represent those called from among the heathen. Should this be so, we are not to suppose that by nature there is any distinction between Jews and Gentiles, as all have sinned and come short of God’s glory. Evidently, however, the Jews are still treated as heirs of the Abrahamic covenant in some of its aspects, and are not to be cast off. Thus they are beloved for the fathers’ sake, and are kept a distinct race, for which great things are still in reserve, for they are to be restored, and their restoration will be to the Church as life from the dead.

In the circumstances of the other classes of persons that came down to David, there is something typical of the condition in which all are by nature, and of the state of mind in which men betake themselves to Christ. There were such as were in distress, in debt, and discontented or grieved in spirit. Man’s sins are compared to a debt, and the claims of the law are compared to the creditor’s demand for payment.

Man owes obedience to the law; it is right and proper that he should obey God, love Him, and do with alacrity and delight all that God commands him to do. This is right in

itself, and also a duty, because nothing is imposed except what is reasonable man should do. It is as reasonable as that a man should pay his creditors, as reasonable as that a child should obey his parents, or that a wife should obey and honour her husband. The creditor does not act unjustly when he sues the debtor; neither does the parent when he chastises his child for disobedience or disrespectful conduct towards him. If these things be right and proper in human relations, surely they are right in our relations towards Him who created us and who supports us. They are so, and therefore men are responsible to God. To deny His right is to rebel against Him; to withhold from Him the honour and obedience are crimes against Him. Man may say that he cannot pay the debt because he has nothing; but the question is, "Does he owe the debt?" No one denies this, for all acknowledge they are sinners, and that is as much as to say that they are debtors. And when the debt is acknowledged, must it not be acknowledged that it is right to discharge it? And if not discharged, it must be acknowledged that the creditor may enforce the law – may exact satisfaction. If so, must not God enforce it? Must He not obtain satisfaction? "The wages of sin is death." This is written; this is the law of the righteous Jehovah. All who profess to believe that Christ came to save sinners, confess the justice of this punishment. For He died; and if it be not just to punish sin with death, it was not just that Christ should die. Christ Himself acknowledged this by taking the cup given Him by the Father.

When one that is convinced of sin sees that he has acted wickedly against a righteous God, dishonoured His holy name, and withheld from Him the obedience and homage due unto Him, and is convinced of the righteousness of the punishment declared to be due to sin, then he finds himself in a position analogous to that of a debtor pressed for payment, but who has not a mite to meet the claims of the creditor. Justice he sees to be in pursuit of him; the law is set before him, and he sees that he never fulfilled it, and that he cannot fulfil it. He is afraid of the creditor, of the judge, of the prison, and of death. This puts him in distress. He is self-condemned; his conscience accuses him and takes no excuse. It cannot be appeased; that is, it thunders in his ears that nothing he does or can do will satisfy justice, and that in all things he sins and comes short of God's glory. He hears the law, and its only voice to him is: – "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." He believes this to be the Word of God, to be His purpose with regard to the transgressor. And how can he bear this curse? How can he endure the death threatened? How can he live for ever under God's anger and wrath? How can he endure the outpouring of the vessels thereof? How can he endure the drinking of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath? The apprehension of this distresses him. Satan, by his temptations, may also assail, and the intention of this great enemy is to drive unto despair, to lull asleep, or to deceive. Sin itself revives, and may cause more distress, because the sinner is ready to believe that he is indeed forsaken and abandoned to all evil. It is natural for man when he finds himself in any distress to seek deliverance, and consider how he may escape from what distresses him, or whither he shall betake himself from impending danger.

The Israelites, who went down, were also discontented, grieved, or bitter in spirit; they were in debt and distressed, and, discontented as they were, they were not pleased with Saul nor with his reign. They paid tribute unto him; they gave their sons to be soldiers, and all else demanded of them, but as a nation they were not benefited; they were not delivered from their enemies; they had not the divine countenance and blessing. They perceived Saul was tyrannical, overbearing, and self-willed, and failed to do what was commanded him. They knew David was anointed, that he was to be king, and that Saul's treatment of him was unjust and cruel, yet they believed the Lord was with him, and would defend him and make him king over Israel. They therefore left their homes and their inheritances, and braved the power of Saul. Thus the taught sinner understands under what dominion he is by nature, that he is under the reign of sin and of Satan, that he is a slave and must continue so, if he be not

delivered, if he change not his state, his king and ruler. He becomes discontented and grieved in spirit; he feels unhappy, restless, and miserable. He hates sin and its dominion; he looks upon Satan as his great enemy, in whose service he has gained nothing but what he now sees to be full of sin and misery, and exposing him to eternal misery. He sees the evil of sin, and sees how degrading, how abominable is its servitude, and feels it to be most wretched.

The Gospel brings to his ear tidings of Christ, the Son of God, who came to save sinners, to destroy the works of the devil, to bruise his head, overthrow his dominion and kingdom, and set up a kingdom where liberty and freedom from sin is to be obtained, and where righteousness, holiness, and love are to reign. To believe these truths puts the sinner in the same relation to Christ as the distressed and discontented Israelites were towards David when they resolved on leaving their homes, and joining themselves to the son of Jesse. Some such might thus reflect and resolve: "I am brought into debt under this man's reign. I have lost all I had. The creditor pursues me, and I have nothing to pay. I see the oppression, the cruelty, the unrighteousness of this man's government, and that by remaining here nothing but ruin awaits myself and family. Of what avail is it to have a house and inheritance when there is no peace, no comfort, no hope of improvement? I have heard of the son of Jesse having been anointed by Samuel. I hear he is a man of God; that he is kind, liberal, just, wise, and a first-rate leader of men. I shall therefore arise and forsake all here, and join myself to him, and will follow him to death." And so the Israelite arose, and went down to him and offered his services. He might question, or feel doubtful, as to his being admitted into the company, yet, like the lepers at the gate of Samaria, he ventures, thinking anything better than to remain as he was. Thus the sinner who is effectually called reflects and resolves, under the saving teaching of the Holy Ghost: "I am in my present condition undone. I have destroyed myself and all God bestowed on me in the service of sin and Satan, who is my great enemy. I hear of the Son's coming to set up His kingdom; He sends ambassadors to invite men and call upon them to leave the kingdom of His enemy. If I remain here, death must be my lot. I will arise and forsake my father's house and my people, and go and cast myself on the mercy of this great and glorious King, of whose clemency and goodness I hear so much." Thus sinners are made willing to forsake sin and its ways and thoughts, and return unto the Lord. And all who come He receives, and casts none out, but blesses them, makes them His people, His friends, good soldiers to fight His battles. For as David became the captain of those that went down unto him to the cave of Adullam, so Christ is the Captain of His people, their Leader; and all who come unto Him must follow Him, and He leads them and brings them unto glory, and will make them kings and priests unto God and to His Son. In following Him they have to fight against sin, Satan, and the world. They are armed not with carnal weapons but spiritual ones. Sometimes the battlefield is within, where the world cannot see the conflict. The flesh is to be mortified, and many a battle it at times gives – many wounds are given on both sides. There is healing for the wounds of the soul, but none for those inflicted by the sword of the Spirit and by the Cross of Christ on the body of sin. Satan at times appears on the field both as a cunning serpent to deceive, and as a roaring lion to devour. Their Captain is never far off, and becomes their shield and their strong tower, to which they are ever to resort. Through Him they sustain the battle; through Him they are kept and defended in the day of sore battle and great danger. Through His blood they conquer. This defends them from the curse; this gives power to crucify sin; this defeats Satan in tempting to despair or in alluring by sin. Now, it may be asked, "Does the blood enable them to resist and overcome the enemy?" The love of Christ, as seen in His death, has a power that destroys all Satan's dominion in the soul. He cannot show anything like this love to draw the soul to him. In it also there is a triumphant answer to all the reasonings by which he would force the poor believer into the pit of despair. Thus

Christ's followers pass through great tribulations, and out of these He will bring them all, with their robes white as light, and bring them to the city of God, the new Jerusalem, whose walls are precious stones, clear as crystal, whose gates are pearls, whose streets are fine gold, where they shall join myriads of holy ones, all redeemed and saved, and whose walks are through this city, as if it were a sea of glass, each having a harp on which he most skilfully and most sweetly sings the song of Moses and the Lamb – songs of triumph over their enemy, who is cast into the depth of the Red Sea of wrath, and whom they shall see no more; songs of deliverance from all dangers, from the evils that surrounded them; from all their iniquities, from death and the grave; songs of gratitude for His love, for His goodness, mercy, and truth, that shall endure for ever, and for His making them priests and kings unto God.

Contemplate them in the various views in which they are represented, first poor, blind, naked, clothed in filthy garments, drowned in debt, slaves of sin and of Satan, and under the curse of the law. Look at them brought unto their right mind, and anxiously looking about them for help and pity, but none to know them. See them divinely guided unto the hill of Zion, where dwells Zion's King. See them graciously received, all their sins pardoned, the filthy garments taken off, their bodies washed and clothed in the garments of righteousness and in the robes of salvation, and their heads anointed with ointment. See them setting out to follow their King. See them going through fire and water, but still preserved and brought through; see them at times in the dark and sadly weeping, or in prison and filled with the fear of death, at other times fighting and wounded. See them at last on the happy shore in the land of promise, crowned with crowns, palms in their hands and harps, reigning with Christ in glory. Is there not here a change? The poor raised from the dunghill and out of the ashes, and set on high with the princes of His people, and He not ashamed to call them brethren.

You who are yet far off, who have not come to Christ, to the King of Zion, consider what is your condition. You are in debt, and the law in pursuit of you, and if you flee not unto Him, there is no deliverance for you from the creditor, who at last will cast you into prison. Are you distressed and grieved in spirit, believing this and feeling your bondage under a hard taskmaster, under sin, the world, and Satan? There is One who receives such and saves, protects, and raises them up. If you doubt His willingness to receive you, come and put Him to the test. He calls you; He has a kingdom; He would have subjects; He would have soldiers of the cross; He carries on a warfare against sin and Satan, against all the sins and vices that prevail among men everywhere; He has raised up a standard against them, against the kingdom of darkness. They are legions, such as ignorance, carelessness, unbelief, covetousness, uncleanness, and drunkenness. All these are crying evils in our day, in our land. Christ is opposed to them, and calls on men to join His standard, to join His ranks. Who then is on the side of David, the son of Jesse? Who is on his side? Let them pass over to Him and fight His battles. Would you not be on the side that is yet to have the victory? The house of David is certain of waxing strong. To the eye of sense, His cause may *appear* to lose at times, but *actually* it does not so lose. The house of Saul must wax weaker and weaker.

