

Notes of a Lecture.

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

[This Lecture was delivered on a week-day evening.]

“The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins” – Mark 2:10.

“Whom he hath called” – Romans 9:24.

“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved” – Romans 10:13.

Having, last Sabbath, spoken at some length on the portions of divine truth cited above, I now proceed to say that the three passages in combination suggest the reflection that there are three aspects of Gospel truth, meaning the Gospel in the strict sense, which find extraordinary emphasis in the Word of God. I mean that the emphasis flows from the very heart of the sacred oracles.

(1) Need I say that the first of the above three subjects suggests the reflection that the all-sufficiency of Christ's power, and the unsearchableness of His riches is the theme of themes in Gospel truth! The particular instance from which we start is a miracle of healing which Christ in the days of His flesh wrought. Matthew and Luke as well as Mark record the miracle. The utter helplessness of the paralytic on whom the miracle was wrought is brought out in its being said that it took four to bring him to Christ. But Jesus manifested His glory at the time in an altogether unexpected way. He did this by assuming the prerogatives of deity. His claim was that as God in heaven forgives sin, the Son of Man on earth does the same; a claim that had been unjustifiable if He were not essentially one with the Father. Could He demonstrate the validity of this claim? Yes, verily. He, who on His own authority could with success command that impotent person to rise and to take up his bed, might demonstrably without presumption lay claim to divine prerogatives. When the matter was brought to such an issue, Jesus says to the sick of the palsy: “Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.” No sooner was the command given than straightway the hitherto helpless man took up his bed, and in the sight of all walked away with it. It was a most impressive lesson on the subject of the unlimitedness of the Mediator's grace and power. It was being made evident to everyone whose eyes “the god of this world” did not succeed in blinding, that nothing was too hard for the Lord Jesus. Neither disease, nor plague, nor death itself could stand before him. No, nor guilt, nor consequence of sin. Now this is not, I need scarcely say, a solitary instance in which Christ's all-sufficiency finds emphasis in the Word of God. One ought rather to say that this divine fulness, this all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ as the sinner's Saviour is the one all-absorbing theme of the New Testament. What purpose does the rehearsal which Matthew, Mark, and Luke make of Christ's mighty works serve but to show forth the implicates of the well-deserved title, Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God? Are not the speeches and the signs which the evangelist John also puts on record all meant to bring to light the infinite riches of that grace that visited this earth when the Word, who was and is God, was made flesh and dwelt among us? The great Epistle to the Romans may be regarded as an answer to the question why such a Person should have been at all constituted and revealed as the Son, who was made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (See Romans 1:3-5.)

How full is the Epistle to the Hebrews of Christ! From beginning to end the theme is the Person, nature, priestly office, and sacrifice of the Mediator of the New Covenant. It was deemed of the apostle Paul an unspeakable additional favour towards himself, because that, together with his own soul, there was given him to preach to others Christ's unsearchable fulness. If anything can be said to receive special emphasis in the New Testament, it is this

incomprehensible fulness which is to be found in Him in whom it pleased the Father that all the fulness should dwell. On account of this fulness is it that we are warranted to say to every sinner whatsoever of the human race that, if he or she only come to Jesus Christ, they cannot fail of salvation, be their guilt what it may.

(2) With this aspect of Gospel truth, to wit, the unsearchable fulness which is in Christ Jesus, an aspect, as we have seen, upon which the divine oracles lay such extraordinary emphasis, must be connected the guilt of those to whom Christ has come near in the Gospel and yet refuse to make Him their confidence. If there were not an all-sufficiency in Jesus Christ to meet your needs, supposing you to come to Him, you would incur no guilt by refusing to come. But not only is there aggravated guilt lying on everyone that refuses to come to Him, but this aggravated guilt is another aspect of Gospel truth which finds extraordinary emphasis in the Word of God. "This," says Christ, "is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light." And again, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin:" "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin:" "If any man," says the Apostle Paul, "love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema." On the whole face of Scripture you will find writ large that as men's privileges increase, their guilt, supposing them not to put these privileges to good use, also increases. Even those who live in heathendom, having only the starry heavens above and the promptings of conscience within, incur guilt because they refuse to walk according to this light which God has been pleased to leave with them (Romans 1:18-32; 14-15). The guilt of Israelites was greater than that of the heathen round about them, when men who had their privileges refused to walk in the light of the Lord. But the guilt of impenitent heathens, and even the guilt of the pre-Christian impenitent Jews dwindles into paleness in comparison with the guilt of those to whom the Gospel is hid. They are reckoned in the Scriptures as trampling under foot the Son of God, as counting the blood of the everlasting covenant a common thing, and as doing despite to the Spirit of grace. And if they continue in that hardness of heart, against them, as against none else, shall the vengeance which Jehovah claims as His own, be executed. For, "how can they escape if they neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 10:29-30; 2:3). Enough, surely, has been said to shew that the Scriptures, not merely in an incidental or occasional way, but as dealing with a matter that enters into the warp and woof of divine truth, puts extraordinary emphasis on the aggravated guilt of those who to trampling upon God's moral law add their making light of the Gospel of God's grace.

(3) But we should not do justice to this subject of the peculiar emphases of the Gospel, if we did not say that the marvel of faith is another theme which in the Scriptures has bestowed upon it an emphasis equally great with that placed upon the two foregoing aspects of divine truth. That a sinner, who is by nature dead in trespasses and sins, should at all come to Jesus Christ, is extolled in the Scriptures as a great wonder. To bring this out the Scriptures:

(a) dwell much upon what man is by nature. "Flesh born of the flesh." "Natural and incapable, as such, of discerning the things of the Spirit of God, of discerning, in a word, the Gospel." "Dead in trespasses and in sins."

(b) They make much of effectual calling – of the exceeding greatness of the power that works in them that believe. "Ye must be born again." "No man can come unto me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts." "For the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ." "He called us unto the fellowship of his Son." Everyone conversant with the Scriptures will recall many other similar expressions.

(c) The Scriptures trace this effectual calling to God's eternal purpose. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." "That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth." "He called us not according to our works but according to his own purpose." The impression that one gets in reading the Scriptures is that they cannot sufficiently extol the favour that has been bestowed on that man or woman to whom Christ has become fairer than the children of men. Flesh and blood have not so taught them, but the Father who is in heaven. It is that peculiar favour of which He spake to Moses when He said that "he would have mercy upon whom he would have mercy, and that he would be gracious unto whom he would be gracious." And this mercy of effectual calling flows from the promise of God, so that thereby, as His mercy is to be built up for ever, His faithfulness shall be established in the very heavens.

For the children of the promise are the true seed of Abraham, a promise traced in the Word of God further back than Abraham. It is a promise of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. Christ is the Father's promise to the Church – the Church is the Father's promise to Christ. In Eve, in Abraham, in Isaac, in Jacob, in David, in Isaiah, Christ is promised to the Church. But the Church was promised to Christ before the world began. The Father's promise of Christ to the Church could only have been made in time, for before time the Church had no actual existence, but the Father's promise of the Church to Christ was before time, and that might well be, as He was set up from everlasting. And Christ rejoices both in the mercy that is shown to every sinner that is drawn to Himself in time, and the faithfulness that is shown towards Himself in that all that the Father gave Him from everlasting are being brought to Him. His Church will everlastingly sing of His mercy and of His faithfulness, but, as Calvin puts it, Christ will be the leader in this exercise of praise. We live in times in which comparatively little is heard of effectual calling, and of eternal election. Why is that so? It is because it appears to most such a little, such a natural and easy thing to come to Jesus Christ. But those who are taught of God know that it is a great matter. And they love to see the greatness of it in all that the Scriptures say of man as he is by nature, of the exceeding greatness of God's power revealed in effectual calling, and of the revelation of the infinite mercy and eternal faithfulness of God that is made in the case of every believer. But whether men extol this marvel little or much, we have said enough, we think, to shew that it is an aspect of Gospel truth which has extraordinary emphasis given it, not in isolated passages, but in the entire texture of Scripture truth. Let us then pray that we may respond not to one but to every emphasis of God's word. It may be that we cannot reconcile these emphases into an intelligible harmony, but, apart from all such attempts, the authority of the Almighty gives them all the unity that is requisite (Romans 9:20).

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A Sermon.

By the REV. CHRISTOPHER LOVE,

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[“Christopher Love was successively minister of St. Anne’s, Aldersgate, and St. Lawrence, Jewry, in London. He was a man of fervent piety, eloquent and popular as a preacher, and respected and beloved for his excellent Christian character. He is the author of various works on practical divinity.” See sketch of his wife, by the Rev. James Anderson, in “Memorable Women of the Puritan Times.” Mr. Love seems to have been a vigorous preacher of the terrors of the law as well as of the grace of the Gospel. The present discourse is the first of a series which he preached with a view to awaken consciences at ease in Zion, and to preserve God’s people from carnal security. – ED.]

“But rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell” – Matthew 10:38.

Beloved, you may remember I have preached ten sermons upon the glorified condition of the saints in heaven. It is now in my thoughts to speak of the tormented condition of the damned in hell, that if the former sermons about glory have not gained your affections, this of hell might startle your consciences. Ministers, as having a mixed people, must mix their doctrine, somewhile with comfort and sometimes with terror. You have heard ten sermons upon the former text; you may haply hear so many more upon this subject. Before I can give you the sense of the text I must give you the scope of the chapter, which lies thus: Jesus Christ, having called his twelve disciples together, and given them a commission to preach the Gospel throughout the regions of Judea and (as a confirmation of their doctrine) to work all manner of miracles, and cure all manner of diseases, and dispossess devils, yet knowing (verse 16) “that they must go as silly sheep among ravenous wolves,” and what persecution and opposition you should meet with in the world in carrying on the great work of promoting the Gospel, therefore labours to prop up the hearts of His people by four several arguments in this chapter.

1. The first argument is in verses 19 and 20: “They shall bring you before governors for my name’s sake; but take no thought what you shall say, for it shall be given you in the same hour.” As if Christ should say, you shall be called before courts of judicature for my name’s sake for preaching my Gospel, but do not study what you shall plead for yourselves, for my Spirit shall dictate to you what you shall say; and so (Luke 21:15) you have the same phrase – “They should have a mouth and wisdom given them” to make their defence, and to vindicate the Gospel in their hands.

2. Another argument He brings is this, that though they should meet with troubles in the flesh, yet Christ should save their souls (verse 22); if they do suffer in their bodies, their soul shall be saved; “for he that endures to the end shall be saved.”

3. That before they had preached in every city Christ promised them to come in the blessing of His Spirit to make their spirit efficacious for the conversion of souls (Matthew 16:28). Some say it is meant till Jerusalem be destroyed, but Calvin understands it of His giving the Spirit (verse 23).

4. He bears them up with this comfort – that Jesus Christ was partner with them in suffering. Now, they must not expect to be above Christ – above their Master (verse 24). “The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord;” it is enough to be as he is. As if He should say: Do not be discouraged; I, your Lord and Master, suffered and must suffer more; I must suffer death. Therefore be not discouraged, for the disciple is not above his Lord.

5. And then another argument is in my text. Be not afraid, because the power of your enemies is limited. All your enemies can do shall only reach the body but never hurt your souls. Fear not him that can kill the body but not kill the soul; so telling them whom they should and whom they should not fear. “But fear him who is able to cast both body and soul into hell.”

Thus I have brought you to the words, I shall now give you the sense.

“But rather fear him.” – This word, rather, is not to be taken in a comparative sense – you may fear men, but you must fear God more; but is an adversative particle – you are not to fear men at all, but God alone.

“But rather fear him that can kill both body and soul.” “Kill” in this place is not to be taken for the annihilation or destroying of the body, but for a continual tormenting of body and soul under the wrath of God to all eternity. And so is expounded by Luke (12:5). “Who is able to cast both body and soul into hell,” that is, to destroy both soul and body. It were well for the damned if the soul and body, in that sense, should be destroyed so as to be annihilated; and the reason why both body and soul are mentioned is because the body hath been the partner with the soul in sin, and therefore shall be sharer with it in punishment.

“Fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.” Hell, in Scripture, admits of a four-fold signification.

1. It is taken for the grave; (Psalm 16:10), “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption,” that is, Christ should not lie and rot in the grave, but He should rise again. And so the Apostle Peter makes mention of this prophecy, that He should not see corruption nor be left in the grave (Acts 2:31,32). This he spake of His resurrection from the dead. Again,

2. Hell, in Scripture, is taken for the belly of the whale into which Jonah was cast. So the phrase is (Jonah 2:2), “Out of the belly of hell I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me.” Out of the belly of hell! Jonah was never in hell, but the belly of the whale was called hell, because a dark place, as hell is. But you must not take it in this sense either. But,

3. Hell, in Scripture, is taken for the devil himself or his malignant spirits. So (James 3:6), “The tongue of man is set on fire by hell” – not hell as the place, but the devil in hell. The devil in hell doth kindle the fire of an enraged and passionate spirit. The tongue is set on fire by the devil of hell.

4. Hell is taken in Scripture for the place of the damned, where God doth torture and torment to all eternity the souls and bodies of all reprobate men in the world. In this sense it is frequent in Scripture, as Matthew 5:29; Luke 12:5 and 16:23; and in this place it is thus taken. “Fear him that can cast both body and soul into hell,” that is, into that place of torment which the Lord, to all eternity, reserves for the punishment and torment of all ungodly men and women. Thus I have opened the phrase, “into hell.”

The word that is here rendered “hell” is from the Hebrew word *gehinnom*, which signifies the valley of Hinnon. It was a valley near Jerusalem, which was possessed by Hinnom or his son (Joshua 15:8; Nehemiah 11:30). Hell is called in Scripture after the name of this place, in allusion to it, because in this valley the idolatrous Jews set up an idol called Molech, which was made of brass in the form of a man, hollow within, wherein the Jews kindled a fire. Then the children were put within the bands of the idol and so burnt. The Jews thought that the father which delivered one of his children to this idol should have a blessing and a comfort of all his other children. Now, from hence the Greek word comes, and carries an allusion to this place, that as there was a continual fire in that idol, and continual shrieking and crying, so shall it be in those fiery torments of hell. The story is at large (2 Chronicles 33:6; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chronicles 28:3; Jeremiah 7:31, 32:35; Leviticus 17:21). Good King Josiah destroyed this place (2 Kings 23:10). And thus, having laid open the words, nothing lies in my way but to give you the observations the text will bear. And there are two observations which I shall draw from these words.

