

A Sermon.

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“So the holy seed shall be the substance thereof” – Isaiah 6:13.

Isaiah prophesied in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. It was in the year in which king Uzziah died that the Lord vouchsafed to the prophet the wonderful vision described in this chapter. It appears he had a view of the infinite Jehovah in the person of His Son, for so Christ Himself explains the passage – “These things said Isaiah when he saw his glory and spake of him” (John 12:41). In this vision he saw God’s throne high and lifted up, and His train filling the temple. The posts of the door were moved and the house was filled with smoke. The seraphim, because of the dazzling glory which broke out from His presence, covered their faces and cried, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” When the prophet saw this vision, he was struck with consternation, and said, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.” His fears, however, were silenced by the angel touching his lips with the live coal taken with the tongs from off the altar, and causing his iniquity to be taken away and his sins purged. After this, an awful commission was given to the prophet – “Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and seek ye indeed, but perceive not,” etc. The generality of the people were to turn a deaf ear to his message, and the consequence would be that ruin would follow its rejection. Yet, notwithstanding, a remnant was to be spared. “But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.” Let us consider –

I. – The seed spoken of;

II. – Its character – “The holy seed”; and

III. – Its intrinsic value – “Shall be the substance thereof.”

I. – The seed spoken of.

The whole human race both in time and eternity are divided into two seeds. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent – sheep and goats, righteous and wicked. Seed must be the production of some progenitor, and whatever be the nature of the original, the same must appear in the seed. For instance, the farmer, who sows a field of oats, does not expect to reap barley; nor does the flockmaster expect a flock of lambs from a herd of goats. That the brute creation would produce a human being is a monstrous idea, and shocks the common sense of unsophisticated men. But, however reprehensible this doctrine may be to our reason, yet, under the name of evolution, it has been taught broadcast over the whole land by paid officials in the highest offices in certain Churches. But there is no evolution in nature; nature is true to its own laws.

(1) When God formed all things, He looked upon the works of His hands and pronounced them all “very good.” Man, who was the copestone of creation, was made in the image of God after his likeness, “in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.” This man who was formed of the dust of the ground, and had the breath of life breathed into his nostrils, was “very good,” and needed no evolution. We are here endeavouring to trace briefly the history of man from his original state to the state in which he is described as the “holy seed.” Man’s

original state, then, was “very good.” The Apostle Paul reasoning with the Athenians, in his famous oration on Mars hill, points out that because “In him (God) we live and move and have our being,” we are, therefore, the offspring of God. Man, being created in the image of God is, according to the Apostle, “God’s offspring.”

(2) Man, who was thus made, “fell from the estate wherein he was created by sinning against God.” Sin, which is the seed of the serpent, has penetrated through his whole person, so that now Satan aims him as his own. “Ye are of your father, the devil, for his works ye do.” “He that committeth sin is of the devil.” Man’s disobedience, however, did not relieve him of his responsibility to his Creator. God has a prior claim, for creation was before the Fall. Satan has no claim to man, but as he is a transgressor, and it is because he is a transgressor, he is Satan’s captive, his prisoner. He is condemned by God’s law which will hold him guilty until it is satisfied as to its claims, but let the law be obeyed and satisfied on behalf of man, and Satan immediately loseth his right to hold him in captivity. “The strength of sin is the law.

Now Satan, through man’s disobedience, erected his kingdom in the world, and had the whole human race as his subjects. He fenced and walled his city on every side so securely that he naturally concluded that there was no possibility of ever any of his prisoners escaping. With God’s law condemning them, His justice, with its “flaming sword” turning “every way, to keep the way of the tree of life,” dead in trespasses and in sins, enemies in their minds, and rebellious in their hearts and wills, no wonder though Satan, as it were, raised his hand in defiance to heaven and cried, “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty or shall the lawful captives be delivered?” God, however, from all eternity purposed that some of those prisoners should be set free, but, before this could be accomplished, law and justice had to be satisfied on their behalf. For this end, God the Father entered into covenant with His own dear Son, who undertook to pay the penalty. In the fulness of time He appeared in their nature to meet His covenant engagements. “In the volume of the book it is written of me, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” Through the obedience and suffering of His life and death He gave infinite satisfaction to law and justice; He spoiled principalities and powers, invaded the territories of Satan, and opened the door of the prison to them that were bound. He took the prey from the mighty, and delivered the lawful captives. “He made of a city an heap, of a defenced city a ruin, a palace of strangers to be no city, it shall never be built.” Man’s state under the first covenant depended on perfect obedience being given by him to the terms of that covenant. “In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” But now, on account of the satisfaction given by the Surety, eternal righteousness is brought in, so that their standing does not depend on their own obedience, but on Christ’s. Therefore Satan can never build his city again. “It shall never be built.”

(3) The seed, however, differed nothing in their state by nature from the rest of mankind. They were born into this world “the children of wrath, even as others.” But the Holy Spirit, in a day of power, convinced them of their alienation from God, that they were under His judicial wrath, and that “by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight.” They also saw their need of a mediator – one who would stand in the breach. He, the Spirit, revealed Christ to them in His suitableness, and by faith enabled them to receive Him as He is freely offered in the Gospel. They were thus born again, “not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” There is now a new principle implanted in them, and that seed, which is the Spirit of Christ, must be of the same nature as He who begat it – “holy.” “He that is born of God cannot sin, because his seed remaineth in him.” This, then, is the seed spoken of here, which is to be “the substance thereof.”

II. – We shall now notice the character of this seed: “holy seed.” The term, “holy,” as used in Scripture, is applied in various ways. It is particularly applied to any person or thing

set apart to the sacred service of God. Thus the priests, Temple, vessels of the Temple, the Sabbath, and even the whole nation of Israel, were called “holy”; not because they were better than others, but because dedicated to the service of God. The priests by nature were as corrupt as the rest of the nation. The material in the Temple and vessels was not better than similar material, neither is the Sabbath day, as a period of twenty-four hours, more sacred than any other day; but because they were set apart by the command of God for holy purposes therefore they are called “holy.” It is in this sense that we are to take the word here.

(1) God set them apart to be a “holy seed” to Himself in *their election*. “I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from all other people” (Leviticus 20:24). The doctrine of election takes away any claim to merit which man may put forward, for they were chosen before the foundation of the world. “For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand not of works but of him that calleth.” This “holy seed” were set apart by the Father in their election, and given to the Son to redeem them – “Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me.” They were regenerated by the spirit, so that they are the “holy seed” of the Triune God.

The farmer who intends to sow his fields in the spring will set aside his sowing seed and will on no account part with it. These are God’s sowing seed, and they are precious in His sight – “None can pluck them out of my Father’s hands.” The late Rev. Alexander M’Coll of Lochalsh said “that these were so precious in the sight of God that, if one (grain) were missing at the last day, He would riddle the whole universe until He found it. “Were it not that He has left “a very small remnant (a sowing seed), we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isaiah 1:9). If you saw a farmer selling most or all his seed, you might well conclude that he had no intention of sowing much in the spring, but to let his farm out under cattle. Now, when God is removing to his heavenly garner much of the “holy seed” He had in the land, and few grains are left, may we not conclude – and is it not actually taking place before our eyes – that the field, the visible church, is left under men no better than cattle? “The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it” (Psalm 80:13).

(2) They are a “holy seed” because they are God’s witnesses in the world. “Therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.” “Living epistles, read and known of all men.” “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” It is their glory and duty that they should show forth His praise in a circumspect life in their profession before men. The profession which will not separate us from the world and its ways is nothing but a delusion. It is quite apparent that, because of the laxity of the professors of religion in this age, the cause of Christ is brought into great disrepute. There is a very prevalent idea in the minds of young people that there is no such thing as vital religion, and that the only difference between one person and another is that the one may be a communicant, while the other is not. How can it be otherwise if they are to judge religion by the practice of many of its professors? Ministers and all grades of professors must be first and foremost in all the frivolities that take place in the land. It is no uncommon thing to find ministers of religion on public platforms at social meetings and concerts, entertaining the audience with light, giddy songs, and also desecrating the Sabbath by travelling for their own pleasure on the Lord’s day. “But ye have not so learned Christ.” They ought to be and are known in the world by their godly walk and conversation.