You who have enlisted then, follow Him, keep near Him, do not be moved by the boasts of the enemy, suffer not yourselves to be disheartened by the apparent increase of the enemy's power, by the seeming success of his cause, for he shall not prevail finally over any believer. This King is almighty; He is the Lord of hosts and strong in battle, and, therefore, He yet shall be seen returning from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of His strength, not faint nor weary, after overcoming all His enemies, and making them His footstool.

[June 1909]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. JOHN DUNCAN, LL.D.,
Professor of Hebrew in the New College, Edinburgh.

Preached 12th April, 1835.

[Dr. Duncan was born in 1796. This sermon was preached a year before he was ordained to Milton Church, Glasgow. His ordination took place on 28th April, 1836. Began his work as Professor in November, 1843. Died 26th February, 1870. The present discourse was previously published by Miss Parker, Aberdeen, in 1897. – Ed.]

“Be still, and know that I am God” – Psalm 46:10.

The Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, says, “Ye have need that one teach you again what be the first principles of the oracles of God”; and, alas, that it should be so, the same thing is

true concerning us. We have not yet learned these principles as we ought. We have indeed to go on to perfection, but this in the way of return to our first lessons in order that we may learn them better. No truth, you will say, can be more plain than that contained in our text, and it is most true. No truth is more important to us to rest upon, in order to our reaching the stature of perfect men, in Christ Jesus, than this very truth, that Jehovah is God.

The call here addressed to the Church of God consists of two parts — one of exercise, a being still; and a knowing that Jehovah is God; a being still so as to know this.

And, first, the particular circumstances of the Psalm teach us that the stillness which is meant is a stillness amidst troublous times; a being still when there is everything to agitate us; everything to toss us about; everything to make us like the waves of the sea, driven about by the tempest and tossed. Such is the situation of things when the mountains are carried to the midst of the seas, when the waters of the sea roar and are troubled, when the heathens rage, and the nations are moved, and when Jehovah is uttering His voice. Such times naturally produce not stillness but excitement, such as the heathen nations are excited when they roar and are troubled; the waves of the sea being used in Scripture as a figure to express the commotions of the people, and the mountains to express forms of government. In such times the Church of God is called to a very peculiar exercise, that of being still. You will say, how is it possible to be still in such circumstances, when those parts of nature which are of a movable quality like the waters of the sea are agitated, and those parts which are of a fixed quality like the mountains, shake? To this we have little more to answer, through our ignorance, than this: that must be possible which Jehovah commands, “Be still.” There is nothing to be gained either by the agitation of the warring waves, or the shaking of the mountains. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with the potsherds of the earth. The pride of the one clashes against the pride of the other; the insubordination of the one clashes with the tyranny of the other; the selfishness of the one with the selfishness of the other. The universal frame of things is disorganised. Sin has vitiated the course of nature; the course of rational and moral nature as well as of physical nature. And in this state of things it becometh immortal souls to listen to the voice which comes from the Lord Jehovah, “Be still.”

But absolute quietness is not what is meant. That were not a real good. To be simply still would be to be as stocks and stones, or worse still; it would be to be man and not have the feelings of man. It would be to degrade beyond the degradation in which the mass of the unregenerate are sunk. But the stillness to which God calleth is a stillness with a purpose; it is a stillness for an end. “Be still and know,” or be still that you may know (which is the meaning of the conjunction “and”) “that I am God.”

The universal frame of things is neither in quietness nor in agitation finally for its own sake. The universe of created things is not all that exists. Beyond this mighty sphere, beyond the solar system, and beyond the whole planetary systems extending through the void of space; beyond astronomers’ conceptions as well as calculations; beyond these immaterial existences of minds — themselves created — remains the throne of the eternal God. And the whole mighty congeries of created worlds, of created systems, as well as all the affairs of this planet with its one sun, are moving on under the control of that intelligent Mind which gives being to all, and which upholds all, and which directs all, to an end worthy of these mighty effects which are produced; I mean, to the putting forth of a manifestation of His eternal excellency, showing that He is God. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.” And if comeliness and order be diffused through the works of God, it is then that we may trace the operations of Him who maketh peace in His high places; and if agitation and confusion and turmoil prevail in any part of His dominions, it is for the purpose of directing our minds to that glorious high throne from the beginning which is the place of His people’s sanctuary, into which nought of turmoil can penetrate, and against which,

though the waves of created agitation toss themselves, they cannot prevail, but like the sea's waves breaking against the foot of some projecting rock, just dash themselves in vain.

But passing from the universal system of things to this world of ours, in which God, in that He has sent His Son into it and in that He has voluntarily come and taken the dust thereof to be His own body, has shown that He has a peculiar interest, and out of which He has chosen His ransomed Church to be a kind of first fruits of His creatures, we are called upon amidst all there is to agitate or distress on the right hand or on the left, to "be still and know that I am God." But why be still to know this? May it not be learned even amidst the agitation? It may be and it may not. It may be known, blessed be God, amidst the agitation sufficiently to stop the agitation. Amidst the raging of the heathen and the moving of the nations, to those who are carrying on the agitation against God and His Christ, in the midst of all their fury and all their zeal (and they have a zeal of God though not according to knowledge), the command may come home with sufficient power, saying, "Be still and know that I am God." In stillness and tranquility must all be learned, save the very lesson which calls to be still, which may be communicated in the midst of the broil. It is alone in secrecy and privacy between God and the individual soul, that this great lesson can be learned – that Jehovah is God. Though all this world – though all that God hath made – speaks of Him, yet are they and we so constituted that amidst the turmoil we lose the lessons which they teach of God; and it is only in the retirement which Jesus points out to us when He commands us to go and repair to our closets, and shut the doors after us, and call upon the Father in heaven, who seeth in secret, knowing that He will reward us openly, that God is to be found. The lessons, though many, pass unregarded till the first lesson be learned which shuts into the closet. But the closet in itself is not absolute stillness. Into its quietness the bustle of the world may be brought. We may be in the midst of all evil there, as well as in the midst of the congregation and the assembly. We must not only be in alone, but we must be alone with God in order to learn that He is God. We must be separated, not from the corporeal only, but from the mental world. We must be brought as individual souls to feel we are with the God who, whilst He pervades universal nature, is undoubtedly present as Creator, Preserver, Lawgiver, Judge, and Inspector of the soul. And other thoughts impeding this must be banished, in order that this thought may pervade the whole soul, that every thought may be subordinate unto and consistent with it.

"Be still, be still." Perhaps thou art in great troubles and in deep waters. Raging and commotion will not mend the matter. Thou mayest fret against the framework of society, civil and ecclesiastical. Thou mayest think that an alteration of external things would mend the case, but it will not. Thou mayest think that taking pains will mend the matter, but it will not. Nothing but internal goodness. By all thy painstaking thou canst not reach the evil; it is within. And while all within is evil, nothing external can rectify it. We are then called to the stillness, in the first place, which self-despair and which creature-despair inspire. There is an activity which will be exerted as long as a sinner, feeling consciousness of sin and misery, thinketh that there is ought within or without him to mend it; but when it is made a certainty that there is nought either within or without him to mend the matter, such a discovery is fitted and likely to inspire stillness. He feels despair, not absolute but universal, of all around him or within him. He is "still." He is shut up from all false hopes, except that which the knowledge of Jehovah being God can inspire. It is of no use then to rage and fret yourself; you can help yourself not one iota. The world may turn any way you please. If you were to get the scheme of things you desire you would be as bad still. You would be as poor and miserable and blind and naked as before. Therefore, "Be still." Know for certain that we are ruined, absolutely ruined, creatures; that sin has brought, not simple disorganisation, but perdition into our universe, perdition into our souls, perdition into all our services. No alteration of things can mend this. Be still and know that true good is not in the universe.

You may say, "Not in the universe as things in the universe are now." It is not in the universe of created things. Might things be as you pleased, no constitution of created nature could give true felicity to an immortal soul. What, then, are you called to do in this stillness? To know that Jehovah is God; to know that the created universe is not all that exists – that there is something else than all that ever was made, than all that rolls through the ages; to know that there is a self-existing King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in that light which is unsearchable and full of glory – a God who existed when there was no sun, no moon, no stars, no earth nor ocean, no mountains, nor fountains abounding with water; that there is an eternal God who is above them all – an eternal God who would continue to be, were all things swept away into their original nothingness; a God having self-existence, having infinite perfection; Jehovah, I am that I am; and I am, because I am the God that hath life in Himself.

Man fell first from his state of innocency from his not being still. Had Eve been still and known this, would she have listened to her tempter? Had Adam been still and known this, would he have listened to any solicitation? Had the tempter been still and known this, would one thought of apostacy have entered his mind? But does not this truth assume a peculiar aspect with regard to us fallen men? This truth, which is the fundamental truth of all religion, which meets alike the religion of angels and that of fallen men on earth, and that of saints in heaven (though we fundamentally assume a particular aspect unto us fallen men for the knowledge that Jehovah is God), implies in it the knowledge that He hath in Himself all that perfection which renders the salvation of lost men possible and, as we have heard this day, honourable unto Him. "Be still, and know that I am God." This voice, coming forth from the throne of the Eternal, and ever heard, maketh peace in the high places. The holy angels are still, and know that God is God; God able to uphold them, and therefore a God in whom they have security that they shall never be devils. And as this knowledge is what makes Michael and Gabriel know that they shall never be devils – for there is nothing in themselves to hinder, but because Jehovah is God, and because they know sufficiently His power and gracious purpose to have confidence in Him that He will preserve them – so the hope in men of renewed rectitude, tranquility, and joy, when they have been lost, is just the farther development of the same knowledge, the knowledge that Jehovah is God.