First, from the context, “but rather fear him.” Observe hence,

Doct. 1. – That the fear of God doth fence the heart against the fear of man. The more you fear God, the less you will fear men; (Isaiah 8:13), “Fear not their fear, but sanctify the Lord in your hearts; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” But this point I pass,

because I only intend, in the handling of this subject, to set before you the torments of the damned in hell, which haply may awaken some drowsy consciences, and I am sure may much heighten the joy of believers, that are delivered from these hellish torments. The observation therefore that will engross the sum and substance of this text is this,

Doct. 2. – That the consideration of this – that God has an absolute power over men and women, to cast their bodies and souls into hell – should work an awful fear of God in the hearts of His own people. This is the point, and a point that carries a great deal of dread and terror with it. Before, therefore, I shall come distinctly to handle the doctrine, I must necessarily lay down reasons why I preach upon this terrible subject, and then answer some objections that may be raised against the preaching of so dreadful a doctrine as this is.

First. – The reasons why I handle this are four.

(1) I handle it now because I have so largely handled the glory of the elect in heaven, for the comfort of the godly. Now I shall speak of the torments of hell for the punishment of the wicked, that so, if the glory of the elect have not allured your affections, the hearing of the torment of the damned in hell might startle your consciences and awaken you out of your security.

(2) I handle it lest any of you should grow secure and presumptuous in nourishing ungrounded hopes of glory, expecting to be in glory with Jesus Christ, upon the former sermons. Lest you should thus vainly hope, I deemed it meet to conjoin this subject with it, that so you might be equally poised from presumption on the one hand and despair on the other.

(3) Because it is a doctrine so little preached and so little writ of in these days. I know but only one book in English writ upon this subject, by Mr. Bolton, and very few in Latin. And therefore being so useful a subject – useful for the wicked and useful for the godly – and yet so little handled, and now-a-days much cried down and much cried against, this reason also put me upon this doctrine.

(4) I handle this doctrine because I am persuaded did many men know distinctly the torments of hell, they would never walk in a way of sin that leads to hell, so as they do. I do persuade myself were this doctrine of hell well studied and better known by the people, they would take more care to avoid hell and gain glory than they do. Did men but know that they who live and die unrepenting, and lie burning in their lusts, shall one day burn in fire; did they but know that they that can swallow bowls of wine, and drink to excess, shall one day drink draughts of brimstone in hell; did men but know that they that grind their teeth, through hatred and indignation, against the godly here, shall one day gnash their teeth in hell hereafter; did men but know that they that oppress the people of God by persecution, and hale them into prison now, shall one day be dragged into an everlasting prison, and haled by devils into hell; that those who could not endure the company of saints on earth should be with devils and damned spirits in hell – did men but know this doctrine well, they would not be so profane and sinfully wicked as they are now-a-days. But the want of the study of this point doth open a gap to the world of profaneness. And therefore for these reasons I resolved to treat a little upon this subject.

Secondly. – Now there are two objections why men should not preach upon such a subject as this is.

1. Some will say this is legal preaching. To cast flashes of hell fire about the congregation; this is not to preach the Gospel, but the law. To take off this, therefore, I shall speak four things by way of answer.

(1) Surely Jesus Christ was no legal preacher, yet He preached this doctrine, for these are Christ's own words; and therefore preaching of hell and the torments thereof cannot justly be called legal preaching, because Jesus Christ, the Minister of the new covenant, was the

Person that most of all preached of hell. And it is observable that neither the apostles nor all the evangelists preached so much of hell as Jesus Christ did. Jesus Christ hath seven particular texts of hell and the torments of the damned, which the apostles never had. And therefore I say this is not legal preaching, seeing it is the doctrine of Jesus Christ Himself.

(2) It is the great policy of the devil to nuzzle men in security in their sins; to have all soul-searching preaching, and sin-reproving preaching, all conscience-awakening, duty-pressing preaching – to have all such doctrines as these called legal preaching. It is the great policy of the devil to put so bad a name on so good a work.

(3) If preaching of terror be legal preaching, then the law was more preached in the New Testament than ever it was under the Old. I make it appear thus. There are more terrible and dreadful doctrines scattered up and down in the New Testament than in the Old. It is a note of Chrysostom that in all the Old Testament the word “damnation” was never used, but is used thirteen times in the New. And it is observable further that, in the Old Testament, though the word “hell” is often used, yet it is most commonly used for the grave and not for the place of the damned; but in the New Testament, unless in two places, hell is altogether taken for the place of the damned. Therefore it is clear to every eye that the Gospel is more backed with terror and with the doctrines of hell and damnation than ever the law was. The preaching of the law hath only anathema, but the Gospel hath maranatha also. Therefore all they that are of the Antinomian error – that cry down pressing duty, as preaching the law – much deceive themselves; for Christ Himself and the apostles and the evangelists all preached more of terror than any of the prophets ever did.

(4) Whereas it is said that preaching of terror is legal preaching, I say this, that sermons of terror have done more good [We understand Mr. Love to mean “good” in a way of arresting and awakening – stopping sinners on the broad way to perdition.] upon unconverted souls than sermons of comfort ever have done: sermons of hell have kept many out of hell. I have read often of Mr. Throgmorton that he was converted by a sermon of terror upon that text: “How shall you escape the damnation to come?” I have heard of another famous divine that tells us he was converted by that text: “Christ preaching to the spirits in prison.” I have heard of Mr. Greenham, a famous minister, that hearing a sermon of the last judgment, and the torments of the damned, proved his conversion and first call. I have read of other ancient authors. Hierom tells himself: “Whether I eat or drink,” saith he, “I hear a voice sounding in my ears, Arise, arise, you dead, and come to judgment.” And this very sound converted him, and so many more. Beloved, doctrines of terror God hath more sanctified for the conversion of souls than any other doctrine in the world. And therefore it is observable of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and that made way for Christ, that the first sermon that he preached was a sermon of terror and wrath to come – “Ye generation of vipers, who hath forewarned you to flee from the wrath to come?” And so this was the second sermon that ever Christ preached, and here He preaches a terrible sermon of hell. “Let us not flee sermons concerning hell,” saith Gregory, “that we may flee hell.”

2. But it may be some will object and say, “Indeed, preaching of hell is lawful, but preaching of Christ’s love and preaching of free grace are more winning subjects, and they are doctrines more to be built upon; and the doctrines more to refresh and cheer the people of God. These doctrines do more gain upon men than such terrible doctrines do.” To which objection likewise, I entreat you, take these five things by way of answer.

(1) It is true indeed, were all our hearers converted, doctrines of grace and doctrines of love and comfort might be most for edification; but seeing we have to deal with a mixed people our doctrines must be mixed also, else we shall never profit.

(2) It is true indeed, were all men’s natures alike – that all men were of a soft and tender disposition – that all men were troubled in mind and under a sense of God’s wrath – then we should preach only love and only grace, to bear up their heart; for *ingenium potius ducitur*

quam trahitur [The mind is better led than driven]. But when the Scripture tells us the tempers of men are different – some men of a soft disposition, others of a knotty and rough spirit – some will be won with mercy, others not without judgment. The Scripture telling us the tempers of men are various, our doctrines must be different also – sometimes of mercy, sometime of judgment – that as sermons of love will win upon soft hearts, so doctrines of terror must be for knotty spirits. (Jude 22, 23), “On some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating the garment spotted with the flesh.” Some, saith the apostle, you must show compassion to and preach love and kindness to, but others you must save with fire, that is, show them hell-fire, and terrify them with the fear of God’s wrath. Some men are more yielding and more tender; these must be dealt with in meekness. Others that are more stout-hearted sinners must be saved with fear, pulling them out of the fire of hell. That is my second answer. Some men’s natures are rather led than driven, yet others are so stout and knotty that nothing but flashes of hell-fire will make their consciences startle.

(3) To those that plead so much for doctrines of free grace and strains of comfort, and must not have such points of terror preached unto them, I answer, man’s nature is more apt to abuse doctrines of free grace (though these must be preached in their season) than they are to abuse these doctrines of terror and of wrath to come. This Jude tells us (Jude 3), “They turn the grace of God into wantonness.” And the Apostle Paul raised the objection, “Shall we sin because grace abounds? God forbid”; implying that some men did make it their practice that, because grace did abound, they would abound in sin.

(4) How can a minister discharge his conscience to God that he hath preached to his people the whole counsel of God, if in the course of his ministry he shall run only upon strains of free grace and Christ’s love and doctrines of comfort? What are doctrines of terror? Are they not the will of God, to be preached as well as comfort?

(5) Those men that have cried so much to have preaching upon strains of love and of free grace, I am sure, as some manage the matter, have hardened more souls than ever they have converted by those sermons. For my part, beloved, I know not one man that hath been converted by these new teachers that pretend more light than their brethren, and pretend to hold Christ more clearly forth than their brethren. I do not see holiness shining in their lives above others. Whereas I am sure those that did preach mixed doctrines – sometimes fear and sometimes love, sometimes strains of wrath, sometimes of grace – did most work upon the consciences of their hearers. I have read of Mr. Hildersham, a minister at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, a most terrible preacher, and it is said God gave him more success to his ministry for the conversion of souls than to all the ministers about the country besides. And when Paul preached a sermon of judgment to come, it made the heart of Felix to tremble, it made the great man’s heart tremble to hear of judgment. And we find in Scripture that as God had His Barnabases (sons of consolation), so He had His Boanergeses (sons of thunder), to make the stout hearts of people to tremble. And thus, lest any seduced heart should be carried away to think all this legal, I deemed it meet to make this apology in entering upon this subject. Remember the doctrine – that the consideration of this, that God hath an absolute power over men and women, to cast both into hell, should work in God’s own children an awful fear of God.

In the handling of this dismal subject I have fifteen queries to go over: as (1) I shall inquire whether there be a hell or no; (2) Why there must be a hell to receive the souls of wicked men; (3) What this hell is; (4) Whether there be degrees of torment in hell; etc.

1. Whether there be a hell or no. – And to answer this I shall make it appear from the confession of heathens that had only the glimmerings of nature, and never saw the Bible; and secondly from the testimony of Scripture.

(1) From the confession of heathens. Though they could not tell distinctly (as never being acquainted with the Word), yet by the glimmering light of nature, they had some fancies and apprehensions of this place of the damned. Virgil tells us, *Facilis descensus Averni*, etc. (*Æneid*, line 6).

Therefore they had one called Pluto (that was the chief person in hell) which chiefly did torment them that were most wicked. And they had their Charon's boats – a fancy that there was a man with a boat that ferried over wicked persons into hell; and they had their *Ætna*, their burning mountains, which they fancied to be hell. And they fancied hell to be a continual rolling of stones upon dead bodies; with many other fancies. And so Pluto had many footsteps of hell, that, saith he, if a man had no punishment after he is dead, he shall have somewhat of guiltiness in him to torture and torment him. All these were merely apprehensions of hell. But these I pass.

(2) As you have a testimony from heathen, so you have this truth clearly from Scripture also; to name two or three texts – (Deuteronomy 3:2), “I will kindle a fire in mine anger, and it shall burn to the lowest hell.” (So Psalm 9:18), “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.” (So Psalm 11:6), “Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest.” (So Matthew 23:33), “Ye serpents and generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?” (So Peter 2:3,4), “He cast them down to hell. They are locked up in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.” (So Jude 6), “They are reserved in everlasting chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day.” All which do plainly prove that there is a hell. But now,

2. Why there must be a hell. – It appears by these demonstrations.

(1) Because of the filthy nature of sin. Sin is against an infinite God, and the offence being infinite, the punishment must be infinite also. But the punishment cannot be infinite upon earth, because we stay here but a while, and our bodies rot in the grave; therefore, of necessity, there must be a hell that must keep the bodies and souls of the wicked, that so they may receive proportionable punishment to the sins they committed here upon earth.

(2) Because else the justice of God could never be satisfied for the sins of the wicked men here done upon earth. And the reason is

[1] Because Christ would not satisfy and suffer God's wrath for wicked men; therefore they must bear it themselves.

[2] Upon earth they cannot satisfy God's wrath. Why? Because sin being an infinite offence, their punishment here can be but finite, lasting for a time. Therefore all their sufferings here cannot satisfy God's wrath which is due to them for their sins; therefore, of necessity, there must be a hell to keep men to all eternity, that by their everlasting torments God's justice might be satisfied, which otherwise it could not be (2 Thessalonians 1:5).

(3) It appears there must be a hell by those horrors and terrors of conscience that are in wicked men when they are dying. Many a man in his health will “tush” at hell; he will scorn the fire and scoff at the flames. Many a man, when he is in his health, never thinks of hell, but he can drink one day, swear another day, play the adulterer the third day, and sin every day, and the thoughts of hell never trouble him. But now bring this man to his sickbed, and what horrors and fears seize upon his soul! Should I appeal from a healthful drunkard to himself when dying – (as one said he would appeal from King Philip drunk to King Philip sober, who thereupon did repeal his act and did the man justice) – thou who by thy sinning hast spent thy strength and estate in drink, and dost not think of hell when thou art drunk, I would appeal to thee, a dying man, and tell me what wouldst thou say then? What wouldst thou then give for a Christ? What wouldst thou then give for a pardon, that thou mightest not be damned? The very horrors and wounds of conscience at thy dying day doth demonstrate that there is a time of torments to be endured by thee; else how could conscience be so terrible a vexation to the souls of men at that day, were there not such a thing as hell provided for them? What made

the Roman emperors to be afraid of death, and when it thundered to run under their beds for fear of death? Only this, that the very workings of conscience showed them something was to come after this life. The very terrors of conscience declare there is a hell, a place of torment, provided for wicked men.

And thus having finished these queries, the use I shall make shall be for condemnation and astonishment.

1. It shall be for condemnation – a condemnation to all them that hold there is no such thing as hell. The Photinians hold there is no hell, but that which we call hell is the annihilation of the body; that man is brought to nothing, and no other. There are fifteen sorts of heretics, an author writes of, that deny a hell; and amongst the rest, one called Empecta was held by Barba, the wife of Sigismundus, the emperor, who gave her followers money to hold this opinion, that she might have their consciences seared in sensuality and lustful pleasure. This truth condemns all that have their consciences seared so as to deny there is a hell.