(3) Again, they are a “holy seed,” not only outwardly but inwardly. They seek not only to walk circumspectly before men but to “crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.” Hypocrites, if they make a fair show in the flesh, are not concerned about the corruptions of their hearts and nature. They are compared to “whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness.” But God’s

holy seed desire to be inwardly conformed to the law of God. They “seek to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.” “They delight in the law of God after the inward man, but how to perform that which is good they know not.” This, is the cause of the continual war which is being waged between the law that is in their members and the law of their mind. We have often seen seed, when beginning to grow, surrounded with many weeds, which, if allowed to grow, would soon dwarf the seed, but once the seed gets its head above them, they will by and by vanish. Such is the case with the seed of grace in the soul. It is surrounded by many weeds – self, pride, the world, and all manner of corruption – which, if allowed to grow, will soon dwarf grace. It is therefore our duty to seek to pull up every root that beareth gall and wormwood.

This, then, is the holy seed spoken of, and though they are in this world mixed with much chaff and corruption, yet the time is coming when they shall be presented “holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight.”

III. – Consider their intrinsic value: “shall be the substance thereof.” The term, “substance,” may be taken in two ways.

First, it may mean wealth or treasure. A man who possesses great wealth is spoken of as a man of substance.

(1) Now, this holy seed, which is to be the substance thereof, is God’s peculiar treasure. “God has chosen Israel as his own peculiar treasure.” There is nothing so valuable in the sight of God as His people. He created the worlds by the word of His power, but these were “not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from their vain conversation, received by tradition from their fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” They are considered by the world as the offscouring of all things, but this is not God’s estimate of them. “They shall be mine,” He says, “when I make up my jewels.”

(2) They are His peculiar inheritance. All created things are His by right. “For his pleasure they are and were created.” But when God wishes to show what is His peculiar inheritance in the earth, He describes this seed as His only inheritance. “The Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob, the lot of his inheritance.”

Secondly, the word, “substance,” may mean the stay or support of the Church and nation.

(1) They are the “substance” of the land, because it is for their sake the world is kept in existence. “They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.” They are God’s ambassadors in the world. It is, we understand, the law of nations that, while the ambassador of one nation is officially resident in the other, no hostilities can be engaged in. The presence of the ambassador in the foreign capital is proof that there is yet peace. Before two nations can go to war with one another, their respective ambassadors must be recalled, but whenever they are recalled the way is clear to begin hostilities at any moment. If we look back to the history of the world we find this was exactly the principle on which God dealt with it. In the case of the old world, God had an ambassador in the person of Noah, but when he and his family entered the ark the ambassador was recalled, and immediately God waged war against the world and destroyed it. The same took place in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah. The angel could do nothing until Lot was recalled. “Haste thee, escape thither, for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither” (Genesis 19:22). Now, while God has an ambassador, a holy seed in the world, they shall be the “substance thereof,” preserving it from being destroyed. But when the last grain of this seed is gathered in, He shall have no more need for this earth and will destroy it by fire. “The holy seed,” then, “is the substance thereof.”

(2) They are the substance of the land, because for their sake temporal prosperity is bestowed on any nation or people. Our own nation has been exalted by God above all the nations of the world. On many occasions He manifested Himself as a “man of war” on behalf

of this land. Let us take, for instance, the attempt made in 1588 by Philip II. of Spain and Pope Sixtus V. to conquer England, and so strike a decisive blow at the cause of Protestantism. The fleet which sailed for England consisted of one hundred and twenty-nine vessels, and was ostentatiously styled the "Invincible Armada," as no doubt was entertained of its success. But God intervened on our behalf and destroyed the "Invincible Armada" by a storm. The victory is worthily acknowledged in the beautiful inscription on the medal struck by the Queen of England on that occasion, which is "Deus flavit, et dissipati sunt" ("God blew, and they were scattered"). This event clearly shows that it was not by our own strength of arms or numbers as a nation that we prospered. It might be said of us, as of Israel, "that we were the fewest of all people." What, then, is the secret of our prosperity? Just what David said of Israel: "God exalted the kingdom for his people Israel's sake." It was because we, as a nation, acknowledged the Lord and He had a people in our midst who feared Him, that He prospered us. And may we not conclude that, when we have ceased to respect His laws and acknowledge His authority, He will do to us what He said of Israel? "That as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and to bring you to naught" (Deuteronomy 28:63).

It is manifest to any right-thinking person that we, as a nation, have sinned grievously against the Lord. In all grades of society iniquity abounds. It is sad and alarming to see how the Lord's day is being desecrated by all classes – steamboat and railway companies, city corporations, etc., all vying with one another as to who will give the greatest facilities to the general public for travelling on that day. Even our members of Parliament generally, who ought to be an example to others, have no other day for travelling to and from London but the Sabbath. All public meetings connected with unions must now be held on that day. It is encouraging in the midst of all this to learn that our King has resolved not to travel on Sabbath, except in a case of necessity. Again, when we consider the awful craze for carnal pleasure which is so prevalent among us, we see that everything possible is done to pander to this desire. Picture palaces, cinematograph exhibitions, theatres, etc., which suck away the morals of a rising generation, spring up in hundreds in cities, towns, and villages. In view of these and many other forms of evil, the Lord may well be angry. "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jeremiah 5:9).

There are dark and ominous clouds hovering over this nation at present, and unless the Lord, for His own name's sake and for the sake of the "holy seed" which is "the substance thereof," will intervene on our behalf, there is great danger that these clouds will burst and that this nation will fall by her own hands and that we shall receive "according to the fruit of our doings." But while there is a "holy seed" in our midst they might avert, by their prayers, such a ruinous calamity overtaking us.

(3) They are the "substance" of the nation and Church by their *prayers*. We have many instances in Scripture where the prayers of God's people were heard, and threatened judgments averted. We see how the Lord answered the prayer of Abraham on behalf of Abimelech. "So Abraham prayed unto God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and maid-servants" (Genesis 20:17). There is also a remarkable passage in Exodus 32:11-14, in which Moses is represented as interceding for Israel when God was about to destroy them for their idolatry, and did destroy many of them. Moses stood in the breach, and besought the Lord his God to turn from His fierce wrath. "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people." We notice, again, when Amalek came and fought Israel at Rephidim, "that Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill; and it came to pass when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed, but when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed." You will also see in the days of Samuel, that when Israel were gathered at Mizpeh

the Philistines came up against them, and Israel was afraid, and they besought Samuel to pray for them, which he did, and the Lord heard him and discomfited the Philistines.

It is a grievous sin for God's people not to pray for the land in an iniquitous state. When Samuel reasoned with the people of Israel concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did for them, he said, "Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23). The Christian religion is of a most loyal character. It is impossible for a man to be a true Christian without being a loyal subject, for the principle of the Christian religion is to "fear God and honour the king."

Now, if ever there was a time in which it was incumbent on the Lord's people to pray for the welfare of their king and country it is the present – to pray that God would give wisdom to our rulers to rule in His fear, so that peace may reign within our borders, and that He would pour down His Spirit upon us, so that sinners would be converted unto Him. Let them earnestly seek that this land, which was at one time as the garden of the Lord, but is now largely a barren wilderness, would once more appear to blossom as the rose. May the Lord hasten it in His time!

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A Sermon.

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"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" – John 3:14,15.

The words which are found in these two verses of Holy Scripture follow immediately upon the Lord Jesus Christ's most solemn, pregnant, and profound answer to Nicodemus, concerning the absolute necessity of regeneration: "Ye must be born again." Concurrently with this emphatic affirmation regarding the sinner's need of a change of nature in order to salvation, the words of our text declare another necessity, not of the sinner but of the Saviour, who must Himself "be lifted up." In asserting this second necessity, a certain memorable event in the history of the children of Israel, which happened when they were journeying from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom, is seized upon and held forth as typical of the Redeemer being thus lifted up. This typical representation makes it necessary for us to refer briefly to that incident at the outset.