Let us view this in several instances. What art thou agitated with? Be it what it may, "Be still, and know that I am God." And when thou hast known this, thou hast known all thou needest to know. Art thou agitated with this – "I am without God?" Some who reach glory are agitated with it. "I know not for certain if there be a God. Oh, that there were a God! Oh, that there were such a God as the Bible speaks of!" Be still, and know that Jehovah is God. Art thou plagued and tormented with Atheism? Even though thou art so befooled as to say, "There is no God," yet dost thou wish there were? There is the whole Bible heaping proof upon proof and demonstration upon demonstration that there is, and to assure thee that every excellence which created nature can conceive, and every excellence which created nature cannot conceive, reside in Him who is over all, God blessed for ever. Wilt not thou, to whom Atheism of heart is a complaint, be comforted to know that there is a God? Art thou going to weep and break thy soul in secret places as if there were none? Stop, stop before thou yield to this view of nature's wide range! View thy conscience and moral law feeble fragments within. View the Holy Scriptures. View Mount Sinai's perfect moral law. View the Son of God magnifying and making it honourable. View the whole system of God's revelation of Himself in creation, in providence, and in grace. See him giving the Son of His love, and if thou canst with undazzled eyes behold this, see Him clothing the grass, and behold that it is true that there is a King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God. But if thy complaint is – "I know that there is a God, but things go so contrary to apparent moral right that I cannot comprehend how this should be consistent with the government of

an eternal God; and as for me, like Asaph, my steps are nearly gone, and I am grieved because of the prosperity of the ungodly, for they are not plagued as other men, nor tried as others are. Believing that there is a God and seeking to serve Him, I daily and all day am harassed, while I see those who care not for Him rejoicing, God bringing to their hand abundantly; and I say, Can there be knowledge in the Highest?" "Be still, and know that Jehovah is God." His moral government has a vaster aim than our puny minds can fathom. It takes in a wide system, all particulars of which are ever present to an omniscient intellect, to be finally adjusted in a day which God hath appointed, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He raised His Son from the dead. Then shall it be seen out and out that Christ loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity; that the moral administration of the world is according to His law; that holy cause is even promoted and encouraged; and that the whole might of Godhead is opposed to iniquity.

But oh, sayest thou, "Instead of consoling me now, instead of quieting and making me still, that is the very thing that agitates me, for I am a sinner, and I know that He is a God of judgment, and that by Him actions are weighed." But oh! mark what the terror would be did'st thou not. Thou mayest have little thought of this, but if thou wouldst let go this truth, what terror would be in the background! It is a joyful terror, even that fearful looking for of judgment which puts away the blacker case of Atheism. But that is not all. "Be still, and know that I am God" – God that justifieth the ungodly. And what hast thou here? It is worlds of wonder and astonishment, but it must be true, for God has said it. As for myself, God knows I never could have said it, did it not stand written in the Book. This cold, unbelieving heart of mine has pored over it day and night, and cannot get itself rightly to believe it yet, but that is my fault. Here it is; Romans 4:5, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him," – that is, on God – "that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Could I have imagined it – had all the angels in heaven and all the men on earth said it – I could not have believed it; but here it is, clearly written in God's Book, "God that justifieth the ungodly." Blessed be God for it. So incredible is it that if all the ministers on earth should preach it to you, you would not believe it on their word; and yet, incredible as it is, here it stands: "God that justifieth the ungodly." Now, be still and know that, and never say, "Now I shall be in a fury and rage, for I am ungodly." Oh, but you will say, "I am not only ungodly, but so ungodly." Why, if God justify the ungodly at all, it is easy to believe that He can justify the most ungodly. The difference between an innocent and an ungodly being is so great that the difference between ungodly beings is nothing in comparison. And if God justify the ungodly at all, there is nothing to hinder but He may justify the most ungodly. If God will pass over that immense gulf which separates innocence from guilt to come over one sin, why may He not come over one million? But you will say, "I have never been a day but I have been sinning; never said a word but it was sinful; never done an act but it was displeasing to God. This I have been doing all my days; and since I knew this holy law of God it is my distress that I can find no peace." "Be still, and know that I am God" – "God that justifieth the ungodly."

But I must add farther, that were it not for something else which that Book declares, I could scarcely believe the Book which says that. There I find written not only that "God justifieth the ungodly," but that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I could scarcely believe there was forgiveness with Him that He might be feared (for sin is an infinite evil), did I not believe that with Him there is plenteous redemption. But be still and know that Jehovah is God – a just God, a Saviour; just while He justifieth the ungodly, else you might think it was a lie and a fancy that He doth so, and a thing the ministers have got hold of to cheat you with. But don't look only at God's forgiving sin, but also at His punishing sin. That is credible. Now, if this is credible, that God should bruise His innocent

Son, standing in the law-room of the guilty, then it is credible that God should justify. If He condemned and made His own blessed Son a curse – if the law, which we have violated by the commission of infinite evil and sin against God, hath been made glorious by the Son of God obeying it and enduring its infinite curse – then it is credible. And then, although a sinner, yet, by the grace of His Holy Spirit, I will listen with faith to the word which says, “Be still, and know that I am God” – God that justifieth the ungodly; God that giveth redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Oh! but, some will say, “There are so many hindrances: there is such an agitation in the world, and such mischief within me. Everybody tempts me; the devil tempts me; all the devils in hell tempt me; and I tempt myself worst of all. God pity me, but how can I be still?” That may be all true, but what follows from that? Just that if more be not for us than all that are against us, we are gone. That follows, and nothing more. The whole world is against us, and all hell is against us. If there are not more for us, we are gone and perish for ever. Shall we then be agitated and fretful for all this? Surely not. What is the voice that comes down from heaven? “Be still and know that I am God” – God that quickeneth the dead. And read as the consequence of this, “God is able to make all grace abound towards you,” and be still. We heard of the Holy Ghost; we have heard the promise of the everlasting Gospel, “I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and make known my words unto you.” “Be still, and know that I am God,” that the Holy Ghost is God. If the Holy Ghost sanctify, He is stronger than all the devils in hell, and than all in the world.

But you say, “Woe’s me, I take evil out of everything. I know God, the Holy Ghost, is stronger than all the devils and sinners together, but I do mischief to myself.” Well, you are called to be “still” in the knowledge of all this. Know this for certain that if the devil and all the men in the world and yourself, too, can keep you from being holy, then you will never be holy. But the promise, “I will pour out my Spirit upon you,” is not a promise to be stopped by all that the devil in hell, or the wickedness of your own heart, or of all creatures, can do to prevent its fulfilment. To this discouragement, then, oppose the power of the Spirit. If the guilt of sin oppress you, oppose to it that Jesus Christ who died is God; and if the power of sin oppress, oppose to it that the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies, is God. Be still, and know that Jehovah is God. You will not dare to say, I am stronger than God; but, on the contrary, I know that but for omnipotence I am lost. But I know that Jehovah is omnipotent, and therefore I will be still. Therefore when sin and temptations assail me, in order to give strength and encouragement to resist them, I must just be still, and know that He is God.

But some may be thinking within themselves, “These are strange times in which we live. What, though it should be so with myself, though I should be justified, sanctified, glorified, what am I to do with the world and the Church? God knows I cannot put up with the thought of going to heaven by myself. I wish God’s name to be hallowed on earth, His kingdom to come, and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven; and I cannot but wish peace were in Israel, and for the house of the Lord my God; I can’t be happy alone.” Well, it does not become us to say in regard to any individual person or country what God will do; but here we are called not to be agitated, as if God could not do what is best. “Be still, and know that I am God.” There is no good that we can wish, which, if it be altogether good and productive of the highest good, does not fall under that scheme of good which God has purposed and resolved on and will effect; therefore, with regard to all things, let us be still, and know that Jehovah is God. If the waves roar, let us say, “That is only a roaring wave, and Jehovah, who is on high, is mightier than the noise of many waters.” If the mountains shake, and so tumble into the sea, let us say that “it is only a mountain.” No doubt it would crush us, but it is only a mountain; there is a stronger and a greater than the mountain; yea, and if the earth shake and be removed, it is only the world going to pieces. The throne of the eternal God

still stands. And then there are the capabilities of rebuilding if God sees good to rebuild; yea, the capabilities, when the heavens and earth are dissolved, and the elements melt away with fervent heat, to rebuild a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In application, permit us to address those who this day at the Lord's table have not got all they desired. You have been presenting petitions at the Lord's footstool, and he has not yet granted them; and you have not yet sought to live by faith so as to leave a petition at God's throne, and to know that a petition lodged in the name of Christ through the blood we have this day been hearing of, and the High Priest we were hearing of, is as good as answered. Well, be still, and know that Jehovah is God. Be not like a fretful being whose time is always ready, who cannot wait for a moment. Your time is wholly in His hands, and His time is the best. You say you have not got your petition, and you have need of importunity, for you do not know how long you may live – your time is always ready, and you have not a moment to trust to. But God teaches that our time is wholly in His hands, and though we dare not idle or delay, because we have not one moment to trust to, yet the sovereign God can delay, and delay without injury to His people, because the times are in His hands. Know that the eternal God need be in no hurry – duty must not be delayed, for that passes upon us. But God's grace need be in no hurry. Though our lives be to us uncertain, nothing is uncertain to God. Let us therefore, if we are trusting in Jesus, leaving all our wants and all our cares upon Him, wait patiently upon Him. To Him belongeth the times and the seasons.

Let us now apply this truth, which is good as regards our duty, unto His procedure. But be still, and know that He is God, and, knowing this, let us wait upon Him in other appointed ordinances of His grace to-night, to-morrow, and the next day – knowing that He is the eternal God, and knowing that the good, the peace, the purity, the usefulness which His people may have sought in their attempted preparation for communicating, and on their communicating, and afterwards with reference to their communicating – all these he can give at any time. He does not confine the good of communicating to the moment, but extendeth it over the whole period of His people's life.

But we must hasten. Ye raging heathen and moving kingdoms, ye shaking mountains and roaring waves, will ye not be still? Be ye also still, and know that Jehovah is God. Ye haters of God, what are ye to do? Consider the end before you go any farther. Is it possible to remove the Almighty from His throne? Shall this mountain be removed out of his place? Is it possible to set aside eternal laws? Is it possible to prevent the issues of the Great Day; and the ascension of the Son of Man to His throne of judgment? Is it possible to undo the death of the Son of God, or to prevent the spread of the everlasting Gospel, which He hath insured to His Son for His reward, and which shall be proclaimed, that His name may endure as the sun and moon endure? Is it possible to root up the Church of the living God, which is based upon the eternal purpose of God, based upon the distinctions of the Godhead; the Church, elect of God the Father; the Church of Christ bought with the blood of Christ, called by the Spirit of God, upheld by all the power of the Covenant God? Be still, and before you oppose God in His legislation or in His grace, be still, and count the cost. Be still, and know that He is God, as able and as determined to thwart the way that is contrary to Him, and the persons that take that way, as He is to maintain eternal truth, to bring the disobedient to His Church by converting grace, and to keep them when brought in.