2. This is for astonishment. To whom? Why, to all you that add sin to sin, and drunkenness to thrift, and one provocation to another, as if there were neither a heaven for the godly nor a hell for you. You that are like Sardanapalus, say, *Ede, bibe, lude, post mortem nulla voluptas*. “Eat, drink, and be merry, for after death there is no pleasure,” and consequently no pain; and therefore, while men live, they should live as pleasurable and joyous as possible might be (Isaiah 28:19). O beloved, tremble if all these places alleged prove such a place to be. How should this astonish thy soul – that all the actions of thy life have been but a running race to these chambers of death? All the actions of thy life have been but a laying-up of treasure in this place of torment. How should this astonish you whose course only leads you to this doleful dungeon of hell? But,

3. Though this be a doctrine terrible and dreadful, yet you may suck forth consolation hence, who are the elect people of God. It is true indeed there is a hell, and wicked men shall unavoidably come to hell. As John says, “You serpents and generation of vipers, how shall you escape the damnation of hell?” But all you that are the elect of God, you are not only forewarned but you are forearmed also; you need not fear this place of hell. For, first, you need not fear the devil, that is, the torments of hell, because God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Though he now goes about like a roaring lion, seeking his prey whom he may devour, yet then he shall be in chains and go abroad no more. And, secondly, you need not fear those torments the damned undergo. Though there be a worm that shall never die, a fire that shall never go out; though there be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; though they lie under the wrath of an incensed God; yet lift up your heads with joy, ye elect of God, for Jesus Christ is your redemption and your life. “He hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2). Hereupon (2 Thessalonians 1) you are by Jesus Christ delivered from wrath to come. Here, then, is matter of joy for you, though there be a hell and the wicked tormented night and day, yet by Jesus Christ you are delivered from this wrath to come.

[June 1911.]

A Sermon.

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

“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” – 2 Corinthians 12:9.

In directing attention to this portion of God’s Word, I shall, as the Lord may enable me, consider:

- I. – The infirmities here spoken of;
- II. – The power that is set over against those infirmities; and
- III. – The consequent glorying.

I. – The infirmities are more than one. In the previous chapter the Apostle had spoken of many things that concerned his infirmities (11:30). “Of the Jews five times received I forty

stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (11:24-27).

These were, all of them, things that concerned his infirmities. We, at this distance of time, are ready to look upon those trials, so courageously endured, as the very credentials of Paul's apostleship. But we should not forget that they must have worn quite a different aspect to the Apostle who experienced them, and were the occasion of many a temptation that was fitted to lay him low. If our King sends out an ambassador to other peoples, the very fact of his being our King's representative secures for him much respect, and consequent privileges and comforts everywhere. One might therefore expect that the King of kings and Lord of all, who has all power given to Him in heaven and in earth, should provide that an ambassador of His, who served Him with faithfulness, would have the utmost respect paid to him everywhere, and the amplest provision made for his comfort. When, instead of this, he was at every turn ready to become the prey of fierce elements in nature or of fiercer passions of men who had set themselves against the Lord and against His Christ, could this experience fail of being a trial of faith? Might not the treatment thus meted out very easily become the occasion of sore temptations? The Jewish law forbade punishment by stripes to exceed forty at a time, and the reason of that was, "lest, if they should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, a fellow Hebrew should become vile in their eyes." Even if his cruel persecutors might say that they had not gone beyond what the law said was permissible in the case of a Hebrew, how could these castigations, when administered to him so often, fail to make the Apostle appear vile in his own eyes? For truly the treatment that, under the providence of God, was meted out to the Apostle Paul by his own countrymen was fitted to quite break his spirit. It seems to me quite plain that the Apostle looked upon those trying providences enumerated in chapter 11, verses 24-27, as sent to humble him; that if, that is, he had any tendency to boast on account of his being a Hebrew, an Israelite, of the stock of Abraham, a minister of Jesus Christ, then these providential buffetings were sent to empty him.

But although we consider ourselves bound to interpret the infirmities of which our text speaks as embracing the particular providences that have been alluded to, there can be no question that the main reference is to one particular trial, of which we come to read in the twelfth chapter, to wit, the thorn in the flesh. The language is figurative, and one, so far, easily understood. If one has but a whin thorn in one's foot, walking becomes very painful until the thorn is extracted. The figure present to the mind of the Apostle may have been of some sharp-pointed wood or stake larger than a whin thorn; but be the exact figuration what it may, it is plain that something very painful to his spirit is meant to be pointed at. Many have offered guesses of what might have been the nature of this particular trial, comparable in its painfulness to a thorn in the flesh; but since the Holy Spirit was not pleased to give any clear intimation of what really constituted the trial, it is prudence on our part not to be wise above what is written. We are warranted, however, to conclude that it was not an affliction which grew up with him from a boy, and, indeed, that it did not enter into his experience in the earliest years of his life as a Christian. This particular affliction was laid upon him subsequently to his having been raised up to the third heaven, where he heard things not lawful to utter upon this earth. It was of a particularly painful kind, otherwise he would not have spoken of it as a messenger of Satan. I take it that that implies that it made an open door, so to say, to Satan to come in upon him so as to torment him in his spirit. For as Satan can and will for ever torment the spirits of unjust men and women in hell, so it is possible that God should permit that a gracious soul would here suffer excruciating pain from Satan for a

little season. It is possible that, on account of this visitation, Satan had opportunities of pointing, in the secrecy of Paul's own spirit, the finger of scorn to him, and make it appear extremely unlikely that God would advance His kingdom upon this earth through such a person as he was, or bless him in his labours at all. It is certain that the affliction was not only painful but fitted to prostrate the Apostle exceedingly. And in fact it was meant to humble him. If over against his being a Hebrew, an Israelite, of the stock of Abraham, a minister of Christ, there was placed in the opposite scale that weariness and painfulness which resulted from the strangely-trying providences wherewith he seemed to be tested at the hands of God and men; so over against his having been raised to the third heaven was placed this thorn in the flesh. And although none of us can have been exalted as was Paul when taken up to the third heaven, yet we need our thorns too, and more especially, I dare say, ministers of Christ; for only those in whom "death worketh" can be a source of much comfort to the tried Church of God. But leaving the particular application of this thorn to each living soul – for I suppose one reason why the thorn was not specified was just in order that it might the more readily lend itself thus to the wider application – I proceed, in the second place, to consider the power that is here placed over against those infirmities.

II. – The power of Christ. – Few things suit better than power and infirmities. That is pre-eminently true of Christ's power as it meets with His people's infirmities. Now, with regard to this power of Christ, observe:

(1) It is omnipotence. Nothing can be surer than that Christ was the Apostle Paul's object of faith, and the Person to whom he directed his prayers. See how conclusive the argument for Christ's deity here is. He besought the Lord thrice that the thorn might depart from him (verse 8). The Lord, to whom he prayed, answered him: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength (power) is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly therefore," resolved the Apostle, "will I glory in my infirmities, in order that this promised power of Christ may rest upon me." The promised power of the Lord is identified with the power of Christ. Christ and the Hearer of prayer are identical. In other words, Christ is to Paul all that God is. We are so straitened in ourselves that because Christ must be our Mediator, upon whom we shall lean when we approach God, we do not so readily make the Mediator Himself the Hearer of our prayer. But Christ was to Paul at once the only Mediator between God and him, and at the same time the object of his worship and the Hearer of his prayer. Christ is thus to the believer as the tabernacle was of old to the Israelite. The Israelite needed not to go beyond the tabernacle for any of his religious duties. The altar of brass, the candlestick, the table of the shewbread, the altar of gold, the ark of the testimony with its precious deposit, the mercy-seat, the cherubim, the Shekinah itself, were all there. To it belonged the priesthood and sacrifices innumerable. So is it with Christ. The believer has no need to go beyond Him for anything. The Father is in Him; the Spirit belongs to Him; He is Himself our life and our peace. One is our Prophet, Priest, and King. Nor can I help saying in passing that it is impossible to think that Christ occupies this place in the mind of many in our own time who presume to preach in His name, and yet who can contradict Him, and say much taking exception to His teaching.

(2) But this power which is set over against infirmities in our text is not only the power of Christ – the power of the prayer-hearing Jehovah – in a word, omnipotence; this power is *grace*. It is power of a gracious nature – a power manifesting itself not in the destruction of the ungodly, but in rescuing the poor and the needy and those who have no help of man at all. Christ's power has been, and will be, exercised in more ways than one. He manifested His power in creating heaven and earth and sea and all that therein is. He will manifest His power one day in destroying His enemies. But that exercise of His power in which chiefly is His delight is in exercising it in a gracious sense. Mercy is His delight, while judgment is His

strange work. And the glory of His power in a gracious sense will so transcend every manifestation of it in any other sense, even as the light of the sun transcends the light of moon and stars; so that, as it is the light of the sun that engages and occupies us in the daytime, it will be the gracious power of Christ that will fill the thoughts of redeemed mankind and of elect angels throughout the eternal ages. For His mercy shall be built up for ever, and His faithfulness shall be established in the very heavens. And unto this mercy we are invited to betake ourselves. As many as continue to despise His overtures must needs know His power to destroy them; but now is He inviting us to Himself, saying, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else; there is no Saviour beside me – I know not any." His delight is in those who, with confidence, betake themselves to His mercy. And those who do betake themselves to His mercy may rest assured that their experience will correspond with that of Paul, who fled to His mercy, and ever afterwards found that Christ's power was engaged graciously to protect him from all evil.

(3) This power, which is grace, is of that nature that it looks out for infirmities as affording the only fitting opportunity and occasion of its self-manifestation. The reason, you observe, why Christ's grace was to prove sufficient to meet the Apostle Paul's infirmities was simply this – that He made it a rule to Himself to show this special aspect of His power only in succouring the needy, in upholding those who are bowed down.

One sees illustrations of the truth of this observation in more connections than one. It was, for example, "when we were yet without strength," that "Christ died for the ungodly." If Christ had said, "I will wait until these sinners become just and good, and then I shall die for them as for worthy persons," He might have waited for ever and certainly never see the good desired. But He would rather say, "I shall die for them when they are weak, I shall die for them when they are guilty, and by dying for them when they are guilty deliver from their guilt, and make it eternally manifest that nothing in them, but only the good pleasure of my will, moved to this act of self-sacrifice."

You see it exemplified in the history of the Christian Church. Who would have thought that the fishermen of Galilee would have been the chosen instruments to turn the world upside down? And yet Christ's strength was made perfect in their weakness, and His power was thus glorified as it could not otherwise have been glorified. Nor need it be pointed out that, if Christ purposes, when His cause is low, to revive it, it need cause no surprise if He make choice of weak and contemptible instruments for reviving His cause, for that would only be in keeping with His manifestation of His grace in every sphere in ages past.

III. – All this brings us to consider this glorying in infirmities, of which we see such a signal example in the Apostle Paul. Now it is an easy thing to *speak* of glorying in infirmities, but it is quite another to be found in this exercise. But let it be observed that if we shall glory in our infirmities, it will be true –

(1) That we shall be conscious – yea, painfully conscious – of them. These are experiences to which the Church of God have been no strangers. The Psalmist was not a stranger to them. "For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead." Very many, we may be sure, of the Lord's more-deeply-tried people have found those words of the Psalmist to express their sense of misery, as though they had been coined by the Holy Ghost for their own special use.

(2) The painfulness of our affliction will not only make us wish that it were removed from us, but it will make us earnest in our pleadings with God to this end. The Apostle Paul besought the Lord thrice in this wrestling of his, just as our Lord Himself in His agony thrice prayed that the cup might, if it were possible, pass from Him without His drinking it.

(3) Christ will manifest Himself as the hearer of prayer, although not altogether on the lines which we might have been laying down. He answered the Apostle Paul in a very direct

way, saying to him, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness,” but not as Paul at one time wished He should. He may not have answered you so very directly, and yet He may have answered you graciously and not less truly. It may be – to give such an example as more naturally comes within one’s own experience – that Satan may have buffeted you, in the sense of pointing the finger of scorn at you, of intimating and impressing upon you that your usefulness in Christ’s service was at an end, that it would be great presumption on your part to expect God’s blessing upon your labour any more, and that therefore you may as well give up speaking in Christ’s name. And yet, in the midst of all these secret thunderings, God may be sensibly coming to your help, making your enemy time and again a liar unto you. In this way, I believe, many of Christ’s servants who feared, on account of some sore and long-lasting temptation, that they were cast over the wall as mere cumberers of the ground, have had their confidence renewed, and their hope touching the unchangeableness of His favour strengthened. They had an answer from Christ, if not in a way so supernatural as was His way of dealing with Paul, yet none the less true.

But how few even of those who are not strangers to being helped, attain to glorying in their painful infirmity – in infirmities that gave Satan opportunities of prostrating their life in the dust! Yet this is what the Apostle Paul attained to. He preferred that Christ should make His grace known in holding him up when bowed down with this affliction, to His removing the affliction altogether. Why? He perceived that the grace of Christ would thus more sweetly be experienced by him, and that Christ’s glory would thus be more mysteriously revealed in and to his own spirit. For that the power of Christ should rest upon him, was equivalent to its coming to dwell in him as in a tent. A heart, broken through temptations and afflictions and necessities, is the only proper resting-place of this gracious power of Christ. The Apostle felt as if Christ had asked him whether he was, or was not, willing that his very infirmities might serve as a window through which Christ’s gracious omnipotence should be manifested, as it can only be manifested in such situations, and the Apostle replied that if the case were so – if his wound was to be Christ’s dwelling-place, in which His gracious omnipotence was to be glorified mysteriously – then he would be happy to have such a wound always. It would seem that he had had it fourteen years already when he wrote this Epistle, and we have no warrant to conclude that he was ever without it until he finished his course here below.

How is it with ourselves? If we have not attained to what the Apostle attained to, it will be something if we long after it.

[July 1911]

A Sermon.

By the late REV. CHARLES C. MACKINTOSH, D.D.,
of Tain and Dunoon.

“So, when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep” – John 21:15-17. (See also Mark 14:26-31; 66-72.)

As it was for the Church that Christ lived and died, so it was for her that He rose again. He left His Father’s throne of glory and came into a far country, that He might earn and purchase her redemption and deliverance. His love for her was such that the waters of many

temptations and the floods of affliction and of His Father's wrath could not quench it. For the joy that was set before Him in her complete deliverance He endured the Cross; for her He became obedient even unto death; and in all His humiliation the prospect in the distance of this beautiful and ransomed bride rejoiced His spirit, and carried Him exultingly through. As He died for her offences, so He rose again for her justification. If He is now at the right hand of the Father, it is that He may make intercession for her. If He has all power in heaven and on earth, it is that He may give eternal life to her for whom He laid down His life. And as the severest pang of His sufferings could not prevail to make Him think the purchase too dear, so He rejoiced in their completion mainly because His Church's deliverance was effected.