On the journey from Mount Hor past the boundaries of the land of Edom, the soul of the people of Israel was much discouraged or grieved "because of the way," and the hardships they endured on the march made them easy victims of one of their most prevalent national sins – that of murmuring against God's providence. "And the people spake against God and against Moses: Wherefore have ye brought us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread." For this sin, the magnitude of which can be measured by the severity of the punishment – having in it the elements of rebellion, ingratitude, contempt, a secret hankering after what they had once willingly forsaken but now wished to repossess, with an openly-confessed preference for the thralldom of Egypt to the great and precious privilege of being God's freedmen, though forced for a little while to undergo the unavoidable inconveniences and discomforts of even a waste, howling wilderness – the Lord sent fiery serpents among them which bit them, with the result that many died. "When he slew them then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God." So, likewise, this dire chastisement made them repent of their folly, and betaking themselves with all haste to Moses, they earnestly entreated him to pray unto the Lord on their behalf, that He would graciously take the serpents away from them. Moses, ever ready to do his best for God's Israel, was pleased to hearken to that doleful cry of distress, and he instantly besought the Lord for them. The Lord mercifully heard his prayer, and immediately steps were taken to provide a remedy for the sick and dying. That remedy was most simple, yet most sublime. It was Godlike. It was easily got and easily applied. It was but the making, fixing, and setting up of a brazen serpent upon a pole, to which those bitten were to look, God having promised life and healing to every one that in obedience and faith would look to the fiery serpent of brass on the pole. "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived."

This, then, is a summary of the narrative of the incident, as we have it recorded in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Numbers, and the position to which it is here raised, and the application made of it by the Lord Jesus Christ, fill it with a new and deeper fulness of meaning and interest than could ever possibly be associated with the incident itself – great though that must always necessarily remain, – or rather the vail is drawn aside and its true and hidden significance laid bare, and clothed in the full light of the Incarnation, shines in the beautiful glow of its renewed youth, like life from the dead.

In a humble endeavour to reach and uncover a little of the great wealth of mercy and grace which lies embedded in the words of our text, we shall proceed to consider it in the following order: –

- I. – The Person between whom and the serpent the comparison is made – the Son of man.
- II. – Wherein does the comparison consist, and why "must" the Son of Man be lifted up?

III. – For whom and for what end must it be?

I. – The Son of man.

In the second verse of this same chapter we read as follows: – “The same (that is, Nicodemus) came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.” Here several things are asserted concerning this Son of man, which we shall notice in their order.

(1) He is called Jesus.

(2) He is addressed as Rabbi.

(3) He is acknowledged as a teacher whose teaching manifested that He came from God.

(4) He is said to be a worker of miracles, and such miracles as could not be wrought by any human ingenuity or power, and plainly were the result of the forthputting of divine omnipotence – the finger of God – thereby revealing and proving that He was God; that God was with him.

From the third to the twenty-first verse inclusive, with the single exception of the fourth verse, that very same Jesus unto whom Nicodemus came is the speaker; and that the speaker and the Son of man, who must be lifted up, must be identified as one and the same person is so plain that proof is needless. We thus see that the Son of man is Jesus, whom the angel informed Joseph of before His birth, and would have Him thus named because He was coming into the world to save His people from their sins: that He is Rabbi, *i.e.*, doctor or master, who has authority to teach and judge in all matters of religion, and whose teaching evidence his wisdom, power, and authority to be divine. “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” “For He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes”: that He is omnipotent and can perform miracles of which God alone is capable, and is therefore equal with God. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

Again, at the thirteenth verse we read: – “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” Here it is asserted of the Son of man that He was in heaven; that He that was in heaven came down from heaven; and that He that came down from heaven is still in heaven, all which plainly and positively shows Him to be possessed of two distinct natures, human and divine, subsisting in one divine Person, and thus with absolute certainty Immanuel, God with us. This is the glorious and matchless Person prefigured by Moses’ brazen serpent in the wilderness. Here the Anti-type compares Himself to the type, and this brings us to the second part.

II. – Wherein does the comparison consist, and why must the Son of Man be lifted up?

We have already seen that Moses was commanded to make a fiery serpent of brass, corresponding to the deadly fiery serpents by which they were bitten, and which similarity seems to me to signify, Jesus Christ made in the likeness of sinful flesh; His untold sufferings as the sinbearer, and His power to endure, overcome, and outlive such fiery trials; and also to teach that an atonement and salvation for sinful men were possible only by substitution, that is, by a divine person, God’s Son, becoming incarnate and suffering death in the very nature that sinned. The brazen serpent was an insensate, lifeless figure, a fitting emblem of death, and it is the Son of man’s vicarious death that heals. “And with His stripes we are healed.” But Moses was next to put it on a pole, or in the words of our text, “to lift it up.” That was necessary in order that those bitten throughout the many thousands of Israel could see it, when obeying the divine command, they looked to it and were healed. For though we cannot now see Jesus Christ with our bodily eyes, and even although we were able to see Him after that manner, it would not mean salvation for us, for many saw and knew Him well in the days

of His flesh and perished, yet we must see Him with the eyes of the soul, that is, by a Spirit-begotten faith and an enlightened understanding, if we are not to perish also.

The chief resemblance of the Son of man to the brazen serpent is His being thus lifted up for health and salvation to a wounded and dying people, bitten to death by the Old Serpent, Satan, and incurable by any other means other than beholding the Son of man “lifted up” – the Son of man crucified. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.”

It may also be applied to Christ’s resurrection, ascension, glorification, and second advent. “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.” Again, it is to be understood of the promulgation of the gospel to which the words are indeed applicable. It seems to be the very thing which is here specially referred to. The gospel message to a perishing world ought always to have for its sum and substance, “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” It should be the heart and soul, head and body of every address on spiritual and eternal things to sinners of mankind, its alpha and omega, with its relative truths of the Fall and eternal damnation. In the preaching of the gospel, Jesus Christ, in all that He is, as God-man, Prophet, Priest, and King, and one Mediator between God and men, ought to be raised aloft and held forth before sinners in such manner as, with the Spirit’s help, to convince and confirm them in the truth that “besides him there is no Saviour,” that “neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;” that He is able to save to the uttermost, and that for us there will be found no way of escape if we neglect so great salvation, and despise and reject so great a Saviour. This is the divine message for all ages of the herald of the Cross, and of the Church militant, to a lost and ruined world. Every preacher, of whatever nation or clime, should preach the Christ of the Scriptures, or leave preaching severely alone. “He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” And in the last place, His whole life on earth may be said to have been one continual lifting up, as He, ever advancing and ever ascending, for thirty-three and a half years trod the lonely, weary, and sorrowful path between Bethlehem’s manger and Calvary’s Cross, and thence to God’s right hand. A lifting up such as spectators never saw, that stands for ever unique in the annals of mankind, and in the records of heaven itself. And if in His humiliation He was poorer than the foxes and the birds of the air, and had not whereon to lay His head, if He knew weariness, hunger, thirst, grief, tears, was blasphemed, falsely accused, sought to be slain, mocked, scourged, spat upon, wore the purple robe and the crown of thorns, they were but the stepping stones by which He crossed the brook of sufferings that lay in His way.

But so far we have only treated of His being lifted up: we must now say something on the second point. Why “must” the Son of man be lifted up? This “must” was owing to following reasons: –

1. God’s eternal decree. To that decree concerning redemption does the only begotten Son refer in the second Psalm as that which he purposed to execute by performing all His covenant engagements as the surety of His people in the great everlasting covenant of grace. “The sure decree I will declare.” That declaration was made

- (1) by His obedience, death, and resurrection, and
- (2) by Himself on the Cross when He cried aloud, “It is finished,” and
- (3) by His ambassadors in the world in preaching the Gospel to every creature.

In confirmation of this we have the Apostle Peter reminding the Jews of it when accusing them of having put to death Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among them by miracles and wonders, and signs: “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” So says the Spirit, and so Peter humbly believes.