Having laid before you these few imperfect hints, may the Lord guide us in this exercise into calm, tranquil, believing reflections on the perfections of God as they are displayed in all His dealings, and in all His works of Providence, especially as they are unfolded in His eternal redemption of His Church through the Son of His Love, and in the fulfilment of all these promises of God to His Church, which He hath engaged for to His Messiah as the reward of His obedience. May the Lord grant that in this way we may each be led to

experience the blessedness of the man whom God keepeth in perfect peace because His heart is stayed upon Him; and may the Lord teach us all that diligence which is the result of being still, and of knowing that Jehovah is God, the only wise God, to whose name through Christ be all praise!

[July 1909]

A Sermon.

By the Learned and Pious MR. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD,

Sometime Professor of Divinity at St. Andrews.

[Preached at a Preparation for the Communion at Kirkcudbright in the year 1634.]

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

Beloved in Christ, there is here a conclusion drawn from the doctrine of the former chapter.

1. Let us run our race.
2. A reason. Many have gone before us; a whole cloud. It is a fair market-gate, a high street to heaven.
3. The way how we may come good speed in our race – get the gold and win the bell – is set down in two things.

(1) What we must quit for the gold. *First*, all weights and clogs of this clay world that retard us in our journey and make our race toilsome. *Second*, sin that hangs fast upon us and beguiles us.

(2) What shall we do? What rule shall we follow? What airtsh shall we look to?

The Apostle says, Know ye not how they look who run a race? They look not over their shoulder, but ever straight before them, towards the end of their race. Look ye to Jesus in the end of your way. Now, the Apostle seems to go a little off the text. He sees a friend, even Jesus, and he cannot pass by Him, but must speak a word of Him. In your race I shall let you see two things in Jesus.

1. Efficacy and power. He is the Captain and Leader of your souls in the course of faith, and He will not tire. When He begins He will also crown and perfect your faith.

2. I will let you see another thing in Jesus: a good example. How was He? His heart longed to be at the gold, as yours should do. He saw the glory in the end of His way. He suffered both pain and shame, and so was seen on it; and He is now set down on the throne of God. Now, then, the Apostle, still dwelling on Christ (for he cannot win off Him), gives them a new exhortation to hold on, in which there are included the following things: –

(1) Consider what that lovely Person suffered of all men; how they gave Him the lie and spake against Him.

(2) Consider how little ye have suffered. Ye have not yet resisted and striven unto blood, as Christ did.

(3) He gives a reason why they should do so: for fear they give over, faint, and fall a swoon. Having, in chapter 11, spoken of the fathers who won to heaven through patient suffering, he compares them to the cloud that led the Israelites by day through the wilderness. He sets the example of those before them to encourage them.

We see the way to heaven is now a high market gate, and paved by hundreds and thousands who have gone before us, and we should follow after. Are ye wanting a settled house and dwelling in the world? Then set forward; look for a city above. “Indeed,” says Abraham, “I shall be witness of that, that ye shall receive the recompense of reward.” Will ye rather suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season? Moses says: “I shall be witness then that ye shall win home safe and sound.”

In the way we may see a whole cloud of them as witnesses, to lead you through the wilderness. Where away can ye go, or what can befall you in your journey to glory, but in which the Lord’s saints have gone before you? Are ye yours alone, and seeking God amongst many, who live as they lived? So was Noah a walker with God when all flesh had corrupted their ways. Let it be true ye have all taken from you, both goods, children, and health. So was Job handled! So the saints have set up steps and way-marks at every turn in your way, and cry, Ride about. And howbeit now, many fools think to win through at the nearest, yet they win not, but stick there. The saints going before in the way is a great benefit to us. Their falls, and the ill steps that cumbered them, ye must beware of. Ye must hold off adultery; for David stuck in that mire. Hold off drunkenness; for Noah and Lot wet their feet in that dub. Beware of mocking and persecuting the saints; for Paul’s ship had almost sunk in that quicksand. See these dead carcasses lying on the road – Judas, Demas, Hymeneus, and Philetus broke their necks by attempting to go to Canaan, and falling off again. Make this use of holy men’s lives, here condemned, who followed the devil, but were recovered again: beware of those temptations and sins which so easily beset them. Here a cloud of witnesses, the world and the fashions thereof they did not follow: Romans 12:2, “Be not conformed to this world,” and the guises thereof; and yet ye can justify yourselves in the daily transgression of this divine prohibition. Wherefore is vanity in marriages and banquets? It is the fashion, say they. Proud Scotland, poor Scotland, near cut out to thy skin; it is worm-eaten. Wherefore is such vanity in apparel, so that women are become indecent and men like monsters? Men are taking whole baronies of land on their backs! It is the fashion, say they. O! proud and poor Scotland; men are cut out to their skin, and women want not vanity enough, but are not cut to the bone. And

wherefore comes swearing and drinking, see ye not? No – otherwise than from the fashion. It is the fashion, say they: but if ye will follow such a cloud of fashionable witnesses, let me conclude ye will go to hell also for I can assure you that is the fashion. Ye may keep that excuse till the day of judgment, and when God asks what ye have done, and wherefore ye did so, say ye: “Lord, for nothing but the fashion,” and see how ye will win off.

Let us run the race. But how shall we run? So run that ye may obtain. Many run upon hope of heaven and get hell in the end. But hear what the Spirit of God says: “Lay aside every weight,” every clog. What is the weight? The world, the love of riches, honour, and lusts. He speaks to us as to men having their backs burden of clay, or clogged with heavy lumps of earth and great tatters and bunches of the world’s glory. Nay, a number of devils of pride, lust, and covetousness hang upon us. Give them a shake, says He, down with them; let the ground bear all.

How hardly do cunning men enter into the kingdom of heaven! Methinks I see three sorts of men beguiled in their race to glory.

1. Some go not a step at all in the way to heaven, for, going too near the hedge, they get a thorn in their foot, which swells it so that they must sit down and lay it on their knee; and they sit there, and never make any further attempt towards heaven till night come, and there they lie. One of those says (Job 21:15), “What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” They say in plain terms, God is but a poor master to follow; it’s long ere he be rich who follows Him; therefore we will have none of Him. Luke 14:19, “One said, I have bought a yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused,” &c. “And the Pharisees who heard these things mocked at him.”

2. Another sort run a start after Christ for a time as Judas, who, in men’s eyes, followed Him till the devil met him in the race, cast down a purse, and breaks his leg, and syne went he over the brae. In John 6, ye see a number following Christ for the loaves. And Demas galloped a while after Paul and the Gospel, but he found it a hungry trade; and the world crossed his road, and after it he went. I say, the world, like a fair strumpet in her silks and velvets, came in his way and gave him a kiss, and he ran to the gate, saying, Sorrow have my part of the Gospel and Paul any more. So Paul says (2 Timothy 4:10), “Demas hath forsaken me,” and has embraced this present world. But,

3. Another sort are those who have some more love to the race, and yet they cannot want the world, like the young man (Matthew 19:21,22) who came to Christ and said he had kept the Commandments from his youth. When Christ bade him sell all that he had and give his goods to the poor, and come and follow Him, he went away with his heart in his hose, looking as if his nose were bleeding, for he had great possessions. So there are a number who would climb up the mountain to heaven, with thousands by the year and with baronies and a great bunch of clay bound hard and fast upon the neck of their souls. And they think to hold foot with Christ, ride as hard as He pleases, and twenty stone weight of clay upon their soul! But they will be all mistaken; they will burst and die by the way; and shall never win to the top of the hill. Ask at them how they will win up to heaven with their lusts upon their backs. They will say, God will draw us; He will help and bear us. Indeed, God makes His own people ride in chariots with Himself, and draws them (Song 1:2). But will ye make Christ a pack-horse to carry your clay and your lusts? How long is it since He has carried our pack-mantle? Believe me, He is no cadger-horse. Demas and Judas and the like would have ridden after Christ with all their bags of clay; but ken ye what Christ did with them? He threw them and their clay off at the broadside, and left them lying there, and posted away.

1. *Question.* – What then shall we do to be quit of these weights?

Answer. – The world is a foul way, like deep watery new tilled ground, where pound weights hang to every heel of the traveller and retard him; and as he shakes off one, another comes on, so that he cannot go fast on his way. Now the affections are the feet of the soul;

take heed to your feet, and come off the deep wet land. Use the world as if you used it not. There is a dry way to heaven; hold ye off the deep way, and be content with food and raiment. Go ye the way that Christ and the saints went before you, who scarce ever wet their feet. Indeed, Jesus was never wet-shod in the world; He had so good mind of His errand and his home that the world got no room in His heart. They who will not keep this clean dry causeway, it is no marvel to see them stick in the miry world, be drowned and never win home. It is with many, as was said (Hosea 2:2) – Their adulteries lie between their breasts; the world in a great bunch lies betwixt their breasts all night. Is it any wonder to see such heavy-headed mardels get the mell in this race, like stiff horses unmeet for a journey? And how can they once give a trot? Nay, they but walk in a circle. The

2. *Direction.* – Satan and the world will play you foul play, and cast their feet before you and give you a fall. But care not for that; rise again. But I pray you beware of sore falls, or sins against the conscience, light, and love. For the conscience is like an earthen vessel; if ye break it ye will not mend it again. Some in their race gave their conscience such a back-stroke that they break their legs, and are never meet for the race again. But whatever ye do, keep the conscience whole.

3. *Direction.* – Cast off all things that make you heavy. Make yourself light, that ye may be nimble; skip and spur away. Run, run; look not behind you – remember Lot's wife. Although ye should be like to burst, tarry not; ye will mend of a sweat and a heat. God has a napkin to rub the sweat off you, and He has a chair and a cushion for you against the race be ended, and He will lay your head in His bosom. Take a little pains in the day, for I promise you ye shall get rest at even.

“Cast off the sin that doth so easily beset us,” or goes round about us. This is the body of sin that remains in our nature. He speaks of it as if one had us clasped in his arms; for original sin has us in fetters as captives. It is a thing we cannot win from, go where we please. It is like a ghost – ever in our eye; behind us, pulling us back; before us, standing in our way; at our right hand, hindering us to hear, pray, believe, repent, hope, &c. It is like the wind in our face, or in the face of a weak traveller, that blows him some steps back where he goes one forward. It is as a man going round about us. It is in the mind, darkening the judgment; in the will, throwing it the contrary way. God bids us walk in the lowest room, down in the affections; but we do the contrary. And this sin, as woodbind goes about a tree, wraps about us in every good way. It is a serpent biting our heel, and cries, “A lion in the way.” When God draws, sin holds under at meat, drink, and sleep. It is a joker – it promises us much, but gives us the wind, and yet we believe it.