If we would see into the heart of Christ, let us contemplate Him on the day of His resurrection. He had burst the prison gates and come forth a conqueror; He stood the Head of a redeemed world; He had spoiled principalities and powers; a name above every name awaited him; the hosts of heaven longed for His ascension that they might fall down and worship Him; – and how was He employed? Behold Him first ministering consolation to a poor mourning disciple, Mary Magdalene. See Him next enlightening the ignorance and confirming the weak faith of the two travellers to Emmaus – conversing with them till their hearts burned within them. Then we find Him appearing to Cephas; he who had denied Him was singled out for this gracious visit, as specially needing it to assure him that he was graven on Christ's heart still. Afterwards He appeared to His assembled disciples, and despite of their ignorance and slowness of heart to believe – despite of their desertion of Him in His hour of agony and distress – saluted them with "Peace be unto you." We have here the heart of Christ disclosed to us, His love and pity for His people, His zeal for their interests, His fixed purpose of saving them, and His determination that none of them should perish, and that none should pluck them out of His hand. And Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But let us attend to the passage immediately before us. And if we could enter into its meaning we should see something of Christ's heart and something of our own. We see here the great Shepherd of the sheep dealing with a strayed sheep – but one of Christ's sheep, and therefore reclaimed – one who would doubtless long ere now have been devoured by the wolves, had not He watched over and protected him. Peter was a chosen vessel, and therefore in confirming him Jesus would so stamp his backsliding and his recovery on his heart, and so deal with him as that the Church at large should be profited.

The case of Peter is sometimes coarsely handled. Many deal with the sad scene of his denial of Christ as though he were placed on the pillory to be branded as a traitor and coward by every passer-by. But when they scan and censure Peter's fall, it would be well if they inquired whether their own lives be not one continued denial of Christ; whether their hearts ever dictated Peter's question and confession, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life"; whether they have ever shared Peter's blessing – "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven"; and whether, if they can see the greatness of his sin, they can also enter into the pungency of his sorrow over it. Not that we would dare to speak lightly of Peter's sin; but it is dangerous to contemplate the falls and infirmities of the saints of God without respect to their life of faith and obedience, and especially to the deep repentance consequent on their reclaiming and their experience of mercy – to probe into their sins and faults while our own hearts' corruptions remain unexplored by us. We are then in danger of extracting poison from such a precious passage of God's Word as this, if we are content to bring to its consideration a hard, unhumbled heart.

"Though all shall be offended, yet will not I." So spake Peter, not in hypocrisy – knowing that he loved Christ – but not thinking of his weakness, and not laying to heart the deceitfulness of sin and the wiles and power of Satan. He spoke as confidently as though he

had been his own keeper; and not only so, but he affirmed that in the silence or flight of all other confessors of Christ's name, he would be found faithful. It was no wonder that his foot slipped. And so will it ever be with us. When we lose sight of the deceitfulness of our hearts, we lose sight of a necessary beacon, and we are left to steer our way in darkness, amid shoals and quicksands; and the result may be a departure from the faith, a lukewarmness of spirit, or a loose or careless walk before the world, by which enemies are led to blaspheme, the people of God are wounded, and we pierce ourselves through with many sorrows. This is a mystery to those who have but a form of godliness, but it is not so to those who know the deceitfulness of their hearts, and that they have daily to contend with the many-headed monster, sin, and need restraining and upholding grace to enable them to stand before it. And how did Peter act when he ceased to say, "Lord, preserve me"? In the face of Christ's solemn and pointed warning, in the face of his boast and of his expressed resolution, he denied his Master: "I know not the man." He thrice denied him. He added cursing to his denial, as if his conscience had not been already sufficiently loaded with guilt. How affecting in one of that little band whom Christ had chosen out of the world, and to whom He had unlocked and disclosed His very heart! How affecting in one who was not a traitor at heart, that such wickedness should lodge in the breast of a disciple! How humiliating to all of us that such is the requital which Christ receives from the best of us! And how strikingly does it illustrate the truth that the love of Christ is free, rich, and altogether unmerited!

"The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." Oh! surely He had prepared Himself for such a requital, and though it met Him in the very thickest of His sufferings He was not overcome by it; it was insufficient to change His love. He would even then show how His heart rose above it all; and as on the Cross He gathered in one unlikely sinner to His fold, so in the hall of judgment He recovered His wandering disciple. "He looked upon Peter." Who can tell the significance and power of that look? It went like an arrow to Peter's heart, and "he went out and wept bitterly."

Without attempting to analyse his feelings in the freshness of his sorrow, let us view him some little time after, under the searching scrutiny of Him whom he had denied. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" It is as if the Lord had said, "Thou knowest the great professions of love made by thee, and how these were followed up by denying me; sayest thou still, not only that thou lovest me but that thy love exceeds in measure that of thy brethren?"

"Peter saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." It is no longer self-confident, boasting Peter, but humbled, broken-hearted Peter who speaks. He had learned a lesson of humility. He had learned the deceitfulness of his heart. The exceeding sinfulness of his sin was present to his mind, so that he blushed in remembering his woeful pride and presumption, and instead of thinking he stood foremost in faith and love, he now deemed himself unworthy to be called a disciple, feeling that if again permitted to call Christ "Lord and Master," it would be a miracle of mercy. Yet still he felt that he loved Him, that Christ was dearer to him than all besides, that without Him this world would be to him a blank and void. He knew that he harboured no known rebel to his Lord in his heart, and if such an "Achan" lurked unsuspected there, it was his desire that Christ should drag it forth and slay it before him. He knew also that he had sorrowed for his sin as he had never sorrowed for any earthly losses or trials, and in the view of this he was able to look Christ in the face and to say, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." He appealed to the Searcher of Hearts, and left it with Him to say if it were not so.

In this reply we may see also the workings of the Spirit of adoption. He felt how grievously he had sinned; that, having renounced Christ, most justly might he be renounced by Him; yet this did not drive him away, nor make him seek to evade Christ's question. It led him to throw himself into the arms of the Lord Jesus in the self-same spirit with that which

led David to say, "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great." "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Happy Peter, that could thus appeal to the omniscient Redeemer that He was his Beloved!

"Jesus saith unto him, Feed my lambs." The great Shepherd in these words seals Peter's forgiveness. Only let us remember that it was to reconciled and penitent Peter these words were spoken. There is no such thing as the enjoyment of pardon separated from repentance. But though Peter's fall had not blotted his name out of the book of life, had he not annulled his apostleship? No; Jesus saith unto him, "Feed my lambs."

"My lambs." How endearing is this expression! And from the mouth, too, of the holy Lamb of God! Here are embodied all the tenderness and affection of which the poverty of language will admit. But who are Christ's lambs? Not the unconverted young – not even though they may be within the outward fold of the Church, and have Christ's name put upon them, if they are still unconverted; though it is out of the families of His people that the Lord specially gathers souls to Himself, and though churches, ministers, and parents are charged with very solemn responsibility to watch over the young, and to commend the service of the loving Saviour to them. And not those who have made the profession for the first time that they are the Lord's, if the profession be not a true one, if they have never been awakened to feel that one thing is needful, never fled to Christ for refuge, and never turned away from the world to rest in Christ as their portion, But they are young or recent converts. Especially they include dear young Christians, pious youth, or children who have just entered in at the strait gate and begun to make acquaintance with the realities and glories of the spiritual world. They include those who, after learning in a more or less painful measure how sinful and lost they are have begun to hope in believing that Jesus is able and willing to save them to the uttermost; who have seen so much of Christ in the Word as to make Him the Alpha and Omega of their desires and hopes and aims – to be His, to follow Him, to love Him, to serve Him, but whose wounds – the wounds produced by a sense of sin – have not been thoroughly healed, or are ready, if rudely touched, to bleed afresh. They include those who – though they may have little to tell of their experience, and though they may be very ignorant of many important truths – have yet got the heart right with God, the heart that loves His name and law, and day and Word, and Church and people. They include those who, having tasted of the graciousness of the Lord, and having no heart to engage in any duty without a sense of His supporting presence, are ready to conclude that all is gone if their Beloved withdraw for a moment, who have yet to learn to stretch the wings of faith, and to pierce through every intervening cloud to an unseen, abiding Christ. They are those who are equally inexperienced in the workings of their own hearts and the difficulties of the Christian life, and are therefore liable to be at once prostrated by temptation, or to fall a prey to the wily insinuations of the hireling. They are those in whom the lineaments of the blessed Saviour's image are like those of an infant, where there is much to excite love and pity, and much also that calls for wise, judicious, and tender management. Such are Christ's lambs. They are dear to Him; and He has provided that they be fed with food convenient for them. The good of the Church requires it; for if the lambs perish, the Church's hope is lost. He has provided green pastures for them, and He has commanded His servants to see to it that they feed them diligently and tenderly. Only those who love Him, and have been called by His grace, are employed and sanctioned by Him in this work. None but converted souls can understand the case of converts. And this is the chief proof of love which He desires from His servants, that they lay themselves out to win souls, and when they are won, tenderly to care for and feed them. Woe then to the hireling shepherd who scatters the lambs! And ill shall it fare even with the ignorant, though honest, shepherd who drives when he should lead them, who gives them strong meat instead of milk, or who quiets their fears by teaching them self-confidence.

Does it seem strange, then, that to fiery, impetuous Peter such a charge should be given? Our wonder will cease if we consider the effects on Peter of his knowledge of himself and his experience of the Lord's grace. He had grown in humility and in self-distrust. His conscience, purged from sin, was tender. His spiritual senses were sharpened to see sin where others might fail to see it. He had learned the devices of Satan, and the deceitfulness of his own heart. He was filled with shame in thinking of his sin, so that he felt, ere he could administer reproof to others, that he needed to administer it afresh and unsparingly to himself. His experience of mercy had softened and subdued him, and filled his heart with patience and gentleness. None more ready to bear a brother's burden, more slow to condemn, more at home in dealing with the broken heart, than those who feel how much Christ has forgiven them.

Peter therefore had a heart for the work of feeding Christ's lambs, and peculiar aptitude for it. Did he meet one of them mourning under the complaint that the Lord had clean forgotten him? Peter would tell him to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself on his God: – Can a woman forget her child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? She may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Did he see another leaning wistfully over the hedge of the green pastures towards the forbidden paths of worldly pleasures? Peter would run to snatch him from the danger. Did he see another sporting himself in the vain imagination that he had become wiser than his teachers? Peter would bid him stand in the good old paths, and attend to wholesome instruction. Did he see another take his determined stand in one corner of the field of truth to the exclusion of the rest? Peter would warn him that he was engendering spiritual disease, and already gave signs of a distempered appetite. And did another meet him with the piteous complaint that iniquities prevailed against him, that his prayers were so worthless, his heart so untamed and unkept, his affections so fickle, his love so cold, that it seemed to him as if he did but beat the air? Peter would direct his eyes to Him who "will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax," and pointing to the Cross and righteousness and intercession of Christ, bid him plant his foot there, and feel a security which all pollution and all guilt could not overcome, and be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And did yet another meet him with the still more mournful complaint that he had sinned beyond the reach of mercy? Peter would say, "I obtained mercy; and in me behold a pattern of God's long-suffering, and learn not to limit that worth and that grace which are infinite."

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" It is as if He had said, "Is it not a solemn question that I ask thee? How few are there who even profess to love me! And of those few how many do but feign it, or deceive themselves with the thought that they love me, while, if they could but snatch forgiveness from me, they care not for my name or honour. Consider also, is love – fervent, steadfast love, the love befitting an apostle and shepherd – consistent with denying me? Ponder this well, Peter." Not that Jesus would have Peter doubt the truth of his love; but assuredly He desired that, for Peter's good and usefulness, there should be yet more searching of heart. And let us take the question home to ourselves. Are there any of us, professing to love Christ, who shrink from truly confessing Him before men? Can we recall a season when we acted as though we were ashamed of His Gospel, His ways, His people; or if we did confess Him, made the confession of Him easy to flesh and blood by making it in the spirit of wrath and vain boasting! Then let us inquire whether this be consistent with unfeigned love to Him. If we find that it is consistent with some poor measure of love, we shall certainly find also that we do not love as we ought.

"He saith unto him, Feed my, sheep." Jesus renews the charge, only He makes it more extensive: "Feed my flock – the lambs and the sheep. Thus would I have you evince your

love for me. Warn and caution them, lest they fall after thy example. Thou art now converted; strengthen thy brethren.”

“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Christ would have Peter to remember – ever to remember – the wondrous mercy he had experienced in being restored and forgiven, that there might be, as it were, a pillar set up here to which he might look back at every succeeding step of his journey; and we cannot doubt that where he now is – before the throne of God – he often looks back to this period, and from its review gathers fresh impulse to join in the song, “To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

“Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?” He felt that he deserved to be distrusted. How vividly was the night of his denial present to his mind! If we go astray from Christ we may expect our love to be mistrusted. Our own consciences will mistrust us; the Word of God in every page will lead us to mistrust ourselves. But can we say with Peter, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee?” Thou knowest all our sins and our follies; Thou knowest there is that in us which would humble us to hell; Thou knowest that every duty is defiled with our sins, yea, that we are altogether vile; but Thou knowest also that they are our grief and our shame; we groan and are burdened under our corruptions; for we would love Thee with pure hearts fervently. Oh, increase this spark of love! Send down from heaven that fire which would kindle our hearts into a whole burnt-offering! Oh, hasten the time when, through Thine unbounded mercy, there shall not be found in us one cold thought of Thee any more.

“Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” Is it so? Then feed my sheep: – thus may you find full expression for your devoted attachment to me; and “inasmuch as ye do it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye do it unto me.” “Feed my sheep” – guide them to the pastures of my Word, defend them from the ravening wolves; take the oversight of them; and when I, the chief Shepherd, shall appear, thou, Peter, shalt receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

This subject speaks particularly to ministers; but it speaks also to every individual.

We have here disclosed to us the heart of Christ – of the meek and lowly yet jealous Lamb of God. He who searches the heart now says to each one of us, “Lovest thou me?” Do we love Him? It is a bad sign if we seek to evade the question. Does our closet, with its omitted duties – does our heart, with its indulged lusts – answer in the negative? Or do we rather, under a deep impression of the deceitfulness of our hearts, do we say in the first instance, Lord, search and try us? So far it is well. Let us, then, take the question home with us, and there lay bare our souls to the scrutiny of the Word, which is Christ’s instrument in searching the heart. If you love the Redeemer you may expect that He will shine upon His own work, make it known to you, and give you a blessed interview in realizing it. If you love Him not, better, surely, to awaken to this consciousness now than to have the mask pulled off at a judgment-seat.

There are many whom I need not ask whether they love Christ. Their disregard of His law, their indifference to prayer and to communion with Him, show that there is no love to Christ in their hearts. Remember that there is another word written: “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.” That is, Let him be accursed till the day of judgment; let the curse of God abide on him for ever. If he love not Christ, let the whole creation say, “Anathema Maranatha.” Can any of us be indifferent to such a sentence as this? O, may God take away the heart of stone!