2. Its being written in the volume of the book. The Old Testament Scriptures, from Genesis to Malachi, speak of the coming of a mighty deliverer, who was to save sinners of all nations from sin and its wages, which is death, and whose kingdom was to be world-wide, in whom the priesthood of Melchizedek was to be combined with the royalty of David, and yet whose triumph was to be won through sufferings and death. "The Scriptures cannot be broken," therefore, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me." "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

3. The absolute demands of the law and justice of God. The law demanded perfect obedience: justice demanded perfect satisfaction for man's transgression of the law, which would forever vindicate the honour of God as the law-giver. Inasmuch as the claims of law and justice could not be met by guilty man, and that they must needs be satisfied on his behalf if he was to escape everlasting damnation, it behoved Christ, the federal representative of His people, to take the sinner's place and die – the just for the unjust, the holy for the unholy, the righteous for the wicked. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

4. Christ being made sin and a curse in having His people's sins and guilt laid upon Him, and so enduring the wrath of God. It should be here remembered that, as the sinner's substitute, Christ was dealt with by God the Father, as if He were really and truly the actual transgressor. And lastly, it was all in complete harmony with His own wishes. This was His heart's desire, which He had long looked forward to with infinite delight; He would not now change. He would not have it otherwise. He loved His church and gave Himself for it, and must we not say that His own love nailed Him to the accursed tree?

We now come to our third and last part.

III. – For whom and for what end must it be?

In answer to the question, for whom the Son of man must be lifted up, we say that it was for the election of grace – that is, all the sinners from among mankind fallen, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, given by the Father, of His sovereign will and pleasure, to the Son, on covenant terms, before the world was. "Thine they were and thou gavest them me." "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them." "Holy father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

But inasmuch as all these, without a single exception, were by the first man's disobedience made sinners, fallen, lost, and ruined, and are known to none but God, and because they can in no way be distinguished from the whole mass of corrupt mankind, or can be known by the visible Church until such time as they are effectually called by the Holy Spirit, profess their faith in Jesus Christ, and bear evidence of a change of nature in works meet for repentance; infinite wisdom has so devised, and Jesus Christ has so ordered it, that a free and full offer of salvation be given to every human being in His name and authority unto whom the good news of His gospel comes. The preaching of the gospel is the special means appointed by Jesus Christ, and honoured in the use by the Holy Spirit, for gathering in the lost sheep to Christ's fold. It, therefore, fills us with sadness and dismay to see it have so little effect on the sinners of our day, so that, even where it has escaped corruption, it is loathed. It is also the great means by which the Spirit sanctifies and makes meet for glory those who are effectually called, justified, and adopted.

What is usually termed the universal call of the gospel occurs in our text in the form – "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life," and every rational

creature, or as it is expressed here, “whosoever,” that receives an offer of eternal life in the name and for the sake of the Son of man should remember and seriously consider: –

(1) That he or she has Scripture warrant, be they young or old, moral and well behaved, or the chief of sinners steeped in scarlet and crimson sins, to gladly embrace that offer as made personally to himself or herself. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners: of whom I am chief.”

(2) The Saviour freely offered, being the Son of man who is the Son of God, is a person so glorious, rich, and lovely as makes Him worthy of being received by every person that breathes and of being rejected by none.

(3) He has made an atonement for sin which fully satisfied the Father, and will abundantly satisfy the sinner too when he comes to know its merits. It provides him with a new and living way to reconciliation with God, peace and happiness in himself, life, glory, and immortality. It supplies him with a laver in the blood shed to effectually cleanse him from sin in its guilt and defilement. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

(4) The offer of salvation is only for a limited time called in Scripture “to-day,” and therefore it becomes us to be up and doing. The crowning sin is to reject salvation; the greatest of all losses to miss it. “The night cometh when no man can work.”

Faith in Jesus Christ, or believing in Him, corresponds to the looking up to the brazen serpent, and it is expressly stated in our text that only such as believe in Him are eternally saved – “That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Faith and obedience are therefore absolutely necessary to salvation.

In regard to this faith which is saving, two things are to be observed, and to be enforced upon gospel hearers with all the emphasis of which one is capable, which their great importance demands.

(1) That as we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins we are utterly unable of ourselves to exercise faith upon the Son of God, apart from that faith being begotten in us by the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of the Word of God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

(2) That this inability to believe, being the immediate result and fruit of the Fall, does not in the least excuse us, or lessen our guilt as rejecters of salvation and eternal life, but rather increases our guilt. Having been originally created with a free will and power to keep it all for good, we abused it, and wilfully brought ourselves into these fearful straits. And, moreover, this inability does not remove our responsibility to our Creator, who, though we became miserably bankrupt, has not lost His just right to claim His own to the uttermost farthing. However, neither this inability nor predestination ought to discourage us in our seeking after God, if haply we may find Him, because, when we cannot make one hair white or black, nothing is impossible with Him; and remembering His omnipotence, willingness, mercy, love, grace, promise, and faithfulness, they ought rather to stimulate us in our quest after reconciliation and forgiveness.

And now, in conclusion, we may briefly summarise the great ends for which “the Son of man must be lifted up.”

(1) The glory of God. “Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

(2) The manifestation of God’s purpose, as already noticed – the showing forth of the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable love of the Father in giving His Son, of the Son in giving Himself, and of the Holy Spirit in preparing a body for Him and upholding Him in His work. And

(3) the complete redemption of His people from sin and misery, wrath and condemnation, and their ultimate entrance into endless fellowship, happiness, and glory in the mansions of heaven, where is treasured up for them what eye has not seen, nor ear heard, and has not entered into the heart of man. “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.” “The Lord will give grace and glory.”

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The Intercession of Christ.

A Sermon by the REV. JOHN R. MACKAY, M.A., Inverness.

“Who also maketh intercession for us” – Romans 8:34.

Our Lord’s intercession in heaven is a subject at once wide, and deep, and mysterious. We shall for the present confine our attention to the following aspects of a great theme: –

- I. – How may we warrantably come to the conclusion that we have a personal interest in this intercession?
- II. – What is the nature of this activity of the Redeemer?
- III. – What does it mean to justified persons?
- IV. – We shall conclude with a word of application.

I. – How may we warrantably come to the conclusion that we have a personal interest in Christ's intercession?

This is an all-important question, for, on the one hand, we are forbidden by John 17:9, which teaches that not everyone is included in Christ's intercession, to take it as a matter of course that we must have a personal interest and part in it. On the other hand, it is certain that if we do not regard the matter as something in which we have a personal interest, we cannot study the subject with much devotion or love – dispositions and mental attitudes, in the absence of which our meditations are in danger of being very unprofitable. To illustrate, in this last connection, the greatest things from small things: who does not feel that the amount of a sixpence, that is our own, is of more consequence to us than the sixty millions which the millionaire possesses, but upon which we can never put a finger? And if a little that is our own, be it ever so little, is of some consequence to us, how much more will it be of consequence and make the greatest difference to us if, with a good warranty, we realise that the greatest things of all are our own; when we come to know and to acknowledge Jehovah not only as the true God, but as our own God, and Christ's intercession at God's right hand, not merely as a truth, whether we believe it or not, but as an activity of Christ in which we are personally interested.

But how may we with good reason conclude that we have this desired interest in His intercession? Well, in order to answer that question we have to bear in mind that the intercession presupposes "the sacrifice," and is based upon the sacrifice wherewith Christ perfected for ever upon the Cross of Calvary them that are sanctified. What think you of this sacrifice, or what interest have you in it? Under the law, if an Israelite came to realise that he had broken one of the laws of the Lord, there was a way of reconciliation set before him. He must take one of the prescribed animals, as a lamb, or a goat, or a bullock, and he must bring this animal to the door of the tabernacle, and must put his hand upon the head of the propitiating animal, and so, in a symbolical way, transfer his guilt to the sacrificial lamb, or goat, or bullock; and further, he must slay the animal. Then one of the priests takes the blood and sprinkles it upon the altar, which last act meant that the priest had offered the life of the animal on the transgressor's behalf unto God; and, in this way, atonement was made for the offending Israelite. If such an Israelite, as we have now been speaking of, were asked whose was this lamb or goat or bullock, through whose blood he was in some sense reconciled, he would say that it was his own, and that for the good reason that he had taken it out of his own fold, and inasmuch as there was, in a general way, atonement made for such a sin as he was guilty of by the blood of such an animal slain in sacrifice, he would not be likely to question that now atonement had been made for his own violation of Jehovah's law in particular, inasmuch as the animal slain was certainly his own.