But here a *question* may be asked: How does the Apostle bid us shake off this sin which dwells in us so long as we live; it is death and the kirkyard that make us quit of this sin. How is it then that we can shake it off?

Answer (1). The dominion of it we break by grace. Woe every heart we have, for this indwelling sin breaks a bone of old Adam, gives his back a crack and makes him cry. As we repent and advance in holiness, we break a leg or an arm of this sin; but for the root of it, God only, in death, can pluck it out. Yet we must be hacking and cutting the branches and roots of it, else we cannot make progress in our race. We must not take this defiling sin forward with us in our race. We must leave it where we start, and deliver it over to Christ that He may put it on His cross and nail it to His gallows.

Answer (2). He speaks of sin as of a thing going about us like a stone wall in our very way to heaven. Till by regeneration, Christ make a gap in the wall that we may pass over, there is no possibility of going one foot. And even when the wall is broken we shall see this sin hanging on our legs and arms. This sin keeps a lodge by the gate for Satan, and is a common robber, who slays many by the way.

1. Some it tricks out of the way, and lays asleep in security, like a drunken traveller who sleeps in a moor till the sun be down, then he wakes from his sleep and cries.

2. It blinds some, as Paul while a Pharisee, and Papists, and chases them a wrong way – to hell instead of heaven – when they make a fashion of repentance, to slay their sins, and go again to their old pass. Such are those who, with willingness, walk softly, and go to sin again.

Now he sets down the exhortation, “Let us run the race.” This is more than to walk and step at our own leisure. Running shows there is a set time, which will go away, a short day, and that the way is long, and we have much to do to get sin slain. And, therefore, we must to the way with speed, and run fast. In Matthew 11, the kingdom of heaven is said to be taken with violence. Luke 13:24, “Strive to enter in.” The word is, “Fight, and throng in by force.” When God, by faith, lets a man see heaven, he resolves, and in he must be, come what will. Philippians 3:13,14, “Reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press forward toward the mark.” The word is, I follow after; I reach out my hand. The Apostle means he ran so that his head and breast pressed forward before his feet, and his two arms reached out to catch hold of Christ. So to speak, he chases Christ and heaven, and they seem to flee from him, and he follows. So should we do. Then chase on. The prize seems to flee from us, but it cannot flee further than to heaven’s gates; there we will get a hold of it.

But how will they do who say, “Hooly and fair comes home against even. And what needs all this din, all these prayers, and all these flockings to Communions? I hope to be in heaven as soon as the best of you?”

Answer. Beguile not yourselves, loiterers and drowsy persons, who go not one mile of twenty in a year; such as walk in a circle round about, from pride to lust; from lust to drunkenness; from that to covetousness; and from that to pride again; like as if they were in a fairies’ dance, and run not at all. Can men come to heaven lying on their back? The good, lucky old religion made a sonsy world, say they. Yet they use religion as a post-horse; as one wears out of fashion they take another.

Heaven must be taken by violence. He speaks of heaven as of a fortified place, that must be forced by fire and sword ere they render it up.

We are like drunken travellers, cast twenty miles behind, sometimes with lust and sometimes with pride, and such companions cannot be put to the gate; they have a friend to Satan’s messengers within, and when they knock, he cries, “Coming, master.” Men have gotten a gate of their own, like neighbour another, the good old use and wont, to walk as they please, and they are no gluttons of religion, neither of the Word nor Communions. Religion to them is a good custom of going to the kirk.

[August 1909]

Continued:–

“The race set before us.” This race is, by our Lord, set before us in His Word, for men set the way to hell before themselves. God’s Word sets hell before no man as a way that He allows of. He sets not that before us, but behind our back. But men turn their face to hell and not to heaven. Know therefore that this is a race of God’s choosing and not of our own, and the ill roads, the deep waters, the sharp showers, and the bitter violent winds that are in our face, are of God’s disposing. We will not get a better road than our Lord allows us. He has called us to suffering, and not a stone is in our way by chance; but by His wise providence all the waters are told, all the streams, the storms, and stones that are in our way are written in His book. Our wanderings are numbered. It is our comfort that our Lord is looking on. God is like the nobleman who lays the cup in pawn, and appoints the bounds: He set down the race in His word with all the waymarks, and sets His Son at the end of the way, holding up in His hand the crown of glory, and crying to the runners, “To the gate with speed, see the prize, win and have it.” As in a horse race, many are galloping and posting from one sin to another till

they be at hell, and Satan, out of his own stable, furnishes them with fresh horses; and aye as one tires, immediately another is brought! But not a step should we go but as God has directed us. The Kirk does not set this race before us; neither may king or kirk change our King Jesus' way, to cast us about dykes into Rome's footroads and Antichrist's by-ways. Scotland's race is set down. (Jeremiah 8:6), "Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth to the battle." The commonality are galloping on covetousness, the nobles on oppression, and the whole land on strange apparel, and some of all ranks in the three kingdoms are posting to hell on idolatry and masses.

When God's temple was last measured in this land much was taken from Him. Either we must change our course, or look (1) to lose the prize; or (2) to want Christ's company and convoy; or (3) to get leave to go all upon horseback, in an ill course, with patience. There is a necessity for hope and patience to wait on, because at the place where they start, men see not the gold in the race, but must run the first mile – and not only the first, but to the end – before they sit down. He that falls back within his own length of the score, or draws his bridle and sits up within a quarter of a mile, loses the race. We see not the prize here, neither is it before our senses, nor hard by our hand, but it is out of sight. We have nothing but God's promise for it, and some small arles. Behold, "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth." We must wait on – winter, spring, and summer – till harvest come: for howbeit ill weather and a rainy season come, yet the husbandman folds not his hands, nor lays up the plough by the walls, but with patience works for the harvest, for he knows God may and will send a good and full crop. And what of a winter storm! What, albeit they mock and persecute us, and Satan send out his dogs to bark at us, to make us take a house over our heads? Let us be going forward; it will blow up fair again. Read Luke 21:19, "In patience possess ye your souls." Verse 28, "Lift up your heads, for the day of your redemption draweth near." This condemns such as will not run one foot in this race except the gold be in their hand, and they will have God paying interest and giving wages in hand. But faith trusts God, and if ye get but one kiss of Him in this life, or the welcome of His bowels with a sweet smile and embrace in His arms, it is worth all ye can suffer for Him in this life.

Got not Abraham a promise of the land of Canaan, and yet got it not in this life, but dwelt in tents and hung by hope? Ay, ye will not play except God give you heaven in your hand, as if God were a child to give you the garland ere the race be run. No, God's on-waiters come to honour in God's Court; the more the good servant is faithful, he has the more to crave. He who takes all at once, and forenails all before the term, will be a poor man. We, like fools, would forenail our heaven; but it is best that God keeps all until the term day, for He is a rich servant, who, in the end, has His heaven to crave. No marvel then that patience be needful. Satan runs up and down like a great warship, with twenty pieces of ordnance, shooting at all who are failing for Canaan, and roaring out, "Surrender." But give not up. Suffer, suffer, take a shot; hold out Christ's white flag. Christ will mend the gap that Satan's bullet has made. We fear ill upon the land for the abuse of the Gospel; and, indeed, that will be an onset. Have patience and ye will win the field.

"Looking to Jesus." Well kend the Apostle the devil would come our gate in his holy-day clothes, with an "All these will I give thee." And when we are running he will cry, "Here away"; but, said the Apostle, "Give him not one look, although he should burst. What have ye to do with him? Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Look to your fore-runner, and follow Him in the race." Then in this our following we must look how Jesus ran. We must observe all the properties of His running, and do just as He did.

1. He yoked to the Jews early in the morning, and was obedient to the law in the cradle. At twelve years of age he disputed with the doctors in the temple. He was still about His Father's business late and early. Yea, even upon the Cross He was running. So run, young men, in your youth. Start to the gate, break off, and run to your dying day. Half not your

lives. If ye have lost time, and were too long in beginning, be like a man far behind, when he looks to the sun and sees it low, and remembers he has far to go: he sets the spurs to the horse. So rouse up your lazy souls, and post, post, post. Heaven is waiting for you.

A special virtue, or property, in a runner is to look even before him. For if ye look over your shoulder, ye may possibly not break your neck, but ye will certainly miss a stride. If ye look at meadows, houses, and worldly pleasures by the way, ye will possibly fall and break your toes. Therefore, look aye home – straight out before you. Give not the world a look, for the world. But very often after we have taken our leave of the world and of sin, we have a strong inclination to be back again. While taking a hearty look of the world, a stone may take a man's foot in his journey, and break his leg.

2. Christ, in His race, got many lets. The devil came in with "All these things will I give thee" to turn Him into his inn, and to lay Him over the board. The world set on Him, but they could not all make honest Jesus come one foot out of the road. Keep aye the highway. Smart men will not come under trysting with juggling knaves, nor subscribe any writs, for fear they bring them under a sum and then take their lands from them. Never, never come in communing with Satan and sin. Some fools give the devil writs, and subscribe a submission to the world and sin, and take the devil and their own hearts to be overseers. Beware of that work. Christ would have nothing to do with the world in His journey. When they offered to make Him a king He refused, and ran to the mountain, and there He prayed (John 6). He took but His meat of it, and all He had was borrowed. He looked blunt-like on it, like a man who would fain have been away, and so was seen on it. We should be like some old men who want children, who quit all to their friends and get a bond for meat and clothing all their days. Our love and affection should quit the world and seek a bond of our Lord for food and raiment all our days, and be content therewith.

3. So run as Christ; He ran so as He left nothing undone. "Father, I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do" (John 17). See that ye have all ended against night, that ye may say as Paul said (2 Timothy 4:7), "I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." There are many who run as Paul, when a Pharisee, ran; but they know not where-away. Many forget their conscience by the gate, as a drunken man forgets his sword at the inn in which he lodged. Take all with you – your conscience and faith. They who go to sea take all with them; for when the wind and tide have put them off land, they will not win back again to fetch anything they have left behind.