From a mercy-seat Christ now addresses each one of you, “Lovest thou me – me, who am fairer than the sons of men, who am the brightness of my Father’s glory and the express image of His person, who laid down my life that sinners such as you might have eternal life, who for years have been standing knocking at the door of your hearts.” You cannot, indeed,

reason yourself into loving Christ, infinitely amiable and worthy of love though He be. Neither are you to keep back from Him whom you have rejected and pierced, till you find your heart going out in love to Him; for then you would never come to Him. But as a lost sheep you are to come to Him as the Shepherd of souls that He may restore and renew you. Under His own Spirit's teaching you are to believe His wondrous love to sinners such as you and me; and that love, when realized and brought home, will conquer, melt, and draw you.

[August 1911]

A Sermon.

By the REV. DONALD GRAHAM, Shieldaig, Lochcarron.

Preached at Opening of Synod in Inverness Church
on 4th July, 1911.

“Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider” – Isaiah 52:13-15.

Isaiah was a prophet of Judah, and he is supposed to have been of the royal family. He began to prophesy in the reign of Uzziah, and continued his ministry till after the death of Hezekiah. He is said to have been put to death, being sawn asunder by order of Manasseh when that king was in the height of his enormous wickedness. Isaiah has been called “the evangelical prophet,” on account of his having plainly foretold so many things concerning the birth, ministry, sufferings, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the glorious times of the Gospel. We may say that this book is most admirably adapted to promote the spiritual edification and consolation of believers.

The design of these prophecies was threefold: *first*, to declare to the Jewish people the greatness of their wickedness; *second*, to exhort all classes among them to repentance on account of their transgressions; *third*, to comfort those who truly feared the Lord with

promises of divine support, to assure them of the coming of Christ, and to encourage their expectation of the future enlargement and permanent glory of the Church.

The account of the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and the destruction of his army in answer to the prayer of Hezekiah, is a remarkable instance of the omnipotent power of God, and of His love and care for His people. "For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses" (Isaiah 37:35,36).

The most remarkable prophecies delivered by Isaiah relate to three momentous subjects: *first*, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon on account of their sins, and especially the sin of idolatry, and their certain deliverance from that idolatrous city by Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, whom Isaiah foretold by name nearly two hundred years before his birth; *secondly*, the circumstantial particulars concerning the birth, ministry, sufferings, and death of Christ as an atonement for sinners – many of which are described by the prophet with the accuracy of a present observer and eye witness of their fulfilment; *thirdly*, the growing enlargement of the Church in the time of the Gospel dispensation, increasing in numbers and prosperity until "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth" in the full millennial glory.

This brings us now to consider more particularly our text, and I would wish to draw your attention very briefly to three things in particular.

- I. – The person brought before us here – "my servant";
- II. – The work assigned to this servant, which is the great work of redemption; and
- III. – The effect of this great work; "He shall sprinkle many nations," etc.

I. – The person brought before us in our text, "my servant." He is the Father's servant. He said, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." I may say that the doctrine of the Trinity is very clearly brought before us in our text. In the great scheme of salvation, each person of the glorious Trinity has his own place, and work in the accomplishing of it. God the Father, purposed from all eternity to save some of the lost race of Adam. God the Son, undertook to work out that salvation. And God the Holy Ghost applies the redemption purchased by Christ to the elect. And we may say that those three persons are brought before us in our text. The Father is brought before us here speaking of His own only begotten Son, under the designation of "my servant." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

1. God the Son is the person brought before us under the designation of "my servant." In order to become a servant, He would require to assume human nature, and we find him saying to the Father, "A body hast thou prepared me. Behold I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." He is a divine person who is co-equal with the Father, of whom the Apostle says, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Oh, wonderful love, matchless love, God the Father giving his only begotten Son to be a servant, knowing what that implied! This was an act of pure, free, matchless love, bearing upon the elect. There was nothing in them to cause this love to rest upon them. But there was much, yea, very much in them to cause His wrath to be poured out upon them throughout an endless eternity. And oh, the matchless love of God the Son, in giving Himself for them, knowing full well what He would have to suffer on their behalf. But he says Himself, "For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was

none to uphold; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me.”

2. He is the Father’s servant, being chosen by the Father from all eternity as the Mediator. The Father says, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” He is the Father’s delight, being one with him. “I and the Father are one.” The Father saw His own image in the Son, who was the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.

3. The person of whom the Father says “my servant,” is not only a divine person, co-equal with Himself from all eternity, but He is Immanuel – God in our nature, God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever. This same prophet foretold His birth. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” And again, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” This, then, is the person brought before us under the designation of “my servant.”

II. – Let us now briefly, in the second place, consider the work assigned to the Servant. We have already mentioned that it was the great work of redemption.

When a master engages a servant he has work in view for that servant; and, speaking with all reverence, when God the Father engaged the person of whom He says “my servant,” He had work in view for Him. This wonderful servant tells us what His Master said to Him when He engaged Him. “And he said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for naught and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth.” We see here the work assigned to this servant – it was to bring back the tribes of Jacob, and not only they, but the Gentiles also; which we will have to consider more fully in connection with the last head of our text.

We see from the context that they were in bondage. This brings before us the sad condition in which we are, each and all of us, as we are by nature, Jews and Gentiles. We are all lost and ruined under the curse of a broken law, exposed to the wrath of an infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and holy God, who is a consuming fire to sin, and shall continue to be so to every sinner who shall not be found in Christ. Oh, my dear fellow sinner, may the Lord enable you to lay this to heart while it is to-day while you are in the room of mercy. Tomorrow may be too late. We do not know what a day or an hour may bring about. “To-day, if ye hear my voice, harden not your hearts.” I may relate an anecdote of Rowland Hill. He said that no sermon should be preached without having three R’s in it – the first R being ruin by the Fall; the second R, redemption by Christ; and the third R, regeneration by the Spirit. We have these great and important doctrines implied in our text. The Fall brought mankind to an estate of sin and misery; yea, we are ruined by the Fall. I know that many in our day deny the doctrine of the Fall, but that does not alter the fact, and those who deny the Fall deny the imputation of Adam’s first sin to his posterity. If there were no Fall, there was no need of redemption. And if there were no imputation of sin, there is no need for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. But the whole Word of God testifies to the contrary. “Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one

man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:18,19).

As long as man continued in a state of innocence, he was able perfectly to keep all the commandments of the holy law of God, and in this way to secure eternal life for himself and his posterity.

"But in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This was the tenor of the covenant of works. The first Adam was a covenant head, and he became bankrupt, and ruined himself and his posterity. But the last Adam – Jesus Christ – is the covenant head of His people, and He came in the fulness of the time appointed to repair the ruins. And in order to do so, He not only had to give perfect obedience to the divine law, but He had to suffer the penalty, and pay the debt already incurred by the Fall, if any of the lost race of Adam were to be saved. So He took their place under the law, and in taking their place He took their nature, in order that He would have a nature in which He could suffer. Oh, let us consider a little of what is indicated in this; Immanuel, God in our nature. The Creator of heaven and earth assumed human nature. The eternal One took our nature. That divine person, who was in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, He, in whom the divine nature subsisted in its infinite fulness from all eternity, became man, and so was and continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever. In both natures then, but in one divine person, He accomplished the great work of redemption. In doing so He is brought before us in our text as the Father's servant. "My servant."

His sufferings, which were an eminent part of the great work, are suggested to us in these words – "As many were astonished at thee, his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men." Oh, think of what He suffered from the stable to Calvary. His sufferings began while He was yet an infant. That wicked tyrant, Herod, as soon as he heard that the King of the Jews was born, sought to kill Him. Earth and hell raged against Him. He says Himself in the 22nd Psalm: –

"But as for me, a worm I am,
And as no man am priz'd:
Reproach of men I am, and by
The people am despis'd.

All that me see laugh me to scorn;
Shoot out the lip do they;
They nod and shake their heads at me,
And, mocking, thus do say," etc.

I remember hearing the great Dr. Kennedy correcting the way in which even some good men used to express the obedience and sufferings of Christ. He said that some would express it in this way – "the obedience of His life and the sufferings of His death," as much as to convey the idea that Christ had no sufferings in His life, and no obedience in His death. But he said, "It would be more correct and better to put it this way – 'The obedience and sufferings of Christ's life and death.' He had obedience and sufferings combined in His life, and He had obedience and sufferings combined in His death, until He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do, when He cried with a loud voice, 'It is finished.'" We may say that the highest act of His obedience was performed on the cross when He said, "It is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." He bowed his head in full resignation to the will of the Father. It was while on the cross that the vials of divine wrath were poured out upon Him, to the full infliction of the penalty due to the elect, a countless number which no man can number. Oh, think of Him, the spotless Lamb of God, suffering as if He were the greatest of malefactors. He suffered in His soul and body. His divine nature could not suffer, but it was a divine person that was on the cross, and cried, "It is finished." So we find the Apostle Paul enjoining upon the Elders of Ephesus, saying, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and all

the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

He paid the ransom price for His people. He bought them with His own blood. O what love! O, that it would melt our hard hearts, and constrain us to take up our cross daily, and follow Him, through good report and bad report. “Ye are bought with a price, be not the servants of men.” He died that we might live, He died the death that was due to us. He was willing that the guilt due to the sins of His people should be imputed to Him, and He knew what that would cost Him. He says, “The Lord God has opened my ear and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheek to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting.”

Let us not forget the love of the Father in giving His only begotten Son. This is the fountain from which flows the salvation of lost sinners. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” And woe be to all those who will not believe in the Son; they shall not see life, but shall eternally be damned. Oh, my dear friends, seek to lay this to heart in time. “Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying Lord, Lord, open to us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.”

III. – I must not detain you. Let us now consider very briefly in the third and last place the effect of this work. “So shall he sprinkle many nations, the kings shall shut their mouths at him.” This opens a door of hope for the Gentiles; not only the Jewish nation is now to be converted, but the Gentiles. All the nations of the world who hear the Gospel, the glorious message of peace and reconciliation, are invited to come to Christ. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.”

This is the work of the third person of the glorious Trinity, to sprinkle nations. It is the work of the Spirit to quicken sinners. Sinners must be quickened in order to feel their need of a Saviour. And oh, how much we need the convincing power of the Holy Ghost! “When he will come he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.” Then the sinner begins to feel his need of sprinkling, and cannot rest until he is brought to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. It is the Spirit that applies the redemption purchased by Christ, “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.” And oh, what a change is now wrought by the Spirit in the soul, when the sinner, being a little before a condemned criminal at the bar of Jehovah, is now enabled by faith to appropriate Christ presented to the eye of faith, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Beholding Christ crucified, the poor sinner is enabled to believe in Him, to receive Him, and embrace Him as He is freely offered to him in the Gospel.

I am not to detain you, to endeavour to describe the change of state and feeling that this poor sinner has now. When the sentence of condemnation pronounced against him is removed, and a full and free pardon now proclaimed by the Judge in the soul, “Thy sins which are many are forgiven,” no tongue can express the flood of joy and happiness, and comfort that enters the soul at that moment.

There was, first, a melting of heart before the love of the Father in giving His own beloved Son to die for me – wretched me – a vile, sinful worm, whose desert it was to be in the flames of an eternal hell. And there was, secondly, a melting of heart in view of the love – the matchless love – of the Son, who came from the bosom of the Father to die for me – wretched me. And there was, thirdly, a melting of heart in view of the love of the Spirit in coming into my vile and corrupt heart to convince me of my need of a Saviour. But I must stop. No tongue can express the joy and happiness of this poor sinner, now saved by free grace. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

The second thing that we were to notice in connection with this head of our text is, “the kings shall shut their mouths at him.” This has partly been accomplished already, some in mercy and others in judgment. It shall finally be fulfilled at the last judgment. Kings and queens shall be converted, as recorded in the Word of God. “The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him” (Psalm 72:10,11).

Let me now say a few words, in the way of application, to my fellow sinners who are still unconverted. I ask you, what do you think of this wonderful person? Have you seen anything of His beauty and excellence as a Saviour? Have you seen your need of Him to save you from hell? There is no other way in which you can be saved. You cannot save yourself. And if you continue to reject Him until death, you shall be eternally damned. O, that we would see Him as the Church (the spouse) saw Him when she charged the daughters of Jerusalem, saying, “I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.” O, blessed sickness! O, that it were prevalent in our midst, that it were infectious in our day among our congregations. O, that we would see and hear of many laid up with it, many put to their places of retirement with it. You will remember the answer they gave her “What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O, thou fairest among women; what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?” So she goes on to relate the loveliness of her Beloved: “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.” And she ends by saying, “His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O, daughters of Jerusalem”

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

[September 1911]

Brief Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. DAVID CAMPBELL,
Free Church, Dunnet, Caithness.

Ordained 4th June, 1844. Died 26th February, 1876.

[A friend has kindly sent us these valuable, though incomplete, notes of a sermon by a worthy minister of the past in the far north, along with an obituary sketch which appeared at the time of his death. – ED.]

“O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more” – Psalm 39:13.

There is, if we may so speak, a two-fold preparation for death, with which every member of Christ’s mystical body is more or less acquainted. There is a preparation which takes place in the day of true conversion, when they are delivered from the power of spiritual death, and there is a preparation that arises from the work of sanctification in the soul, when they are weaned more and more from the world and the things thereof, and the whole man – soul and affections – is set upon another and better world. But although we say that every member of Christ’s mystical body is more or less acquainted with this two-fold preparation for death, yet we do not say that they are at all times favoured with such a happy frame of mind as would make them long for their departure to another world. For there are times and seasons with them, when sin lies very heavy upon them, ready to sink them lower than the grave, and when He, who can comfort, is far from them. All their former experience is lying under a cloud, so that they are ready to call in question if ever the Lord made Himself known to them, and therefore all before them is dark and distressing. Now, when this is the case, is it any wonder that they should cry out as the Psalmist did, when death knocked at his door, “O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more”? O my friends, it is the new creation alone that prepares for death. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

The words of our text may be illustrated by a few practical observations.