Well, by way of answering our present main question, we have to observe that those who are warranted to conclude a personal interest in Christ's intercession are persons who, to begin with, like the supposed Israelite, if in a deeper sense, have laid to heart that they have violated the law of God; that by what they did not do and by what they did do, they were so far from meriting the honour that comes from God only that on the contrary, if God were to enter into judgment with them, they deserved to receive from His hands only indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, because that is what every soul that doeth evil properly merits. In a word, those who have warrant to conclude that they have a personal interest in the Sacrifice, and consequently in the Intercession, come all of them, with more or less clearness, to apprehend that they stand in need of a propitiation, that they need that God's judicial wrath should be turned away from them, and His judicial favour procured, and that they need that their conscience should be purged in order to their entering into life. But over and above this first lesson, they have also been taught that, in the proper sense, the blood of lambs and of goats and of bullocks could not in respect of them satisfy the justice of God, that such

sacrifices could not magnify and make honourable the law which they violated, that those sacrifices could not bring peace into their conscience; yea that, in the words of Micah, thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil could not avail to put away their sin, not even if they gave the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul could their sin, in the sense desiderated, be put away.

Is the case, then, a hopeless one? Certainly it is, so far as creatural resources are concerned or can help. But what was impossible to any mere creature was not impossible to God. God has provided a sacrificial Lamb – the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. God found not this Lamb in any man's fold; He found Him in His own bosom. And thus it was that when the time destined and promised had come, He sent forth His own Son, made of a woman made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. It may with truth be said that it was God, even the Father, that brought this Lamb of God to the door of the tabernacle; it was He that laid our iniquities upon Him; it was He that slew this sacrifice; for does He not accept responsibility for these mysterious transactions when He says, "The Lord hath laid upon Him (Messiah) the iniquity of us all"; and again, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him"; and again, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd; I will smite the Shepherd." In a general way one cannot question the truths that by the blood of this Lamb satisfaction is made to divine justice, sin is put away, and consciences are purged, without doubting the Word of inspiration entirely. But the pressing question here regards our personal appropriation of the Lamb of God. It is certain that we could not provide an adequate atonement for the sin of our soul; it is certain also that we did not deserve that God should come to our rescue. But He has come to our rescue, and although this Lamb of God was not found in our fold, and could not, on this account, be said to belong to ourselves, the Lamb which is God's, which He found in His own bosom, is given us in the offer of the Gospel as freely and as unstintedly as if it had been a lamb taken out of our own fold, and which we could on this account call our own. The Lamb is God's Lamb, but if we be willing to have Him, we are welcome to make Him ours also.

Have we pressed forward to make Him our own? Have we received and rested upon Him alone for salvation, as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel? If we dare answer this question in the affirmative, then we say there is not only present, as a thing known to God, a sealing of forgiveness through the gift of the Spirit, but ordinarily there is a sensible experience of this sealing. Yet inasmuch as all the Lord's people have not had this experience to the same degree, and inasmuch as, through the hiding of His face, even those who at one time were least of all disposed to question it in respect of themselves, may, through the temptations of the devil and for other reasons, call the reality of this personal sealing into question, we deem it safer to determine our personal interest in the sacrifice and in the intercession, by insisting only on the questions, "Have you realised that you need a propitiation? Have you welcomed the Lamb which God has provided and offers freely to sinners as such in the Gospel, appropriating Him as your own, and as being for you, believing upon Him and trusting in Him, the end of the law for righteousness?" If your answer be in the affirmative, then, beyond question, you have more than a speculative and theoretical interest in the intercession; you have a personal and practical interest in it.

On the other hand, if one refuses to answer these two decisive questions which we have now put, with an affirmative, we may surely say to all such that they are without excuse. How can any who in heart maintains that he is not a guilty person by nature, that he did not deserve the wrath of God, that he did not in respect of himself need that God's judicial wrath should be turned away from him, how, we ask, can such a person be excusable? Can this species of unbelief be indulged in without making God, who in His word tells us of our ruined state by nature, a liar? And if all such as, in heart, deny their *need* of a sacrifice are without excuse, how much more may that be said of all such as refuse the sacrifice provided by God, and

offered to them by God? Is Christ not worthy, as the Lamb of God, that He should put away your sins? Is there not merit in His blood to meet your case? Is not the calling of this in question the guilt of all guilts, that in respect of which Christ Himself has said that “this is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil”?

II. – But in the hope that through the grace of God, we may consider this intercession, not as a matter of mere speculation, but as something which is our own, we proceed in the second place to inquire into its nature.

Now, here we must distinguish between what we may speak of as the things for which this Intercessor and Advocate pleads, and the ground upon which He presents His petitions. His petitions may be said to be many, but the ground or plea or argument is one. One may see this by a careful reading of John 17, in which we have an example of Christ’s work as Intercessor. One may find in that chapter a petition having in view Christ’s own exaltation, another petition for the safe-keeping of His disciples, another petition for their sanctification, another petition for believers who should afterwards appear in this world, and still another petition for the glorification of all believers; but although the petitions are thus many and varied, the ground upon which these petitions are offered is one: “I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.” Now it is to this aspect of the intercession, its ground, or the argument made use of, that, at the present time, we wish mainly to call attention. The intercession is, in a word, based upon the sacrifice and upon it alone. That sacrifice is the argument made use of by this Intercessor or Advocate. The Reformed Divines were wont to make use here of an illustration which, although it may not be pushed beyond the direct purpose for which it is introduced, is fitted to set forth clearly what the Reformed Church taught, and what we believe the Scriptures teach concerning the nature of Christ’s advocacy and intercession. A certain king, it was said, who lived in days now long gone by, had a devoted subject who, in the king’s service, lost his right hand, so that he was no longer able to act for the king in the capacity in which, so long as he could do so, he, with the utmost devotion gave himself up to the king’s service. This loyal subject, however, had a brother who was of a very different disposition to himself, so that for his misconduct, he was made at length to appear to give an account of himself before the king, who, in those days, was also supreme judge in his own person. It came to the loyal subject’s ear that his brother was thus arraigned, and that it looked as if a decision adverse to his brother should issue from the king, and so in pity for his disloyal brother, he rushed into the court, and, speaking not a word, he showed the judge his own amputated limb. The king-judge, it is said, called to memory all that he and his country owed to this loyal subject, who had lost his right arm in his country’s service, and thus the king-judge was moved to overlook and to forgive his disloyal subject’s delinquencies. The loyal subject was in this case an intercessor, but he needed no argument to move the king save the sight of the amputated limb. So it is with Christ. He needs no argument in heaven, but the presentation of the sacrifice offered once for all upon Calvary’s Cross. For does He not appear even in heaven as a Lamb that had been slain? And if He could, after He was alive from the dead, show to His disciples the print of the nails in His hands, and the piercing which the spear had effected in His side, how may he not in heaven in the capacity of an Advocate appear as the Lamb that had been slain?

Christ’s intercession, from this point of view, may be regarded as a continuous offering of the sacrifice. The ceremonial law teaches us to consider the idea of “offering” from several points of view. To begin with, the person who brought a lamb, say, to the door of the tabernacle, who put his hand upon the lamb’s head, who slew the lamb, was said to “offer” the lamb. But not the person who thus brought the lamb to the door of the tabernacle could sprinkle its blood upon the altar. This was exclusively a priestly function, and the priest who