But what good will our looking to Jesus do us? Very much. He is the Captain of our salvation, "the author and finisher of our faith." For Christ is all. He draws with His Spirit, and He leads us through the mires, and goes before us; and we have this advantage – when we faint He looks back over His shoulder, with a smile, takes us by the hand, and says (Luke 12:32), "Fear not, little flock," &c. (John 16), "Yet a little while, and I am with you." Even as a loving guide says to the tired man, "We have but a little water or two to pass through, and see, yonder hill is but betwixt us and the town; ye are near the city." He will see you again, for He is a Captain indeed. In taking in a town the soldiers will venture sometimes to scale the walls where the captain is; but it is not so here. Jesus Himself took the castle of heaven first; it cost Him blood to win in and break up the doors. Now He stands in the entry and cries, "Come in, I have broken up the gate; I have won the city. Be not afraid; I shall warrant you." Therefore (Hebrews 6) He is called a forerunner. He went before to open the doors and the park dykes, and take the stones out of the way, and says, "Step forward, my brethren, be not frightened." So, then, when we run we are not to lean to our own strength, for fear we get a fall. He who thinks he has little need of Christ's help is ready to fall. He who knows not his own weakness, fears not; and he, who knows not his own heart, has good cause to fear he may get a fall and dash out all his brains.

“The finisher of our faith.” He will not have Jesus pulling us to the gate and leaving us there. No. 1 Corinthians 1:8, “Who shall also confirm you to the end.” It is a work of Christ as Mediator, and written in the commission His Father gave Him, that He should lose none, but raise him up at the last day (John 6:39, and Ephesians 5:27.) He presenteth His Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle. He shall get His bride, the Church, all arrayed in His Father’s clothes, in at heaven’s gate, and slip her in His Father’s hand, and say, “Father, there her now; I have done my part; I have not laboured in vain.” Let them be confounded who take this glory from Jesus and give it over to that weather-cock, free-will. But here an argument that hell will not answer.

The Father promised Christ a seed (Isaiah 53:10), and a willing people (Psalm 110:3), and the ends of the earth (Psalm 2:8) to serve Him as a reward of His sufferings.

Now, shall God crack His credit to His Son, and shall Christ do His work and get the wind for His pains, except free-will say, “Amen”? This were a bairn’s bargain. No, it is a part of Christ’s wages that men’s free-will shall come cap in hand and bow before Him. He shall have a willing people.

We must digress a little, and speak of Christ’s Race. Observe this is the Apostle’s answer. Christ comes in his way, and he cannot pass by him; but he must stand still and speak a word with Him, and give Him a kiss by the way. (Colossians 1:14), “In whom we have redemption,” etc. And there, ere he go further, he must run out upon Christ, and His nature, and offices. (Verse 15), “Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature.” (See Revelation 1), “Grace be to you, and peace from Jesus.” Then he runs out, “who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead,” etc.

1. Learn a lesson: When Jesus comes in your mind, leave your way and go and speak with Him a while, and go not soon from Him. Is He come? Let Him not go without a kiss. Oh! and alas! we oftentimes let Him go as He come. But why do His friends commend Him so much? Even that you and He may fall in love together.

“Who for the joy that was set before him.” He sets down a special virtue in Christ’s running: who for the eye-look to joy, endured the cross, and despised the shame. Here is a question: What an eye-look to joy was this that Christ had? What made Him run, seeing heaven was in His bosom? What needed He rejoice to be at home?

Answer. As He was God, nothing could be added to His joy; howbeit He carried the Godhead about with Him, yet the sight and sense of the Godhead was covered in the days of Christ’s humiliation; there was a bar and a lock put on the Godhead, that He saw not as He now seeth, in that He took the pilgrim’s lot with us, and was a traveller, in respect of sense and clear light. For He as man was ignorant of some things then – as of the day of judgment, and fruit on the fig tree. He knew He would be nearer God; the Godhead stood aloof from Him then.

2. The joy before Him was the contentment He would have in His new bride; the joy He had won through hell, and gotten His errand; sad and heavy would His heart have been to have missed us; He was glad of the hire His Father had promised Him. It is natural for a man to rejoice when he gets the fruit of his labours: and there is thanksgiving and joy in heaven for the conversion of sinners, and He gives thanks far more when they are redeemed fully (Hebrews 12:12). In the midst of the congregation, He sings praise to God His Father for the children he had given Him; but more especially when He shall have ended all, and got the goods in His hand that He bought so dear. He shall then sing for joy, and when Christ sings for thy redemption, and giveth thanks, thou hast far more cause to sing than He.

3. The joy set before Him was the glory to be manifested in Him which He prays for (John 17), which He had with the Father before the world was; that joy that His Father will welcome Him with, and (to speak with reverence) clap His head for His pains. That as He rejoiced from all eternity with His Father (Proverbs 8), and was His Father’s delight, so now

He shall rejoice with His Father, He and He together, in redeemed mankind. And the manhood, with all His members and the angels (for they rejoice at the conversion of sinners), shall rejoice with Him to see His body fulfilled, and to have them all under His wings.

4. Consider the sadness Jesus had, and the tears He shed in the days of His flesh; but for that His Father dried and wiped the blood and sweat off His face, and set Him in a place where He should shed tears and die no more. So do as Jesus did, and why? Because never man endured out his longsome race but he who got a sight of heaven. See wherefore Abraham dwelt in tents, and Moses (Hebrews 11) choosed rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin. They saw a sight that everyone cannot see. Ye know a man who has been seven years away from his wife and children coming home again and seeing the smoke of his own house; his heart rises a foot higher than it was before. Would ye run? Get a sight of the city. Get Christ's prospect to see the joy set before you. Get the earnest of the inheritance and you will never rue the bargain. Whosoever has a mind for heaven, and runs a while in blind zeal until they sweat and then grow lame, like a horse that is ill taken care of after hard riding; so are those who never saw heaven afar off by faith: but a sight of the gold makes the runner spring and run. O! what wrought this joy that was set before Him? It made Him endure the cross; His Father laid the cross on His back, and he carried it thirty-three years and never gave it a shake to put it off. Oh, what crosses! Never man was handled as He was; for some are under some crosses and free of others. When Satan and men struck Job, the Lord blessed him and upheld him. But on Jesus all at once fell God, man, devils, law, justice, sin, and the curse! Ye cannot tell me what comfort Christ had when he cried, "My God, my God." That was a sore thraw for his back. O! the fire was hot then; but when Christ was in His prison in this dark night there was a hole to let Him see day. He had His eye by faith upon the hope of the joy of the fair day before Him. He got a foul, black day, all clouds of darkness about Him; but He said within Himself, I will get My fair day when all this ill weather is away.

Now, let me speak to a heavy heart that looks for a shower upon this land; and, indeed, it is black in the west; the clouds are gathering, the shower is coming. Take a house in time, yet fear not, a shower will not melt you, and Christ has a fire in His Father's house to dry your clothes. O? but he who has faith to look up through yonder blue sky to see the throne of God and the Lamb, and to wait for the rending of the heavens, when Christ shall get through His fair head with a great crown of gold upon it; I say, he who gets faith to see and wait for these, will give a leap and a skip in his journey. Let us suppose Christ were bodily upon the earth and a water betwixt you and Him; yea, a lake of fire betwixt you and Him. I think ye would venture through to be at Him. Now set out in your journey, set down your feet, and be not beguiled with the devil's apples, which he casts down in your gate. Christ, in the end of the journey, holds out His long arm with a crown of glory, and shouts and cries, Silly tired bairns, look here-away, look up the brae, come this way.

Ye may ask what power had Christ to give His manhood to die for others? This would seem to be against justice, as a king's subject has not power to slay himself, because in so doing he takes a subject from his prince.

Answer. The subject is not altogether his own; he owes his life to his king, and may not dispose of it except he fail against the king. But, howbeit the manhood was God's creature, yet it was by the law of a personal union God's manhood and God's flesh and blood, and the Godhead gave to the manhood absolute power to give His life for men, and to pledge Himself as the price of our redemption. See, then, here a sweet mystery; the Godhead furnished the sum to Jesus, and gave Him the price to pay, and the manhood gave it back to justice as suffering and dead for a ransom. Law furnished the sum, and justice received it, and gave Christ our bond to tear in pieces.

Another fruit of our Lord's to-look to the joy that was set before Him was, He despised the shame. What shame? Lighted there any shame on Christ? Ay, in truth! Heaven and earth wonder at an ashamed Christ. Look if Christ got not His part of it when mickle black shame came upon Him. But how? Shamed by men and shamed by God. I shall prove both.

One rascal struck Him on the head, another villain spat in His fair face: a great shame! They wagged their heads, and brake a jest upon Him. Take up Holy Jesus now, say they, He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him. Think ye not but that went to Christ's heart to hear those black mouths make a mock of God's glory? Herod and his men of war mocked Him. And see more shame yet. Howbeit He was an honest man all His life, they conveyed Him out of the town, and the guard at His back, His enemies scoffing at Him, and children wondering at Him. And what more? Dear man! He went out at the ports bearing His own cross on His back! Of seventy disciples, twelve apostles, and all His friends, not one to help Him, or take an end or a lift of the cursed tree! And they put a crown of thorns on Him, scorning His kingdom. Was not this to put the thief's mark on Him? And what more? Might they not have said, This poor man has few friends? But His friends would take no part of His shame, and yet He took all their shame.

God shamed Him also. His Father said: "A curse and malediction light on Him, shame light on Him." Start not at this, I shall clear it. Sin has aye shame at its back. Ye know that God made Him sin, and if God made Him sin and a curse, He behoved to bring shame on Him, for the shame that should have come on us, and the reproachful words that justice would have given sinners, they lighted on our Lord. Ye see when a thief is taken in the fang, and brought before the judge, and put to an Assize and challenged, he looks down, and thinks shame to look any man in the face. When the judge says, How durst thou do it? silly man, he blushes, hangs his head, and never says a word. So God put Christ upon a pannel, arraigned Him before His tribunal, and accused Him for our sins. Christ could not deny them, but stood as a sheep dumb before her shearers. He hung His head before justice, and the honest man took with the fault. He said He would die for the murderer, adulterer, swearer, idolater, the drunkard, etc. Now there was reason here that God should put Christ in this plea for the shamed man, because God's wise will is the rule of all justice. God made the first Covenant that Adam should be legally for us, and the second Covenant was so contrived that Christ should be for us. For Christ's manhood has a personality, not of its own, but of the Godhead, and by the law of a personal union, Christ should enjoy Himself. Now, because Christ had a legal personality from us, and as in His person under His sufferings, he enjoyed not the fruits of that personality, but was plunged in fear and horror, while he said (John 12) "What shall I say?" Yet the Godhead (to speak so) was like cork to make the manhood swim above, that it was not swallowed up with God's infinite wrath; and the manhood had personal legality from us to bear the strokes by law due to us.. Hence come and learn and be willing with Christ to want a limb of your credit for Him. He was ashamed for you. O wonderful! An ashamed sinner is nothing, an ashamed devil is ordinary; but God ashamed – an ashamed Christ – is a miracle! One honest man will suffer loss for another, but to take another's shame is a different thing; yet this rarity was in Christ. A man who is cautioner for his waster friend, the judge counts not him the waster; he is still thought an honest man, only he pays the sum. But Christ our Lord, besides the sum he paid by law, He was as the dyvour, for our sins were laid upon Him; for He and we are so near here, that He is as us, and made sin for us.