1. Here we may observe, first, that death is represented to us in the words of our text as a going hence, or as a departure out of this world. The Apostle Paul speaks of his own death in a somewhat similar manner, when he says: “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” Now; this departure refers more to the soul than to the body, because the body is committed to the grave and remains there asleep in the dust until the morning of the resurrection, but the soul departs immediately, when it leaves the body, to

Him who gave it. We find the Lord saying to the rich man who had heaped together much of this world's goods, and who was forming plans for the enjoyment of them, "Thou fool, this night thy soul is required of thee." The union that subsists between soul and body, although very close and intimate, death shall break, for "it is appointed unto men once to die," and none is able to resist death. Death not only dissolves the union that subsists between soul and body, but it also breaks the union which is formed between husband and wife, and between parent and child. And when once these unions are broken by death, they shall never be formed any more, for we are told that at the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. Death not only dissolves these unions, but the departure that it creates will be for ever. "For when a few more years are come," says Job, "we shall then go the way whence we shall not return."

A sinner, dying in his sins, cannot return any more to this world, even should he be willing, because although there is a way from earth to hell, there is no way from hell to earth. None ever yet returned from thence. The rich man wished Lazarus to go and tell his brethren not to follow him, because he could not go himself. And so, on the other hand, a soul in union with the Lord would not return any more for a thousand worlds. If the tree falls to the north or south, in the place where it falls, there it shall be (Ecclesiastes 11:3). Heaven and hell receive all that leave the world, but none return any more.

2. Further, death is not only a going hence, but they who go are said to "be no more." Now, this "no more" does not mean that the soul is to become extinct, or dead when it leaves the body, because the soul is to exist in another world. Neither is the body to be annihilated, or reduced to nothing, when separated from the soul, for although it is reduced to putrefaction and dust, it is not reduced to nothing. The form or shape of the body may be lost, but none of the substance of which it is formed can be lost. We are told that He will command the earth and the sea to yield up what was committed to them, and we also find the Apostle Paul saying that this mortal, meaning the body, shall yet put on immortality, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:53). But what is meant is that neither soul nor body is to be found in the place they once occupied, so that with respect to this world, they are to be "no more." The poor man is not found any more in his cottage, nor yet the rich man in his mansion. The minister is no longer found in the pulpit, nor yet the pious parent worshipping in his family, and the place he once occupied in the house of God here is now occupied by another. When the prophet Elijah was translated from this world to another, we are told that the sons of the prophets persevered in seeking him for three days, but they sought him in vain, because he was "no more" in this world.

Death not only takes us away from our place in this world, but it also takes us away from those we love here. And indeed to a truly pious man it is no small affliction to be separate from those he often took counsel with and with whom he delighted to wait upon the Lord. We find that good king Hezekiah was deeply affected with this thought, when the time of his departure seemed to be at hand. "For," says he, "I said, I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living. I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of this world." Attempts have been made to put a stop to the progress of disease, and to avert the arrow of death, but all at length will be of no avail, for, says Job, "Thou prevailest for ever against him and he passeth. Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away."

3. But, thirdly, we observe to you that these two things greatly affected the Psalmist and lead him to say, "O spare me that I may recover strength." From this cry, we find that even those who are in covenant with the Lord may be afraid of death. And what, perhaps, will you ask is the reason? Oh, it is because, although believers are reconciled to the Father through the blood shed on Calvary, yet it does not necessarily follow that they are reconciled to death, and that the love of life here is altogether extinguished. It is, my friends, indeed true that the terror or fear of death is the mountain that faith removes, yet it is only strong faith that can

remove this mountain. And although it is said that Christ came to “deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage,” yet it was not to deliver them entirely from the painful apprehensions of death so much as to deliver them from the dreadful consequences of death. For we find that Christ Himself, when He was approaching death, was not without His fears, and hence His request to His Father, “If it be thy will, let this cup pass from me.” And again, it is said of Him by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.” (The notes regrettably end here.)

[September 1911]

Notes of Communion Sermons.

By the late REV. ARCHIBALD COOK, Daviot.

Preached at Dunnet, Caithness, in the Years 1861-62.

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy” – Revelation 3:4.

These are the words of Him with whom there is no respect of persons, whose eyes are like a flame of fire searching the hearts of the children of men, and who will yet fix our eternal state before angels and a holy God. These words were spoken to the Church of Sardis. Sardis was very popular, and so were the ministers of Sardis. They thought themselves very good, but there was a piercing eye that searched them and saw their evil doings.

I shall consider, as the Lord may aid:

1. What is meant by the garments spoken of, and by the keeping of them clean; 2. The difficulty of keeping these garments clean in a sinful world;
3. The promise given: “They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.”

Every child of God has a garment in the way of justification. On the day that the soul closes with the offer of salvation the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to him. This garment cannot be defiled. The righteousness of the saints is in the Lord Himself, for He is their righteousness. They have another righteousness, and that is, a drop of spiritual life in the soul. We hear much of faith nowadays. The cry is “Faith, faith, faith.” Cartloads of faith! The faith which is so much spoken of is just a giving of assent to what is heard, such as people give to the contents of a newspaper. But when you come to Jordan, you will find yourself without it. My friends, true faith is nothing else but a drop of the infinite purity of God, which seeks back to the fountain from whence it came.

There is another garment the child of God has, viz., the garment of profession, and to be preserved from defiling that garment is a great mercy. Men may take up religion before religion takes up them. There are many who, when they come to grapple with Jordan, will not have so much comfort as to say that it was concern for their souls that made them begin the worship of God in their families. One may take up a profession of religion from the demands of a natural conscience. There are many whose conscience will not allow them to live like other men. They will not go to bed nor rise in the morning without prayer. They observe family worship and attend public ordinances, and go through the world and into eternity without the Lord, and will be found at the left hand on that day when He makes up His

jewels. I think the cause of this is some secret sin unrevealed to them, hidden deep in their hearts. Think of last night. You had some concern for your soul and some desire to live for eternity. Where is it to-day? You let it slip away, you quenched it by sleep, and you have no word about it. There is nothing in the world so much despised as a drop of soul concern. You are there who were not ashamed to go home drunk, to go home from dancing and balls, but you would be ashamed to go home from the back of a rock praying for your soul.

The oftener the poor child of God prays or reads the Bible, or goes to public ordinances, the clearer views he attains of eternity, of heaven and of God. There are some poor creatures that got a glimpse of eternity, and were it not for the secret hand that supported them, they could not have endured it five minutes. I have often thought that the poor children of God when going to the means of grace will have little word of bed or food. A little straw in a corner would satisfy them. In the place where I dwell, I have asked people returning from the means of grace – “Were they kind to you?” “Oh yes, very kind; plenty meat and bed and clothing.” I would then ask them, “What was the text of the sermon?” “Oh, really, I don’t remember.” Oh, carnal professors, no wonder though hell will be full of such as you. You, poor child of God, you would say, “Is there a corner that I may get into?” But those who have the world in their eye want the highest seat, that everyone may see them.

It is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul to destroy its love for its idols. I am sure that if the soul was taken away from its idols it would be like a newborn babe. It is in such a soul that there is the broken heart. It is wonderfully sweet to sit at the feet of Jesus. My friends, if you have but three words – the publican had but three words, and they were heard in heaven – if you have but three, they will do your soul eternal good. Those who have a broken heart must be conformed to Him whom they will eternally enjoy. To keep the garment of profession clean is not a little with God, and He will show this yet before heaven, earth, and hell. My friends, the Lord must have the whole heart or none. And I must say that the devil will not be content without the whole. Is he not a covetous spirit? You, poor sinner, you have spent sixty years in his service, and he might give you these few days to prepare for eternity, but he will not. Oh, he is a covetous beast!

I have seen young people speaking together, and they would choose the darkest corner; but after the marriage took place the young wife might be seen standing in the door, and saying, “Did you see my husband?” I have also seen young people who, when the Lord began His work in their souls, were hiding in corners, afraid to be seen in public. They were seeing their own hearts so bad, and themselves so unlike the profession. But when the Lord manifested Himself to them as their own Saviour and Husband, they could bear witness in public for Him. But you will see those at the Lord’s table to-day who never lost a night’s sleep nor shed a tear because Christ was absent from their souls, and they are as light as they can be with their ornaments. They are a dishonour to the Lord’s cause and people. My friends, it is a part of the glory of the Church that He will confess them at the great day. The glory of God demands of every soul brought to spiritual light to show this light to the world. But, young people, keep from an open profession until you know something about God, about Christ, and about your own soul, for your expense will run out, and then you will become a thief. There is an infinite fulness in Jesus. We hear many professors speaking of the fulness of Jesus, but what do they know about it? The Lord Jesus, when He undertook to save the Church, knew the expense, for He had to pay the cost Himself. My friends, there is nothing that the poor soul is so much afraid of as not to be kept in tenderness of spirit and brokenness of heart. You that have this fear will be carried through with a clean garment, to the praise of His grace. But you, my young friends, beware of hastily making an open profession.

Some think that it is an easy thing to confess sin and seek mercy, but I think it is the most difficult thing the Lord’s people have to do. Much is needed before there can be a spiritual

confession of sin. There must be a drop of the pure life of God let into the soul, that the soul may see the infinite purity of God and the vile, dishonouring nature of sin, and may see sin in the heart working against the very being of God. There must also be felt divine influences flowing from God in Christ, suitable to the sinner's case. My friends, it is a spiritual sight of sin in this way that produces true confession of sin; and it is the mercy of God coming through the blood that enables the sinner to seek mercy. The Church of God was the eternal electing choice of His love. It was a sovereign act of God from eternity that determined that they should be partakers of His glory; hence Christ said, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." Christ was the first object of the Father's eternal love, and then the elect in Him, and here the eternal God and the objects of His love met in Christ in the covenant of grace from eternity. The Scripture saith, "There is no new thing with God." Everything that befell the Church was clear before His omniscient eye. He knew all her trials and everything that was before her, and had provision prepared to meet her case. To the poor souls that have been wounded for sin or by the old serpent, one glimpse of the Saviour when they come to Jordan will heal all their wounds through eternity. When the poor souls are brought home to glory the heart of God has such infinite delight in them that He, as it were, feels for the many stripes they suffered in the wilderness, but the poor soul cries, "Less than this would not bring me here."

The devil had such pure enmity against the being of God that he arose up to take the throne and to destroy God. When God cast him out of heaven to earth, no material substance was suitable for him, as he was a spirit. He then took possession of man's soul because it was formed after the image of God. The devil said to the Lord, "You put me out of heaven, but before I will go out of this, You must come out of heaven." When the devil rose up against God, his revolt was pure enmity against the very being of God, but when man sinned he fell by temptation. Those who commit the unpardonable sin are guilty of pure enmity against the being of God. But there was a surety provided for the elect, so that they are preserved from this sin. We hear some saying that one drop of Christ's blood is sufficient to save a thousand worlds, but, my friends, a complete atonement was required for every sinner given to Christ by the Father. His blood was drained as completely from His body as this bread is separated from the wine.

My friends, the cross is an ornament that everyone is not honoured with. They only have it to whom is given a drop of life from the fountain of spiritual influences that makes them find out a throne of grace, and from the throne of grace they know the bosom of God, and thence comes out "the unction from the Holy One," whereby they know all things. The cross makes them strangers in the world, and weans them from the company of the world, and makes them know that they are in the wilderness, and causes them to live in sight of Jordan. By the cross, their old sins are brought to remembrance, and thence arises the broken and contrite spirit. When David was driven out of Jerusalem by his own son, Shimei came out to curse him. One of the servants of David said, "Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." "Oh no," said David, "the Lord hath said unto him, curse David. Although you take off his head, you cannot take off the head of what is in my bosom." The devils set a court in hell to plot as to how they might make Joseph commit sin. They contrived to go into that vile woman, Potiphar's wife, as the instrument of their purposes. But that very night the Lord prepared Joseph for meeting with them. He said, "I will lie in prison until I rot, to the day of judgment ere I sin," and the prison was as dark to Joseph as to others.

My friends, the Lord's table is the most solemn place we can be in until we meet at the day of judgment. And some have felt it more solemn, because they knew that if they were prepared here, they would be safe at last. Be sure that you have some word from God Himself that you can venture your soul upon for eternity. Hence the Lord's servant said, "Remember the word unto thy servant upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." My friends, some of the

Lord's people have obtained such a view of the purity and holiness of God that there remains a tenderness on their spirits, a fear of committing sin, and a savour of divine things. The carnal world sees nothing in this ordinance but bread and wine, and they think that the Lord's people never saw anything else. But you, poor people of the Lord, that have received a glimpse of the purity of God, and a broken heart for sin, which will keep you humble unto the day of your death – (although the beginning of this life was as small as a single thought, it will never die, because it is connected with the life of God) – be concerned for your soul, and let it be above the things of the world and everything concerning your body, for the promise is that His own shall never want, because with them is bound up His own glory. I have known persons grasping the world with their two hands, and it would run through their fingers like sand. Remember, you that have come to profess His name, that you profess to have nothing in your eye but God and your soul, and to have engaged to be on His side unto the day of your death. It is on these conditions that I give the elements to you. I take God to witness, and the walls of this house and this congregation, that it is on these conditions I give them, and if you don't take them on these terms it is at your peril.

Whatever breaking the soul experiences, unless it is melted by redeeming love it will never run in the mould of the Word. This divine melting brings with it brokenness of heart and desires for communion with God. It not only casts out the old furniture, but brings in new. I have often thought of that passage in Jeremiah (31:25), "I have replenished every sorrowful soul." Ruth said to Boaz, "When you intended to marry me, why did you leave me so long in the despising of the open field?" "Oh, just that you might know how to sympathise with others in a like state." Christ suffered temptation that He might be able to sympathise with those that are tempted. The poor soul, when he gets grace, says, "Take me with you to heaven, that I may not be sinning here." The Lord replies, "Well, if I take you to heaven before you suffer the bitterness of the Cross, you will want as much of the sweetness when you come to glory." "Oh, then," says the poor soul, "I will suffer to the day of judgment before I lose a drop of the sweetness when I come to glory."

Carnal professors think that if they get faith, they will get to heaven, but the children of Israel when they passed Jordan, never got possession of a footbreadth of the land but by the sword, and less than that will not do you. When the children of Israel were commanded to slay all the enemies in the land and not to touch the accursed thing, they spared what was for their own profit and pleasure. And the Lord said that what they spared would be prickles in their eyes and thorns in their sides. When the people of the Lord spare their idols and lusts, these will be prickles in their eyes and thorns in their sides unto the day of their death. But the Canaanites were permitted to be put out little by little for fear that the wild beasts should increase in the land. The Lord left sin in the souls of His own people to keep down the wild beasts, spiritual pride, carnal security and self-righteousness, that are more devouring to the soul than Satan himself. Some profess religion that they may get a little gain of the world. Like Hamor and Shechem, they would undergo Jacob's circumcision for Diana, his daughter, and his riches. Others profess religion for honour, like Saul, who would have Samuel to honour him before the people. Some professors have a secret sin in the bottom of their souls unknown to themselves, that will seal their eternal damnation. The Lord's people have a besetting sin unknown to any but God and themselves, that will keep them humble till the day of their death. The Lord's people may commit sin such as neither men nor angels would understand why they were left to commit it. But because they were in God's purpose in the covenant of grace, they obtain repentance and pardon. The Lord's piercing eye, that is as a flame of fire, saw from eternity every wandering of the heart from Himself, and He had provision made in the covenant to supply every want of His people. It is here that the Lord's people get their standing for eternity. Although there were as many of the Lord's people

together as there are people present here, two of their cases might not be the same, yet the Lord knows each of them, and has provision for each of their cases.