did sprinkle the blood upon the altar, or who poured it out beside the altar, was the person who, in the strictest sense, “offered” the sacrifice, for in thus sprinkling the blood upon the altar he was offering the life of the animal to God, and not everyone dared to approach God. None could do this but such as had a divine warrant and call, as had Aaron. But, further, there was not only the “offering,” in the sense of the blood of sacrificial victims being daily poured out beside the altar of burnt-offering, there was the function of the high priest in entering into the holiest of all once in the year, bringing with him the blood of animals slain as sin-offerings. Now, this bringing in of the blood into the holiest of all, and this sprinkling of the mercy seat with blood was a species of “offering”. Corresponding to the offerings now referred to, we have, in regard to the Lamb of God, the Father Himself, who is said to offer. He it was that provided this Lamb; He it was that laid the sins of the sheep upon the Shepherd; He it was that smote this victim with the sword of divine justice, and of Him it is said (Isaiah 53:10) that He made the Messiah a sin-offering. God the Father “offered,” in this sense, the Lamb of God. This was to “offer” in the first of these senses which we have named. But to “offer” in the second sense, in the capacity of Priest, was not the work of the Father but of Christ Himself. In this second and strict sense, it belonged to Christ alone, as He was Priest, to “offer,” and this He did when, upon the Cross of Calvary, He offered Himself a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour (Ephesians 5:2). By His own supreme act, Christ, as the Antitype, realised all that was typified by the blood that scarcely ceased to flow by the altar of burnt offering under the law. But over and above this primal “offering,” the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches us to regard the typical act of the high priest on the great day of atonement, when he entered into the holiest of all to be in order to “offer,” and further, that the typical entering into the holiest of all looked forward to Christ’s entering into heaven, after He rose from the dead – an entering which was in virtue of the blood, and was in order to “offer” blood. We are not suggesting that the service of the great day of atonement was not at all typical of the death of Christ, and of the offering of the sacrifice in the sense of Him giving His life to God in His death. Such a view of the spiritual meaning of the activities of the great day of atonement is impossible, in view of the facts that, on the great day of atonement, emphatically the bodies of the animals, which were for sin offerings, were burnt without the camp (Hebrews 13:11), and that Christ, the great Antitype, realised the meaning of this typical circumstance in Himself when He was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem. What is meant is, that the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews appears to us to be that part of the services of the great day of atonement, when the high priest went, with the blood of animals offered as sin offerings, into the holiest of all, had an eye mainly to Christ’s entering heaven with His own blood, and *that* is the sense in which He entered heaven after He rose from the dead, that is, when all His sufferings were past. If the question therefore be put, “What, in the sense of merit, was it that opened the grave to Jesus Christ”? The Biblical answer is, “It was His own blood.” And if the question be put, “What was it that opened the doors of heaven, doors which were shut by the disobedience of the first Adam and by our own personal transgressions?” the answer is, “It was the merit of Christ’s blood.” And when He entered heaven, He was received with a welcome: “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee;” and not only so, but “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.” Melchizedec was at once a priest, priest of the Most High God, and a king – King of Salem. And so is Christ in His estate of exaltation. “He sitteth as a priest upon His throne.” And the counsel of peace is between God the Judge of all and this person that sitteth as a priest upon his throne (Zechariah 6:13). As a King everything in being, that is not God Himself, is put under His feet; heaven, earth, and hell are under His feet. But as a Priest, He still has somewhat to “offer” (Hebrews 8:3). And this offering is an offering of the merits of the obedience and sufferings of His life and death in this world. It is a continuous offering,

and this “offering” is the ground of all His petitions. In this “offering” we, so far, have light on the nature of His intercession.

What, we may well ask, can they lack who have an interest in this intercession? What can they lack who have seen their need of a propitiation, and have become debtors to God for the Lamb which He has provided, and with which He calls upon us to identify ourselves? Surely when we have said “God, and all that is not God,” we have left out nothing. But Christ’s priestly function secures that God should be “for us.” Christ’s kingly function secures that all that is not God should be made to subserve our highest interests.

III. – A question occurs as to what this intercession means for persons already justified.

In putting the question in this form we are far from suggesting that it has nothing to do with such as are yet “the children of wrath.” It is plainly revealed that it is only as Christ, as Intercessor, asks, that any soul, hitherto dead in sin, turns with repentance and faith towards God in Christ. But we put the question in this form, because, in a single discourse, one can touch only upon certain aspects, not upon all the aspects, in which the Bible teaches us to consider the intercession of Jesus. And for the present we have chosen this particular question for consideration, just because it is sure to occur to an enquiring mind to say: – Such as are in Christ are justified once and for all, and they shall never come into condemnation, the reason for that being that just as the disobedience of the first man Adam is put to the account of everyone descending from Adam by ordinary generation, so the obedience of Christ is put to the account of everyone that is united to Christ by faith, which is of the operation of God. How then can we imagine that those thus fully justified stand in need of Christ’s intercession, at least so far as the benefit of their justification is concerned?

Well, at any rate, the Scriptures plainly teach us that it is in virtue of Christ’s intercession that believers continue in a state of grace, or in a justified state. This ought to be continually felt by persons who, notwithstanding their being justified, have to acknowledge that they are so far from being able, perfectly, to keep the Commandments of God, that they do daily break them in thought, word, and deed. But it is not at all unlikely that the full force of the truth we are insisting on has ordinarily dawned upon believers, one by one, in connection with a more than ordinary severe effort, on the part of the accuser of the brethren, to cut off their hope in the mercy of God. But howsoever this doctrine be experimentally realised, certain it is that the justified are daily kept from falling from a justified state through Christ’s intercession. This is implied in Christ’s reassuring promise to Peter: “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” It was as much as to say that if Christ did not intercede for Peter, Peter’s faith would have failed him, Peter would have fallen from grace, from a justified state.

The two aspects of truth upon which we have been insisting – the perfect justification of believers once for all and their indebtedness to Christ’s intercessions for not falling from the state of justification – may seem a paradox. I would suggest that its solution is found in the fact that, in the widest sense, the reason for their justification is what may be called a reason that is “alive,” and that reason continues to act conformably to its own nature, which, of course, will be something different from what would be the case if the reason were a mere work detached from a person. But whether this solution be accepted or not, the facts which call for a solution are certain – it is impossible that those to whom Christ’s obedience unto death has been imputed should fall from the grace of a justified state, and it is also certain that but for Christ’s activities as an Intercessor, they would fall from grace in every sense of the term.

This divine arrangement whereby justified persons are kept from falling from grace, is fitted to teach us two things very impressively. First of all, the evil of sin. It is possible for one so to construe the doctrine of justification, and of the non-imputation of sin to believers, as, in the long run, to give the impression either that the sins of the Lord’s people are not

properly sins at all, or else that God looks with a kindlier eye on their sins than on those of others. It is possible, I say, for one so to construe the doctrine of justification as to indulge thoughts such as I have just now given expression to. But such a way of looking at the sins of believers or of the reason why the blessing of justification is perpetual, finds no countenance from the Bible. "Because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters, he abhorred Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:19). I have made bold, therefore, to think of Christ's constant intervention in heaven against His people falling from the state of grace thus: John Bunyan, in his "Pilgrim's Progress," tells us how "the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a place where was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it always casting much water upon it; yet did the fire burn higher and brighter." Then the Interpreter brought Christian to see the solution of this mystery. "He lead him to the back side of the wall, where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of which he did also continually cast, but secretly, into the fire." By this, of course, John Bunyan meant to teach that, apart from Christ's gracious intervention by His Word and Spirit in the heart of believers or in the court of conscience, the work of grace could not be maintained against the devil's temptations and the believer's own corruptions in the soul. But may we not say that in order to maintain grace in the soul, in order to keep the soul from falling from grace, not only is it necessary that Christ should intervene in the court of conscience by the oil of His Word and Spirit, but that in order to maintain the soul in a state of grace He must constantly appear for us in the court of heaven itself, His intercession being even there as oil, preventing any more judicial wrath? Is not that implied in its being said, "that if any sin, we have an advocate with the Father," and "that he is able to save perfectly, because he ever liveth to make intercession"?

But this activity of Christ as Intercessor is not only fitted to teach us impressively the evil of sin in the sight of God, even if that sin be the sin of persons in a justified state, but it is specially well fitted to bring the nature of that love which passeth knowledge to light. For in His intercession Christ intervenes continually between His people and death. It is not sins of peculiarly aggravated guilt, such as we may suppose to be referred to in 1 John 5:16, that in their own nature are fitted to cause the believer to fall from grace, and which, apart from Christ's intercession, would actually thus affect them; but, inasmuch as every sin is hell deserving, and inasmuch as the Lord's people must acknowledge daily, hourly sins, even these sins would, of their own nature, and apart from Christ's constant intervention, cause them to fall from grace. What love thus appears in Christ's incessant intervention on our behalf! And what love does thus appear to have been in Christ's death! For the intercession merely makes explicit what is already implicit in His death. There is not an instance in which Christ intercedes for us in heaven, but means that He puts His life between us and death, even the life that He gave in sacrifice to God upon the cross. Of how many forfeitures have we been guilty? But Christ, by interceding on our behalf, by pleading the merits of His sacrifice on our behalf, as much as intimates to us that He would sooner die, and die, and die again, than that we should perish! But He need not die, for His one death was equivalent to millions of millions, yea to an innumerable number of deaths. It is as we are conscious of coming short of God's glory, and as we are conscious of our need of Christ's intercession, and as we realise in ourselves that virtue goes forth from Him to heal us, that we begin to have an inkling of the nature of that love that many waters could not drown, a love that passeth knowledge, a love that virtually died such an innumerable number of deaths for us, a love therefore with which the destruction of its objects is not compatible. It is the manifoldness of His death – a death in which, as Antitype, He realised the significance, not only of the frequent typical sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, which were for sins that could be specified, but also of the daily, yea almost constant, burnt-offerings, which were for sins that

could not be specified, and the manifoldness of the love which many waters could not drown, that is brought out in these incessant interventions on our behalf.