"And is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." He was a good man, and endured all patiently, and so was seen on it. He got much glory in the end; there could not but grace come of Him, He was so mild under His sufferings. (Philippians 2:9) "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him," &c. Wherefore then is His sitting down nothing but an exaltation – a state of glory above men and angels? To Him is all power given, and He has received a name; (Acts 5:31) "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to

give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.” Now, to understand this the better, note that His sitting as God upon His Father’s right hand is but the open manifestation of His glory, which He had before the world was. His rising as a man to this state hath two steps going before it.

1. The nature of man in Christ is made of the same metal with our nature, and therefore deserved a personal union; and therefore the God of grace raised the manhood above itself to be married to the Godhead. This is the first step of the Headship spoken of (Hebrews 1), God has made him the heir of all things. For God, indeed, lifted man above Himself in giving to the manhood no created personality, but the personality of the Godhead, so as that blessed manhood at one moment should subsist in the Word, and subsist in the infinite personality of the Godhead, that the man Christ and the Godhead should be in one person.

2. Upon this resolved a free donation of Christ to the manhood to be King, Priest, and Prophet, sufficiently qualified to grace us. This was grace also to the manhood, yet this grace was not given in such a measure to Christ in the days of His flesh. Howbeit this grace, and the personal union did sufficiently bear Him up under all His sufferings.

3. After His sufferings the manhood saw the Godhead in a more glorious manner, and enjoyed Him after an admirable manner, and is made a personal worker and absolute commander of the world – a Prince, a Judge, a Lord, and next to God – over and above all creatures. That our Husband is so high is great matter of comfort to the faithful. Men who have a friend at court are aye troubling him with suits and writs; we write not half many letters up to our Friend at court; He delights to speak of us to His Father, and to carry us in His heart as the high priest did the names of the twelve tribes on his breast, and to engrave us on the palms of His hands. Then see the gate and follow Christ Jesus on the cross, and the cross is your way. Christ got a deeper gate; His way was the cross and the crown. Now, says the Apostle, Consider such an one, and yet spoken against by sinners, for sinners gave Him the lie. Look upon Him lest ye faint. (Psalm 31:22), “I said in my haste, I am cut off before thine eyes.” Isaiah 49:14, “Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me.” Think not, ye will aye be alike stout in the journey; some times ye will fall down, and Christ will have you a-lifting, but He is near you with His flagon of wine to comfort you. Amen.

[October 1909]

Notes of a Sermon.

Preached before the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church,
met at Inverness on the 6th July, By the Moderator,
the REV. NEIL CAMERON, St. Jude's, Glasgow.

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee” – Psalm 122:6.

Jerusalem was to the pious Israelite the centre around which his thoughts revolved, and upon which the intensest affections of his heart rested. There were three things in Jerusalem which caused his thoughts and affections to gravitate towards that place, wherever his lot might be cast.

(1) The seat of their civil government was in Jerusalem. David and his sons after him were appointed by God to rule there. The whole people of Israel crowned David as their king, swore allegiance to him, revered him for his godliness and bravery, but very specially for the absolute justice with which he ruled the poorest of the people. The fact that the most godly men he could find were his companions and counsellors endeared him to the godly among the people.

(2) Jerusalem was the place in which the Lord chose to put His name. The temple, in which the shekinah appeared on the mercy-seat between the cherubims, with all the divinely instituted order of worship prescribed by the ceremonial law, was there.

(3) It was at Jerusalem – at the three feasts yearly – that all the male members of their tribes were commanded to worship their covenant God together. The godly among them had an opportunity, at these stated seasons, of meeting one another to worship God in the beauty of holiness, and to enjoy, sometimes at least, so much of the presence of the Comforter that they found it impossible to separate from one another on the last day of the feast. These things caused them to love the place in which they enjoyed such wonderful fellowship with their God and with one another.

The time came when the literal Jerusalem of Scripture, with all the order of worship under the ceremonial law, passed away and came to an end for ever; because they were only shadows of good things to come. But the things so represented by these types remain in their true spiritual significance and substance. As our Lord Jesus taught the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, the time has come when the Father is not worshipped at Jerusalem, but is worshipped where two or three are met together in the name of Christ, in order to worship Him in spirit and truth. Jerusalem, in this spiritual sense, continues, and will do so until the trumpet of the last day shall be blown. In this way of understanding our text, we shall endeavour to speak from it as we may be enabled by the blessed Spirit to do so.

- I. – Let us consider the place that we are commanded to pray for.
- II. – The particular thing that we are to pray for.
- III. – The promise made to such as love this place.

I. – Let us consider the place that we are commanded to pray for.

(1) In New Testament times the presence of Christ, by His Spirit, is promised to His worshipping people wherever two or three are met together in His name. The blessed name of God, the Father, is made known to poor, lost sinners of mankind in and by the Son, as He says: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou hast given me out of the world.” As the shekinah appeared on the mercy-seat of old, so God is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Thither the sinner is invited to come with holy boldness, by the blood of Jesus, that he may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. This great privilege is not held forth to our faith in types, but in reality and in truth. Christ is our temple, priest, altar, sacrifice, and mercy-seat. In Him the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. In Him God, the Father, offers pardon freely to every sinner who will confess and forsake his sins. He is the way to the Father, and no man can come to the Father but by Him. This incalculably great privilege comes to men wherever the Gospel is declared. It came to our beloved land, most probably not later than the beginning of the second century of our era, and bore abundant fruit for nearly four hundred years. During the dark ages of Popish idolatry, the light of it was almost extinguished for nearly one thousand years; but it never left us altogether since it came. It revived gloriously at the blessed Reformation in the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was this glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus, that the Holy Ghost shined through the truth into the minds of our forefathers, and that restored them from the darkness of superstition and idolatry to a clear understanding of the way of salvation. Man’s works and merits, before God, were seen to be a lie, and men looked to Christ’s blood as the only expiation for sin. They took their eye off every false object of hope held forth to them by Satan, and they looked to Christ alone as the only hope set before them in the Gospel of the grace of God. This elevated them from being semi-savages to true enlightenment, godliness, and integrity. The same blessed results followed the great spiritual revival of the sixteenth century among several of the nations of Europe. The other nations that refused this light from heaven at that time remain till this day in darkness, ignorance, and idolatry; and have, from being the head of other nations, become the tail. In no other nation has the light of the Gospel shone more gloriously than in our poor, despised and little nation of Scotland. When, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, the mist of Popish superstition and darkness was dispelled, men began to see the meaning of God’s word, and they rejoiced exceedingly in it. The mediators of the Papacy disappeared, and the gathering of the people was to the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

Two things were made conspicuous by the place given them in the feasts of the Old Testament

- (1) The great day of atonement annually;
- (2) The reading and expounding of the Word of God to all the people.

We enjoy these things under the New Testament dispensation. The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper sets forth the death of Christ now, as the great day of atonement did in Israel. They looked forward, by faith in God’s promise, to the day on which Christ would die on Calvary and enter into heaven with His own blood, and we look back by faith to that same day upon which our Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. So that the object of faith was the same with them as with us. They had a yearly commemoration of the atonement held forth in type by a bloody sacrifice; we have a commemoration of the atonement as often as we partake of the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper. The day of Christ’s death on Calvary was the one and only great day of atonement upon which the eye of God rested from

the beginning, and it shall be so unto the end. It has been and shall be the one day upon which the eye of faith rests – from Abel till the last of the elect are saved. It was there that God rested in His love, and it is there that the guilty conscience of the sinner finds true rest also.

We noticed above how the godly Israelites, occasionally at this feast of the Passover, enjoyed so much of the favour and fellowship of God together as made it painful for them to go back to the world and to their own homes. This has been often the case in Scotland at Communion seasons in the past. To leave the mount of ordinances on a Monday, after being so many days in secret fellowship with the Lord and with one another, has been often painful to the Lord's people in this land. You will remember how truly this was the case at the Kirk of Shotts in 1630, when, according to the account given of the power of the Comforter accompanying the Word preached with saving results to the souls of men, five hundred were added to the Church on that day. The same thing has been felt often since then by our fathers, though not to the same degree. Have we not felt a little of this favour, which is better than life, in our assemblies at our Communion seasons more than once, and especially on the last day of the feast? How often have we felt that it was good for us to draw nigh to God? This experience binds man's soul to the place and company where he enjoys so much of the favour and presence of God. This makes the tabernacles of God amiable to a poor sinner, who, like Ruth of old, says: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." This was it that caused David to say: "One thing have I desired of the Lord that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." Have we not good cause why we should pray for the place in which we have enjoyed so much of the presence and comforts of the Spirit? How often have we felt that the preaching of the gospel in its purity and by the Lord's sent messengers has been like "pouring water upon the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground"? "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." These things bind our souls to the true Church of God, and to all the instituted means and ordinance which He has set up in this land. These were the very things which caused David and every godly man or woman in Israel to love Jerusalem and its peace.

II. – The particular thing we are to pray for – "The peace of Jerusalem." This leads us to consider some of the causes of dispeace in Church and State.

(1) We read, in the days of Eli, the High Priest, that by the wickedness of his sons, who were the officiating priests in the Lord's tabernacle in Shiloh, the worship of God was brought into contempt and abhorrence; and that their godly but unfaithful father brought guilt upon himself and his posterity by his negligence to execute upon his own sons the punishment demanded by God's Word for their heinous sins. This caused great and sore troubles, both to the Church and State. The Philistines slew Eli's two sons, thousands of the people, and carried away the Ark of the Covenant to their own land. God's worship ceased in Shiloh; the godly mourned after the Ark of the Covenant of their God. Not long after King Saul slew all the rest of Eli's sons. Eli was truly a good man, but he neglected to attend to the Scripture rule, "First pure and then peaceable," and consequently the Lord, to maintain the honour of His own holy name, swept the unclean thing away in judgment.