When man fell from God, the devil put a rope around the neck of the elect, and was leading them to hell. But Christ met Satan, and asked him, "Where are you going with them?" "To hell," was the reply. Christ took the rope and put it around his own neck, saying, "Ere they go there, I will be hanged in their room."

My friends, when the soul obtains a sight of the purity and holiness of God through the secret influences of the blood, there will be a tenderness on the spirit and a fear of committing sin. Hence some say, "Oh that I was preserved from being a reproach to the cause of Christ!" Keep your eye on Christ. An old divine was asked by another why he spoke so much of Christ. He said in reply, "Do you see my finger on my hand? As long as I keep it there, there is a white spot, but as soon as I remove my finger the blood returns. So it is with me. As long as I keep my heart on Christ, all is well, but whenever I remove it from Him, the world rushes in." Oh poor soul, be sure to keep near the Lord in secret. I know that the carnal world knows nothing of such experience.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" – Proverbs 25:25.

People in general are very fond of news. Most people know more about their newspapers than their Bibles. They spend more of their precious time in reading the newspaper than the Bible. Hence it is that people are so ignorant of the Word of God. This is one of Satan's devices to make people spend their precious time. My friends, heaven is a far-off country, but there is good news from it, which is "as cold waters to a thirsty soul." The news is from the Lord, but the people of the world never hear the Lord speaking to them any more than the beasts of the field.

I intend, as the Lord may aid, to show:

1. What good news from heaven are;
2. In what way it may be said that heaven is a far-off country;
3. How these good news from a far-off country are "as cold waters to a thirsty soul."

The name of Jesus is so often sounded in our ears that it has become old, but there are some souls in this world that have found the name of Jesus good news. And those who do not find this will burn in hell as sure as the devils. It is this name that has brought any kind of comfort into the world. This world would only be a nursery nursing souls for eternal burnings, unless for this name.

There are three persons in the Godhead, and each person has His particular work to do in the salvation of the soul, and one does not get the glory more than another. But whosoever keeps one of them out of his creed, that Person will keep you out of heaven.

To find out a Saviour in any other way than has been found (if that were possible), would not be an evidence of God's love to sinners. It is far easier to believe that there is a God than a Saviour. In the works of nature, we know that there is a God. We may say that none but God Himself could reveal the Saviour to the soul, for it is written, "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." There are very few that think of appearing before God, but "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The reason why Christ came into the world was to make reconciliation between God and man. There are many that can trifle with the name of God. The reason is because God is at a distance from them. God and man disputed. God became an enemy to man. Why? Because God hates sin. He cannot love Himself without hating sin. When Cain killed his brother, at that moment he was branded a murderer. Judas when he betrayed His Master, was written traitor. You murderer, you

Sabbath breaker, you harlot, the moment you commit those sins of which you are guilty, you are written down before God as murderer, Sabbath-breaker, harlot. Oh you whole-hearted sinners, the hardness of your hearts is seen in your very eyes.

“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” was said before the world. What was the Saviour then? He was the surety of His people. There was a purpose in the Father from eternity regarding sinners, and the same love was in the three Persons in the Godhead. Oh, poor sinners, you think if you will simply get the pardon of sin, you will get to heaven, but you will not. The soul must get new furniture. Oh, you are poor sinners indeed, that reject the Lord, and are content with a form of prayer.

I observe that heaven is literally a far-off country. We read in the Bible of three heavens. The heaven that we see is far-off. We might ascend this heaven and see another. We might ascend the second and see a third. Where God personally dwells with the angels and redeemed spirits is described in the Bible as the third heaven.

The moment that Adam gave his assent to the eating of the forbidden fruit, justice gave him over to the devil as a punishment for his sin, and when any unregenerate sinner commits sin, justice gives him over to the devil as a punishment. Nothing but the fruit of the blood of the Lamb can bring him back. Man fell from the very perfection of holiness to the very perfection of wickedness.

Heaven is so far-off a country that man by his natural understanding cannot have the least right conception of it. Still, there is nothing so easy to the unregenerate man as vain thoughts of heaven. But when the poor sinner begins to seek after it he feels it a far-off country. I have asked the harlot, the drunkard, the swearer, the Sabbath-breaker, What will you do when you come to die? They answer, “Oh, the Lord is merciful, I hope to get to heaven.” Oh the vile creatures, to think that God is at their command! But the poor creature that is brought to follow Him sees somewhat of His sovereignty. There are two experiences that will do a soul good when he comes to Jordan. The one is that he saw himself shut-out by the law, and the other that he saw himself brought in by the Gospel.

When you come to die, your attendance on the means of grace will not be sufficient for you. But if you can put your finger on a passage of Scripture or an ordinance in which you had communion with God, although it was as small as a single thought, the Lord will not lose sight of His own work. We cannot blame God or the devils if we go to hell, but our own two hands. Hence, David says, “The sinners’ hands have made the cords wherewith themselves are bound.” There are many in hell who are saying, “If we knew that our actions would have brought us here, we would not have done them.” There are some who pray morning and evening but they never miss God out of their hearts, and never mourn an absent God. There are other poor creatures, who say, “Oh, if I were free of vain thoughts on the Sabbath, in praying or singing.” There are some poor souls crying “I am lost,” but you are not lost, you are leaning on the arm of the Second Person of the glorious Godhead, and although you are lost you will be found. I was thinking upon that Scripture which says that “Jacob worshipped leaning on the top of his staff” We do not read of Jacob’s having a staff until he was lame. And what made him lame? Wrestling with the angel of the covenant. He was leaning on his staff, and the staff was the promise. O sinner, when you come to grapple with death, praying for pardon will not be enough, but the enjoyment of it. When the unregenerate sinner is grappling with death, the devil and his angels are as thick about him as flies ready to get the beckon of God to take him to hell.

My friends, there is nothing in glory, but the seed of it is in this world. O sinner, if you were in the company of two or three of the Lord’s people who were speaking about the concerns of their eternal state, or reading a chapter in the Bible, you would be sitting on nettles! How would you feel in glory? You would rather be among the devils.

I debar, in the name of the Lord, from His table those that have no concern about their eternal state. You may go, but you may be a child of hell seven times more than you were before. I debar, in the name of the Lord, those that do not keep the worship of God in their families, morning and evening. I debar in the name of the Lord, parents who will allow their children to walk about on Sabbath and not tell them of the concerns of their souls. I debar, in the name of the Lord, you that shun the people of God for your companions, and choose vain company on Sabbath and through the week. There are some people that when anything goes against their natures, their hearts send up the rotten savour of hell, just as when one puts a graip into a dunghill, a rotten smell arises. O my friends, “be not overcome of evil but overcome evil with good.” You are there with your grey hairs that never believed that you had an immortal soul, that never felt anything in the means of grace. O are you going to the table with your heart on your idols and your vain companions? Everything in the creation cries, “Set not your heart on me. I will not go far with you. I am not God. I cannot save you.” Observe that it is a merciful One who is concerned about your salvation.

BRIEF NOTES OF TABLE SERVICES.

(1) We are now at the Lord’s table, and indeed it is an honourable table. “Many kings and prophets have desired to see the things which we see and have not seen them.” What things are these? Christ in the flesh coming to redeem a sinful world to Himself. And you, poor sinner, that got a glimpse of Him in a corner that melted your heart to Him, He will leave you a little while, but He will come again and take you to Himself. O let your thoughts go after Him! When He was sitting at the table among His disciples, it was a dark night, and the sins of an elect world were gathering around Him. Law and justice demanded full payment for sin. Every vain thought, word and action of His people demanded His blood. He loves to see His people coming to Him for something or other, or complaining to Him. It was for that end that, He came into the world, namely, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Go from the table committing your souls to a precious Creator for eternity, praying for eternity, singing for eternity. My friends, all the tables in this world will be drawn, but there is a table appointed that will never be drawn throughout eternity.

(2) Well, you are now at the Lord’s table seeking Jesus who was crucified. Do not be ashamed of His name. You that received something that made you forsake your idols, will not be ashamed to confess Him before an assembled world. The Lord loveth the broken heart for sin. It was sin that made Christ go through the ocean of God’s wrath that He might redeem the objects of His love. Sin is the only thing in the world that the Lord hates. On that night on which He was betrayed He took bread. That night will never be forgotten. It has sent forth a savour that will never pass away through eternity. He will come again and finish His work. He finished a great part of it upon the Cross, but He has a great deal yet to do. A good woman said, “If ever I get to heaven, He has much yet to do in my soul. If I would be taken to heaven in my sins, I would turn a serpent and would sting the Lord of Glory.” Mary washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. That was the fruit of pardon. The Lord never gives a token of the pardon of sin but He gives a token of the sanctification of the soul.

My friends, if ever you got a drop of grace, when you come to Jordan, you will see that you had need of every cross and every trial to draw the soul from its idols. Remember, poor sinner, that one vain thought will do more harm to your soul than all the devils in hell. Poor creature, do they call you a hypocrite? What will they say when the Lord will acknowledge

you to be His own before an assembled world? Many poor sinners are contented with the form of godliness. But there is nothing in the world one should be so much afraid of as starving one's soul. There is nothing so near the Lord as the death of His Son. It is the death of the Saviour that lifted the glory and cause of God in the world.

We read that the Lord's eyes are as a flame of fire. This means that His secret eye observes the actings of the souls of men. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." For my part, I would prefer one spiritual thought to a million of prayers. The secret eye will pierce through the soul. Don't look about you at the Lord's table. You don't know how near you are to consuming fire.

My friends, a person might go so far in religion that the Lord's people – and even the angels and saints in heaven – might think he was a gracious person, when the secret eye sees in him nothing but emptiness to the very bottom. Did you ever see the mercy of God? Did you see it in the death of the Saviour? If not, you never tasted of the mercy of God. O, what love will be seen when He will say concerning some, "Behold me and the children whom thou hast given me." The Lord will not break one of your bones – He will not give you one stroke – but what you will bless Him for through eternity. O, poor worldling, you will yet see all the world burning. All that took away your heart from God you will see in flames, and you will then say, "O that I had thought more of the world to come." One said, in speaking of Jacob, "It is written, Fear not, thou worm, Jacob, for I am thy God." When Jacob was a worm he thrashed the mountains, but when he became a mountain the worms thrashed him.

An old divine once said that man was a ring which dropped from the finger of God into hell, and the Second Person of the Godhead stooped down into hell and lifted the ring and put it on the hand of God. I hope there are none here whose soul never kept them five minutes from the world. If there are, they are miserable creatures. If the greatest sinner here should get a drop of repentance, he would be eternally saved, but it is not every late repentance that ends in glory. It is an awful thing to see a sinner going to eternity without repentance, like the very beasts that perish.

"Do this in remembrance of me." He asked no more from the objects of His love than to remember Him. When He had supped, He gave the bread and wine to His disciples, as I now give them to you in the name of a Triune God, on condition that you will be His through time and through all eternity.

[October 1911]

A SERMON.

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“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?” – Luke 7:41,42.

This parable was spoken by Jesus on a very touching occasion. He had been invited by one of the Pharisees, Simon to name, to eat with him, and had accepted the invitation. We are told that “he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat.” While he was seated there, a striking incident took place. “A woman in the city” who had been an open and notorious sinner, came with “an alabaster box of ointment and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head.” She also “kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.” These marks of sorrow and affection evidently showed the character of a sincere penitent. She had been a great sinner, but she had heard with power, the words of grace and truth from the lips of the great Saviour, and her heart was broken for the sin of her past life. She had evidently got a view of the infinite excellency and preciousness of Christ “as fairer than the children of men,” for she did not hesitate, in the most humble and affecting manner, to express the all-absorbing love and reverence which she had begun to cherish for His adorable person. These things would have been plain to an unbiassed on-looker, but they were not so to the proud self-righteous Pharisee. He could see nothing but the fact that the woman was a sinner, and “spake within himself saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.” Observing that Christ did not repel the poor woman's attentions, he does not draw a conclusion in favour of His condescension and grace, but expresses within himself the doubt whether Christ was a prophet at all, seeing that He allowed “a sinner” to touch Him. What ignorance of Christ and His work of mercy, these thoughts revealed! The omniscient Redeemer saw what was going on in the heart of Simon, and spake the parable of the creditor and the two debtors with a view to teach him and others present, a lesson in gospel truth, which they should not readily have forgotten. The parable was spoken by way of reproof. The grace of God, set forth in it, is a reproof to the pride and self-righteousness of the fallen heart which would hold fast the principle of salvation by works. But on the other hand, no parable can afford more encouragement to the poor sinner who is willing to be an entire debtor to the free mercy of God in Christ, and whose cry is “For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Psalm 25:11). In considering, then, the words before us, in dependence upon the Spirit of truth, let us observe:

- I. – The Creditor; “a certain creditor”;
- II. – The two debtors who owed, one “five hundred pence, and the other fifty”;
- III. – The inability of the debtors: “they had nothing to pay”;
- IV. – The Creditor's forgiveness.

I. – Let us notice that *God is the creditor* to which Christ refers. He is employing figurative language to set forth a certain relation in which the Most High stands to His creatures. A creditor among men is one who gives goods or money to others for a time on the condition of payment or return. God is the creditor of His creatures in the sense that He has given them many privileges in all ages, for which He expects some return at their hands, that shall be honourable to themselves and glorifying to Him. This return, alas, He has not received from fallen sinners of Adam's race. Let us here observe briefly the two chief aspects in which God stands in the relation of creditor to us.