IV. – As we began this discourse by inquiring into the grounds of one's confidence in an interest in this intercession, so would we now close by an appeal to your experience.

Christ's intercession is all-prevailing, and has blessed results following it. It is on account of this intercession, that godly sorrow for corruption and for daily shortcomings is kept alive in the heart. What know we of it?

It is on account of this intercession that mourners in Zion, mourning on account of sin and transgression, receive the oil of joy, in their being anew enabled to exercise faith upon the Lamb of God, and in their being anew enabled to apprehend that forgiveness is still their own. Great forgiveness to great transgressors. What know we of it?

It is in answer to Christ's intercession in heaven that mourners in Zion have not the Holy Spirit taken away from them utterly, as they deserve; but, on the contrary, have the joys of God's salvation restored to them, and they are upheld by His free Spirit. What know we of it?
[March 1914]

A Sermon.

By the REV. JAMES S. SINCLAIR, John Knox's, Glasgow.

[Taken down by a hearer, and revised by the author.]

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” – Hebrews 10:14.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is largely devoted to a discourse upon the priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ. The inspired writer undertakes to show that the priesthood of Christ was incomparably superior to the priesthood that obtained under the old dispensation. God had certainly appointed the Levitical priesthood, but He did not design that that priesthood should always continue. The Levitical priesthood was only appointed as a shadow or figure of better things that were yet to come. It shadowed forth the priestly work of the Son of God who was called to this office even from all eternity and who would appear “in the flesh” in due time.

Now, in looking at the words before us for a short time, in dependence on the Spirit of Truth, let us observe,

I. – in the first place, the Person of the High Priest who is here brought under our notice; then,

- II. – in the second place, let us consider the “one offering” which He presented unto God;
- III. – in the third place, let us observe the perfection which He produces by this one offering: and
- IV. – in the last place, let us notice the description that is here given of the persons who are perfected by His offering.

I. – Let us notice first, briefly, the Person of the High Priest who is spoken of in our text.

The High Priest is evidently none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The inspired apostle sets forth the constitution of the person of the great High Priest whom God had appointed, and the work which He came to accomplish. If you study the first and second chapters of this Epistle, you will see a wonderful account of the person of the Lord Jesus. He is set before us as none other than the Son of God by a mysterious eternal generation. The Father said to Him, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” He is also described as a Son who is co-equal with the Father in the ever-blessed Godhead. For it is written that “Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy Kingdom,” while He is further addressed as the divine Creator of heaven and earth. “And thou, Lord, hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hand.” Now, my friends, it is perfectly plain that the great High Priest of our New Testament profession is a divine person, “God over all blessed for ever.” He exercises His priestly office in His divinity as well as in His humanity. It is the Son of God as a divine, eternal person, who has been called to the discharge of this important office. The Father, as representing the dignity and love of the ineffable Godhead in relation to the fallen children of men, called the Son to perform the work of a priest as a part of His great task as Mediator of the new Covenant. “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” Observe, further, that the Great High Priest possesses in the constitution of His Person a real human nature. In the fulness of the time, and with a view to perform His work of sacrificial obedience and suffering unto death, He humbled himself and became flesh – very man as well as very God. “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” The High Priest, therefore, as He stands before us in the estates of humiliation and exaltation is the eternal Son in human nature, the Word “made flesh.”

It is plain also, from many passages of Scripture, that He was active in His divine as well as in His human nature during the discharge of His priestly office upon earth. It was He who was “upholding all things by the word of his power,” who “by himself purged our sins,” and then “sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). It is further declared that “Christ . . . through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God” (Hebrews 9:14). And again, the apostle proclaims, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, that it was God’s dear Son, by whom “all things were created that are in heaven and that are in earth,” who “made peace through the blood of his cross.”

II. – Let me now proceed, in the second place, to observe the “one offering” which He presented unto God.

1. You will clearly see from the context that the inspired writer is making a contrast between this “one offering” and the many sacrifices that went before under the ceremonial law. By this contrast he emphasises the pre-eminent worth and virtue of Christ’s sacrifice. Let us notice two things in connection with those ancient sacrifices which will make plain the apostle’s point in the matter – first, their intended use, and secondly, their special *inefficacy*.

(1) Let us observe, then, *the use* of those sacrifices. They were manifestly of divine appointment. We are not to think of them as some men do nowadays, who do not hesitate to suggest that they were the crude products of a barbarous or degenerate age. The so-called

higher critics look upon the Jews as partaking of the same spirit with the heathen nations around them in the matter of offering bloody sacrifices, and of supposing that the Most High was needing to be propitiated, and could be propitiated by the sacrifice of slain beasts. They regard such a manner of worship as a Pagan way of dealing with God on behalf of sin. Now, this is an absolutely erroneous view of the case, and proceeds from an unenlightened and unholy opposition to the principle of satisfaction to divine justice by an atonement. The same critics have no right view of the atonement of Christ. We joyfully accept the plain testimony of the Bible on the subject of atonement, and pity those who reject it. The witness of both Testaments is harmonious throughout. Nothing can be clearer than that the ancient sacrifices offered by the Church were directly appointed by God from the beginning. Abel and Moses are outstanding witnesses to the truth of this.

Now, the use of these sacrifices was two-fold. For one thing, under the ceremonial law, God declared that certain actions were “unclean.” If a person, for example, happened to touch the dead body of a human being or the carcass of an unclean beast, that person was defiled, and would require to be cleansed by sacrifice from the defilement. Death is the fruit of sin, and so the people were taught the desirability of shunning all contact with the moral evil of sin, and the necessity of applying to the divine provision for cleansing when they came under its influence. An immediate use of those sacrifices was the removal of ceremonial defilement.

But there was another use, namely, to point out the way by which God would take away sin in the fulness of the time. By these sacrifices He impressed upon the people, in the first instance, the solemn facts that they were sinners, justly obnoxious to eternal death, and that they required an atonement of blood to be made for their souls; and then, secondly, that He had provided a remedy whereby sin could be taken away – even a priest and a sacrifice – in the person of the coming Messiah. Thus from the sacrifices of the ceremonial law, they could get a glimpse by faith beforehand of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who would appear in due time to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

It is very clear, then, my friends, that those sacrifices had very important uses. They were appointed by divine wisdom as means of spiritual and saving instruction to the children of Israel under an economy of shadows and figures of “good things to come.” Though without efficacy to make real atonement for sin, they possessed an efficacy of teaching with respect to the future atonement by Christ.

(2) Let us notice the special *inefficacy* of those former sacrifices. The apostle points this out in the chapter before us. I take it that the Jewish people had fallen into practical error on the subject. Many of them rested in the shadows and figures. They brought their bullocks and goats to the altar and imagined that the blood of these was sufficient in itself to take away, not merely ceremonial, but positively moral, defilement. They failed to look beyond these offerings to the one great sacrifice which was to be offered by the Messiah in due time. The Apostle therefore reminds them of the constant frequency of the legal sacrifices which proclaimed their inefficacy to take away sin. They had to be repeated over and over again. “The law . . . can never with these sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For, then, would they not have ceased to be offered?” God had no delight or satisfaction in these sacrifices in themselves – that He had such delight was the error the Jews were ready to fall into – His satisfaction was found in the great object whom the sacrifices “of the law” prefigured, even His own Son, Jesus Christ, who said “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” It mattered not how numerous the sacrifices were; they were entirely inefficacious to satisfy divine justice or purge the guilty conscience. The blood of irrational animals had been shed all down the centuries from Adam to Christ – a vast ocean of blood was poured forth – but all that blood could not make atonement for the guilt of rational beings, could not take away one single sin, the smallest sin that had ever been committed by any member of the human race. But, on the other hand, here is one offering – not a thousand

or a million offerings, but one – and by this single offering, the innumerable sins of a countless multitude of transgressors were swept away in a moment into everlasting forgetfulness. He made an end of sins and brought in everlasting righteousness.