King David brought back the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem forty years afterwards, and set up the Lord's worship according to the order revealed in the Word of God. The temple was built at Jerusalem by Solomon, David's son. King Solomon, in his old age, set up temples for idols. He also, although a good man, forgot the rule by which peace ought to be maintained, and this caused divisions, trouble, and dispeace. These things are written for our learning; but have we attended to them with diligence, or learned the lessons which these calamities teach?

(2) Let us now come to our own country, and let us pass under review, briefly, the dispeace and trouble which have come upon us, with a few of their causes. For brevity's sake,

we shall not, on the present occasion, go further afield than the Free Church of Scotland. What was it that caused the Free Church of Scotland dispeace and trouble?

The first thing was the toleration granted to men who propagated unsound doctrines within her pale. For, although Professor Robertson Smith was personally removed from his chair in Aberdeen, all who defended his position as a higher critic were allowed to continue undisturbed in the Church. From that time the doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, was not believed in by many of her office-bearers. This state of things was put up with by good men for the sake of peace; but did it tend to peace? No; but changes were made in doctrines and form of worship until the whole creed and worship of the Church were revolutionized. These things caused quarrelling and dispeace to begin in the courts of the Church. In her Assemblies, Synods, and Presbyteries dissensions and party spirit arose and continued year after year to the grief of all who loved her and her peace, and to the great dishonour of the name of the Lord. As the good men within her pale did not separate the clean from the vile when they ought to have done it, God, in infinite justice broke up that Church, as in the days of Eli's unfaithfulness, so that men have to worship, "in the high places," in the Highlands of Scotland, as they had then to do in Judah. Further, the dispeace that began in Church courts has come to our townships, households, and into our very souls. Neighbours, who used to live in peace and unity, are now opposed to one another, so much so that they will pass each other on the street or road without speaking to one another. This Church, which continued, at least outwardly, one incorporate body until 1893, is now divided into three parties. Where the whole people of a parish met together in one building to worship sixteen years ago, we find now three churches, three fragments of congregations, and generally two kinds of gospel preached. Who are responsible for these things? Those who changed the creed and worship of the Church, and, to a great extent, those who tolerated such corrupters in church fellowship. Had responsible men refused any quarter, fifty years ago, to such as corrupted the faith and practice of the Church, and had they turned these corrupters out of their fellowship, as the Word of God demanded, we would be united to-day in truth and brotherly love instead of being two against three, and three against two. The beautiful carved work of our Zion has been broken down by barbarians, who had no spiritual discernment to enable them to appreciate its grandeur. Give a hammer and an axe to the most ignorant rustic, and he will very quickly break down the finest piece of art. Ignorance of its beauty and strength of arm to work the crude instruments, are all the qualifications necessary. The Confession of Faith, and the two Catechisms of the Church of Scotland were really carved work of exquisite spiritual beauty; but Dr. Rainy and his carnal followers saw no beauty in them, and consequently they broke them down. They have made efforts to set up their own ensigns in their place, and more awkward pieces of work have never been placed before the Church. The Declaratory Act will remain an infamy on the spiritual understanding of these men in the eyes of all truly enlightened men. Their last effort, in the shape of a Catechism, is no improvement. Time will not allow me to enter further into this deplorable discussion, but all who love the peace of the Church of God in this land mourn over these things in secret.

Have we, as a Church, done our duty in holding fast the form of sound words, and in separating from a party who destroyed the faith of the people in God's Word and in the Confession of Faith? Have we done this before the time had come when our duty towards God and the people demanded that we should have done it? The answers are clear to every unbiased mind. Had we not stood resolutely to the original Creed and Constitution of the Free Church in 1893, the end had come publicly to the adherence of the people to the infallibility of the Bible and the Confession of Faith. That might appear like peace; but would it be peace with Christ? No, but peace with His enemy. Still we are charged as being the authors of dissension and strife, and if that charge means only that we neither could agree nor hold

fellowship with Rationalists – men who have broken their most solemn vows, and profaners of God’s house and day – we are not ashamed of having separated in the most public manner from them. If, on the other hand, the charge means that we were the cause of dispeace because we held firmly to the Word of God and to the Confession of Faith, we need not be ashamed. I ask in all seriousness, why have the people who composed the Free Church and gloried in her standards, turned their backs upon both the supreme and subordinate standards of that Church? But, my dear friends, let us say, “Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.” It will be the best legacy you can leave to your son or daughter at your death. You will leave with them, unimpaired, the doctrines and order of worship set up by God in His Church.

(3) Let us now consider the duty of praying for the peace of the Church. If we view her peace externally, our field will include all the countries in which the true Church exists. For the peace of the Church depends, not only on unity in the true faith among the people, but also upon the wisdom and integrity with which the civil governments protect, encourage, and support her. These remarks lead us to consider the parties to be prayed for. First, kings and all who are in authority. This is a duty laid upon all the Lord’s people by His own authority. To neglect it is to sin both against God and against His Church: “I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.” We ought to pray that God would give them knowledge and understanding, so that they might rule in the fear of God, and that the sword put into their hand by Him might be a terror to evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

We are bound also to pray for all men. Our duty is, not only to have the desire that all men might be saved, but also to plead with the Lord in prayer that all men should be brought to the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved. This entails on us the duty of declaring the truth unto all whom we can reach with our voice or pen. This is one of the chief benefits accomplished by our Magazine; because it goes much further afield than our preaching. For this cause, as well as the edification of our congregations at home, our ministers should contribute sermons or lectures as often as they could. Truth, when accompanied by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit, bears down falsehood, error, and deception before it as the light of the sun chases away darkness when it appears in the morning. Nothing but truth can overcome men’s prejudices, ignorance, superstition, hatred of God, and of each other. It is destined to accomplish a greater work in this world than anything that has appeared yet. Nations, yea, all nations, shall yet live in peace and amity with one another, and shall vie with one another for the advance of Christ’s kingdom and glory in all the world. Let us then pray: “Thy kingdom come,” and then “the wolf shall then dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” Nothing but the old Gospel that men despise and call foolishness in our day shall be the blessed means of accomplishing such a glorious change on the fierce, destructive, and corrupt nature of men and nations. Therefore, our duty is to preach it, and to pray that it should have free course into the souls of all men. Secondly, we are to pray for the true Church of God, that peace may remain within her walls.

The Church is one family, and in a peaceable family the authority of the father ought to be supreme. The authority of God, speaking in His own Word, must be the only rule of obedience in the Church. Without this there cannot be peace. If the children begin to rule and to disobey, peace departs. So our duty is to pray that we ourselves, and all who are in Church fellowship with us, may be enabled to walk in the truth. The Apostle John in the Spirit declares: “I rejoiced greatly that I found thy children walking in the truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.” This must be our aim in our prayers and practice, for otherwise we cannot expect peace. How can we pray – “Thy will be done on earth as it is

in heaven” – unless we unfeignedly desire to be guided by His revealed Will. This is beautifully stated in our Shorter Catechism: “The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.” Let us search for the rule of our duty in everything in His Word, and when we find His direction, let us faithfully adhere to it. Let us have no will of our own, but let His will be paramount. Our corrupt flesh cannot do this, but grace will enable us to attain to it. Then we may expect peace in the Church over which the Holy Ghost has made us overseers, and we may expect also peace in our own souls. Surely this is worth praying and labouring for.

Again, let us pray for and cultivate peace among ourselves. We are commanded to love one another as brethren: “Let brotherly love continue.” Brotherly love among men means either the natural ties of family relationship, or the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit in regeneration and adoption. The first, in its wider sense, includes all the human race, as the Apostle taught the Athenians: “God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” Sin has made men hateful and hating one another, and love in this sense perished at the fall. The offspring of one natural father are called brethren. Natural love and peace may be met with among them; but since Cain slew Abel, or since the fall of mankind in Adam, love and peace in a family have been rare.

But the true followers of Christ are united to each other by stronger bonds than flesh and blood. They are one spirit with Christ, that is, they have the Holy Ghost dwelling in their hearts. “The spirit of love and of power, and of a sound mind.” The love they have for God and one another is nothing less than the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. This enables them, not only to love their brethren in Christ, but also to love their enemies and to pray for them. The Word of God shows several motives for brotherly love among the Lord’s people:

(1) That they have one Father: “Ye are all brethren, and one is your Father who is in heaven.”

(2) The Holy Spirit that dwells in them is: “The spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind.”

(3) The example of Christ: “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us.” Again Christ’s commandment to His disciples: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

These spiritual endearments caused David to pray for Jerusalem and his brethren: “Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good.” Let us pray for the peace of the Church of God, and endeavour to maintain it, for the same reasons.

III. – The promise made to such as love the Church of God: “They shall prosper that love thee.”

(1) This may not necessarily mean much worldly prosperity; for you remember that those who loved her in the past had to live in caves and dens of the earth, clothed in sheep skins and goat skins. Christ did not promise His followers great prosperity in this world; but on the contrary He foretold them that in the world they should have tribulation. So that worldly prosperity is not the meaning of the promise to God’s people.

(2) They shall prosper spiritually in their efforts to uphold a banner because of truth, and they shall prosper in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, in their own souls. Adversity has had the effect of restoring the internal peace of the Church, and reviving the grace of love in the souls of the Lord’s people. This was the effect of adversity on the Jews who were carried captives to Babylon: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” Surely that was a prosperous condition. We are

told that once the demolished temple and city of Jerusalem were the objects of their thoughts night and day: "For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." Is it not true to-day, as well as then, that, when the Church of God is brought low by the heathen, and the Lord's people oppressed, their love to the ordinances of the Gospel in their primitive purity and to one another is rekindled? Was it not the case in our own midst sixteen years ago? Did we not feel in our own souls that the graces of the Spirit had been revived, and that, in the midst of all our adversity, our love for the Word of God, for all the ordinances of the Gospel, and for one another increased? Have we not prospered beyond any thing that we could have expected then? The Lord has tried us once and again with sore adversity since, but He has enabled us to hold fast the form of sound words. Let us conclude at this time by the confession: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."

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