1. He is our creditor in the administration of the covenant of works. He created man in His own image at the beginning, and gave him a holy soul and body that he might employ these in the service of his Maker. He placed our first parents in a beautiful garden, where they walked in all outward comfort as well as enjoyed the favour and converse of God Himself. Still more, He entered into a covenant of life with Adam, as the natural head of the race, the substance of which engagement was a promise of everlasting life to him and his posterity on condition of his perfect obedience, and a threatening of everlasting death as the penalty of disobedience. The Most High thus bestowed upon us many advantages in the First Adam; He gave us a rich stock of goods, and the ability to employ them for his glory. He became our creditor in a high and important sense, and we became His highly favoured debtors, under every obligation to make a suitable return for His kindness. But, sad to say, the covenant was violated. Man broke it by disobedience, and thus abused and cast away all the valuable blessings which he had received, making himself obnoxious to the penalty of eternal death. Here, however, transpired an inexpressible wonder. God, in the riches of His goodness, became our creditor again in the unfolding of a new covenant, designed to meet the desperate case of these ruined debtors. "He restored that which he took not away." This leads us to notice:

2. He is our creditor in the administration of the covenant of grace. The first intimation of the provision of this covenant was made in the promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. The main substance of this covenant, as unfolded through the length and breadth of the Scriptures, is that God entered into an engagement with His only-begotten and eternal Son that He would become, in the fulness of the time, the seed of the woman by the assumption to Himself of a true but holy humanity; that He would enter into conflict with and overcome the old serpent; and that by His holy and stedfast obedience and sufferings unto death, He would obtain eternal redemption from sin, Satan, and the curse, on behalf of an innumerable company of our race. Further, it was arranged that the Holy Spirit would apply this redemption with power to the souls of men. The first part of this covenant, in a way of purchase, was fulfilled in due time by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the second, in a way of application, is now in process of being accomplished.

Let us now observe that God has become our creditor again, in bestowing upon us the various means of grace whereby He communicates the benefits of this great redemption. These means He expects sinners to employ with a view to their salvation and His glory. They are privileges bestowed upon men, which, if rightly improved by divine help, will bring a revenue of praise to God. He gave much in this way to the Jews of the Old Dispensation, but He has given more to us under the New. He has sent us the whole Bible – the completed canon of divine revelation – and every sinner in a Gospel land has now the opportunity of becoming acquainted with its precious contents. He has provided us with a preached Gospel, and has sent forth His Spirit in His powerful operations to convince, quicken, and renew. He has set up His Sabbath in our midst as a sacred day of rest and worship. To some He has given godly relatives and friends, whose word and example are fitted to bring the realities of eternity and salvation near. Our heavenly Creditor has bestowed upon us much valuable goods, and He looks for spiritual revenue to be returned to Him.

It is vain for any to imagine that privileges do not entail responsibilities, and that, because they cannot save themselves, they are not to be diligent in seeking to improve their privileges. It is in connection with the use of means that God blesses and saves His people, and glorifies His name, and those who cast these behind their back, deliberately chose to dishonour God and destroy themselves, to the utmost of their ability. We shall have to give an account of our stewardship at death and the judgment seat.

II. – Let us next observe “the two debtors,” who owe, one five hundred pence, and the other fifty. It is plain that Jesus has here immediately in view the woman and Simon. She had been a great transgressor, and she owed five hundred pence; the Pharisee had been moral and upright in his life, and he owed only fifty.

The Saviour here recognises a distinction which runs through all His teaching that some sinners of the race involve themselves in greater guilt than others. “There is none righteous, no not one.” All sinned and fell in Adam, and all possess a sinful corrupt heart, but some plunge themselves by their actual transgressions into deeper debt to divine justice than others. At the same time, it is not so easy, as it may at first sight appear, to determine who are always the most guilty parties. So much has to be taken into account, that God alone can infallibly determine the exact proportion of guilt in every individual case. He has, however, given us in this parable and elsewhere in Scripture some general rules designed for our guidance and admonition in the matter.

Let us notice, first, the guilt of people possessed of *equal privileges*. To this class the woman and Simon seem to belong. They were both, to begin with, members of the commonwealth of Israel, and had all the privileges of this favoured people. But the woman had trampled upon all outward restraints, and had run riot in the ways of sin and death, while Simon had lived a strict and careful life and had walked in a measure answerable to his light and knowledge. Her guilt was much greater than his, though he was a sinner also in many things, a fact that he does not seem to recognise. Christ allows that the woman is a greater transgressor than Simon, but He does not fail to remind him that he is a transgressor also. Thus, it is the case, my friends, still. We see many brought up in favourable surroundings, but some of these despising their advantages and going headlong into all the vanities and follies of the world, while others appreciate to a certain extent their privileges and are circumspect in their walk and conversation. Let not the former reason in carnal fashion that, because all men are sinners, their course of life does not imply any added guilt, and that it makes no difference how men live, if they are still unregenerate. They may find out something different when they come to die. The impenitent debtor who deliberately accumulates his debt of five hundred pence and refuses to accept the pardon of the gospel, will find out at last that he has chosen for himself a deeper and more dreadful place in hell than his more careful neighbour, although it is an awful thing to go there in any circumstances. The Apostle Paul bears testimony to this in respect of the unbelieving and persecuting Jews who violently opposed the gospel, when he declares that “the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost” (1 Thessalonians 2:16).

Let us, secondly, notice the guilt of people possessed of *unequal privileges*. Those who have been under the sound of the true gospel from their childhood are in deeper debt to God than the heathen who never heard the gospel, or than those who have had only a semblance of it. Let us be assured of this, that the first of these classes is owing the five hundred pence – the others lesser sums in proportion to their peculiar circumstances. Gospel neglecters and despisers are far greater transgressors in God’s sight, however fair their moral character may be, than many in heathen lands who live lives of degradation. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for the Capernaum sinners of Great Britain who have been exalted to heaven with outward privileges, and who shall, if they repent not, be thrust down to the depths of hell. “And that servant which knew his lord’s will, and

prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes, but he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:47,48). And you, who have been accustomed to sound doctrine from your youth, and have had solemn warnings and gracious invitations addressed to you from Sabbath to Sabbath will have much more to account for at last than those who have been brought up in ignorance of these advantages. You are five hundred pence debtors, and stand in unspeakable need of a free forgiveness for abused mercies. O seek it now in the day of mercy, ere it be too late (Isaiah 55:6,7).

III. – The third point in the parable that falls to be noticed is the inability of the debtors; “they had nothing to pay.” This was the case with both parties. The five hundred pence debtor was in irretrievable debt, and the fifty pence debtor was in no better case, for, although he had less to pay, he was equally helpless to meet the just demands of the creditor.

There may be different degrees of guilt, as we have shown, among men in general, but here is a point where they are all on an equal footing: they have “nothing to pay,” nothing to meet the requirements of God’s justice. His justice calls for satisfaction in two special particulars: obedience to divine precepts in all those respects, where there has been disobedience, and satisfaction by suffering for transgression committed. “The wages of sin is death.” Now, where is the sinner that can meet these demands? The disobedient sinner has rendered himself incapable of ever giving the perfect obedience which God’s revealed will justly requires. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.” “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” The best works that the natural man can perform are rotten at the heart. “God made man upright” at the beginning in heart and action, and in justice, He cannot accept anything less now. Poor fallen sinners have therefore nothing to pay by way of obedience to the precept of the law. “By the deeds of the law (the deeds of corrupt sinners and there are no other) no flesh shall be justified in His sight.”

Still more, we have “nothing to pay” in a way of satisfaction to the penalty of disobedience. The sufferings of unholy creatures can never satisfy the holy justice that has been offended. All the sufferings of the lost in hell are never able to satisfy the requirements of divine justice, and so these sufferings never come to an end. Justice requires willing suffering – holy suffering – before its perfect demands can be met, and this is what no fallen sinner can render. “Nothing to pay,” therefore, is the verdict that has to be passed upon every member of our lost race, whatever men may think of themselves or not.

Multitudes in the Church of Rome – yes, and in Protestant Churches also – imagine they can pay their debt to God’s justice; they are working night and day at a thousand labours, supposing that they will make themselves acceptable in His sight. But theirs is a vain delusion. The Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, solemnly declares that “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,” and in so declaring, condemns such legalists, root and branch.

The great difficulty, however, is to get sinners to believe that they have nothing wherewith to pay. None but the Spirit of God can convince them of this, and it is a great mercy when a poor sinner is brought to see that he is guilty of having destroyed himself, that he is utterly destitute of all ability to keep the precept, or satisfy the penalty of the divine law, and that he is justly under the sentence of eternal death. It is usually in this spot that sinners are made willing debtors to the mercy of God in Christ who has magnified the law and made it honourable in the room of all His people. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Romans 10:4).

IV. – We now come to the fourth and most wonderful point in this parable – the Creditor’s, forgiveness. “And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.”

May the Most High be for ever adored that these words and such as these, have been spoken and written for the benefit of the guilty sons of men!

1. Let us observe first, that it is the Creditor Himself, and not another, that forgives. It is He whose goodness was abused and dishonoured, who had an absolutely perfect sense of what was due to His just requirements, who was under no inherent obligation to show mercy, and who might have, in all righteousness, cast His ungrateful debtors into an eternal prison, that frankly cancels their debts and sets them free. Sometimes, among men, when the handling of such things as debts falls into the hand of another than the creditor himself, the other has no scruple in exercising an unjust liberality towards the debtors. Such kindness is worthy of small esteem. But here, the soul, whose conscience has been awakened to a sense of righteousness, has the unspeakable satisfaction of knowing that it is the very Divine Creditor whom he has robbed and dishonoured by his sins, that finds it possible in consistency with all the perfections of His character to bestow forgiveness. This greatly enhances the sweetness of the gift. The Holy One of Israel is also a sin-pardoning God. "Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity?"

2. Let us notice next the character of the forgiveness bestowed. "He *frankly* forgave them both." There is much wrapped up in the frankness with which the Lord forgives.

(1) It is a *sovereign* forgiveness. He was under no absolute necessity to forgive. He chose to do so of His good pleasure. It is the forgiveness of a King who is under no obligation to pardon. The Lord said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," and His counsel stands sure for ever.

(2) It is a *gracious* forgiveness. "The Lord is merciful and gracious: who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Forgiveness is of the free grace of God through Jesus Christ. Sinners do not deserve pardon: they justly merit eternal condemnation; and under this condemnation the whole guilty race would have remained, if God did not, in the abundance of His mercy, purpose to forgive. He now bestows the forgiveness of sins, "according to the riches of his grace"; and He forgives the greatest transgressors as freely as the least through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:7).

(3) It is a *righteous* forgiveness. He that forgives frankly forgives with his whole heart and soul. This is the manner in which the Lord forgives: He forgives with the consent of His righteousness as well as of His other attributes. His righteousness is well pleased with the obedience and death of Christ who obeyed and suffered in the room of sinners, and satisfied all the claims of law and justice on their behalf. Forgiveness thus flows through a righteous channel to the guilty. It is an eminent part of justification, and God is just, when He is "the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:25-26).

(4) It is a *loving* forgiveness. The creditor who frankly forgives, as we have said, does it with all his heart. And the heart of God is a heart of love towards a sinful people who are guilty debtors to His justice. If He forgives you your sins, He does it in the exercise of His infinite love. Godly King Hezekiah says in his prayer: "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back" (Isaiah 28:17).

(5) It is a *full* forgiveness. "All thine iniquities." The creditor does not forgive the debtors part of their debt; He cancels it all. The Lord bestows a complete forgiveness on those He pardons. He blots out all their sins, great and small, without exception. What a wonderful blessing this is! "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

(6) It is an *unchangeable* forgiveness. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not forgive to-day, and condemn to-morrow. No doubt, His people have not always a feeling sense of their forgiveness: they are afraid oftentimes that the Lord is still charging their past sins against them, and they cry with the Psalmist, "Remember not the sins

of my youth nor my transgressions.” But they are greatly mistaken if they think that the Lord has withdrawn the word of pardon that has gone out of His mouth. He saith, “I am the Lord; I change not.” He may chastise them on account of their sins past and present, but this is rather because He has forgiven than because He has not. “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” Whom He forgives, He sanctifies; and their sanctification under His discipline is an evidence of their justification. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

(7) Our last point here is that it is an *everlasting* forgiveness. “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.” It is true indeed that the Lord’s people come to “the throne of grace” constantly for the forgiveness of their daily sins, but this does not imply that their first forgiveness has come to an end; it only means that they seek an experimental realisation of what was contained in it suitable to their present case. The experimental realisation of what is in Christ for His people is something that can only be held by the Spirit’s continued operation upon their souls, and the exercise of prayer at a throne of grace is one of the channels along which the Spirit works in producing repentance, confession of sin, cries for mercy, and the application of forgiveness. The divine pardon will stand sure at death, and at the judgment seat of Christ. Those who were pardoned and accepted in the Beloved in time, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted before the whole world at the last day. They will hear the voice of the Judge, saying, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

The concluding point in our text, which we do not now fully handle, is the love that a free forgiveness produces, by the divine blessing, in the hearts of those who are pardoned. “Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?” The answer to this question was rightly given by Simon: “I suppose that he to whom He forgave most. And He said to him, Thou hast rightly judged.” The greater the sense of forgiveness, the greater will be the love to the person of the Divine Forgiver. It was therefore entirely appropriate in the case of the poor woman who had been forgiven much, and deeply felt it to be so, that she should both feel and express greater love to Christ than others who had not had a similar experience. Simon treated Christ very coldly though he invited Him to his house. He was righteous in his own eyes. Possibly he owned that he had committed some small sins, and considered that he had obtained forgiveness for them. The Saviour took Simon at his own profession and weighed his practice. “To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little,” is Christ’s sentence.

One other general remark. While Jesus in this parable allows that some persons are more guilty than others, yet He does not teach, here or elsewhere, that it is the disposition of truly penitent and forgiven sinners, however moral their outer life had been, to think that they were only small transgressors against the law of God. He impresses upon all that they are sinners and lost, and recommends all to take “the lowest room,” and such is the attitude of all truly gracious souls. The testimony of some of them, such as Paul, is, that while they might be more blameless, by the restraining mercy of God, in their general behaviour than others, yet that they had heart sins, secret sins, and sins against the gospel that placed them among the “chief of sinners,” the five hundred pence debtors.

In conclusion, let each of us pause and consider, “Am I a forgiven sinner, or am I still under the burden of all my sins?” If we are still unforgiven, we are lying under a load that is more than sufficient to sink us down to hell. We have nothing wherewith to pay the demands of justice, and we may at any moment be seized hold of and thrust into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The Lord Jesus is still exalted at the Father’s right hand to bestow repentance and forgiveness of sins. Let any poor, guilty debtor, who feels himself under an overwhelming burden of sin and guilt, from which he can in nowise rescue himself, look to the exalted Saviour and commit himself entirely into His hands. He is

ready to bestow a rich, free, and full forgiveness upon every heavy laden sinner who truly comes to the Father by Him, with the soul cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." May the Lord bless to us His own Word!

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