2. Now, let us observe more closely the nature of the “one offering” by which the Son of God has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. That offering was, in one word, Himself. Over and over again is it stated in the Scriptures that He “offered up Himself” to God. The offering here has particular reference to His surrender of Himself to the accursed death of the cross and His endurance of all the shame and suffering implied in that death. In an important respect He was giving Himself to God in a way of obedience and suffering during His whole life on earth, but nothing less than the suffering of death could make a complete atonement for sin. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” He perfected his work of substitutionary obedience when He shed His blood upon the cross.

(1) Observe then, that *the material* of the “one offering” which Christ, as the High Priest, offered to God was Himself, or in other words, His human nature, consisting of soul and body. The word “Himself,” in the fullest extent of its meaning, would embrace His divine as well as His human nature. But it was not possible, in the nature of things, that His divine nature could suffer, and when it is stated that He “offered up himself,” it is not meant that He offered up His divine nature as a sacrifice to God. Still, at the same time, we must very carefully remember that His human nature was in union with His divine person during all the days of His obedience and suffering upon earth, and that when He endured the accursed death of the cross, His suffering humanity was all the time in vital union with His eternal Godhead. His Godhead was active, though not suffering, in all the transactions of Calvary. In this way the infinite dignity of His divine Person gave immeasurable value to the obedience and suffering of that humanity which was in personal union with it.

The material, then, of the offering, as consisting of a human nature in personal union with the eternal Son of God, was of infinite worth and value. This may be illustrated as follows: – The body of a great king among the sons of men may be intrinsically no better in itself than the body of one of the meanest of his subjects, but, inasmuch as its possessor is a man of high dignity, it shares in the dignity. All he does in and by the body is regarded as done by himself, and possesses importance in proportion to the loftiness of the position he occupies in the world. Should he be willing to sacrifice himself in any way on behalf of his subjects, the sacrifice is rightly estimated at all the greater value owing to the dignity of his person. Thus we may see, by an imperfect illustration, the incalculable value of that sacrificial offering which the eternal Son, Jesus Christ, presented on the altar of His divinity to the Father.

(2) Let us notice, further, *the manner* of the offering. Christ offered His holy humanity in a way of obedience and suffering, with a view to satisfy the claims of law and justice. It was for these ends “He took part” of flesh and blood.

The Scriptures clearly teach us that this was the device of infinite mercy and wisdom for the redemption of a guilty people from sin and the curse. The Son of God comes forth from the Father and humbles Himself to assume into personal union with His Godhead, a real but holy human nature, taken from one belonging to the fallen race of Adam, and in the character of a surety and substitute for a company which no man can number of this race, He meets the claims of law and justice against them, which they were perfectly unable to satisfy, and offers a suitable and sufficient sacrifice on their behalf in the obedience and sufferings of His life and death.

It is to be observed, then, that while the obedience and sufferings of the bullocks and goats and other animals offered under the law were unintelligent, compulsory, and of no moral value, it was quite different with the Son of God, the glorious ante-type. His was an *intelligent* sacrifice in the highest degree, a most suitable substitute in the room of rational, though fallen beings of Adam’s race. He possessed the human soul in all its faculties, and He

was well acquainted with the will of Him who sent Him. “As the Father knoweth me,” He said, “so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.” He offered Himself, also, a *willing* sacrifice. He declared that it was His “meat and drink to do the will” of the Father. He hid not His face from shame and spitting, but willingly gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. “The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” His, still further, was a *holy* sacrifice. It is written concerning Him: “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” He loved the holy law, which His people had broken, with all His soul and strength and mind, and hated sin with an infinite hatred. He bore all the sufferings inflicted upon Him with humble and holy acquiescence in the righteousness of the law which required them. Perfect purity characterised all His thoughts, words, and actions during all the period of His suffering unto death. “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). And lastly, His was an *infinitely God-glorifying* sacrifice. He said, “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). He obeyed and suffered all that was necessary to be accomplished to the glory of the divine perfections. The sword of justice awoke against Him. The call went forth from the Father, “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow,” and He lovingly endured inexpressible sufferings in body and soul at the hands of men and devils and the righteous Judge of all. The sacrifice was enveloped in the hot but holy fire of God’s infinite wrath, and the incense that ascended from it into the presence of Jehovah was perfumed with those graces of knowledge, filial submission, holy obedience, love to God’s glory, and love to the souls of perishing sinners which characterised the adorable Jesus as Priest and Sacrifice. He magnified the law as a covenant of works, and unfolded the riches of the covenant of grace for the complete and everlasting redemption of sinners. Here, then, my friends, you may clearly see that Christ in His obedience and sufferings unto death is the “one offering” whereby you and I can obtain eternal redemption. Looking unto Jesus alone, we shall find in Him all that our souls shall need in view of death, judgment, and an endless eternity.

III. – But this leads me now to speak, in the third place, of the perfection He has accomplished by this one offering. “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” What perfection is this?

It is to be noticed that the word, “perfect,” is used in various senses in Holy Scripture. It is sometimes employed in a comparative sense. “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,” says the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians, second chapter. There he refers to the perfection of regeneration, or of spiritual maturity. Believers are “perfect,” as compared with unbelievers; and some Christians are “perfect,” in the sense of having reached a greater maturity of knowledge and godliness than others. Then the word is used in an absolute sense. “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” The Lord Jesus here points out to His disciples the goal of absolute perfection which they were to seek as matter of attainment – perfect conformity to the character and will of their Father in heaven. I may say that the perfection spoken of in our text appears to be complex in its nature, both absolute and comparative. Let us notice the respects in which the Great High Priest has perfected His people.

1. Christ, by His one offering, has perfected them *in relation to the requirements of law and justice*. He has made a perfect atonement for all their sins.

Those for whom Christ acted in His priestly office during the days of His flesh were under condemnation, and could by no means find access to the favour and fellowship of God unless the demands of the righteous law were satisfied. Now, the Lord Jesus, by His one substitutionary offering, has perfectly satisfied the requirements of God’s justice. He endured

the full penalty of disobedience in their room and stead, suffering for sins, “the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” His satisfaction may be called infinitely perfect, for it was the satisfaction of Him who was both God and man – “God manifest in the flesh.” Such perfect satisfaction the law could never have received from any or all of the race of Adam, though they had continued in original innocence. Here is Immanuel – God in our nature – obeying His own law and satisfying His own justice. He has magnified the law and made it honourable before the whole universe. As covered with the merits of His obedience unto death, His people stand perfect in the presence of the law as a covenant of works. They stand perfect in the presence of the righteous Judge, who must exact all that that covenant requires from the guilty. God, as lawgiver, beholds the whole election of grace perfect in Christ. “He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Such all of them were in Christ, as their representative, at the moment He finished the work which was given Him to do, but the truth of it had to be applied, individually and experimentally, to a vast multitude of them in the succeeding ages – a work, indeed, that will not be completed until the end of time.

2. Then, secondly, I observe as a consequence of this perfection in Christ, that they are personally made “*perfect as pertaining to the conscience.*”

The sacrifices of the law could not make the worshippers thus perfect. They were quite insufficient to satisfy the requirements of an awakened and enlightened conscience. They were not intended for this purpose, though the spiritually ignorant were no doubt finding a superficial satisfaction and rest in them. The Lord desired that sinners should look through and beyond these sacrifices to “the Lamb” who was to appear in due time to take away sin “by the sacrifice of himself,” and those who were savingly taught were longing for the coming of this Lamb of God in whose work they should behold a perfect remedy for sin and all its consequences.

Let us notice, then, that the Divine High Priest by His one offering has provided perfect satisfaction for the conscience. The conscience is the vicegerent of God in man’s soul. It has suffered considerably by the Fall, but when awakened and instructed by the Spirit of God through the word of truth, it does its proper work with power, and makes its voice to be heard by the poor sinner. The conscience then re-echoes the just demands of the law, and calls for satisfaction to these demands. Possibly the soul who has such a conscience may for a season run to a great variety of expedients wherewith to stay the law’s requirements and pacify the voice within, but no real or abiding rest is found. The best works of fallen men are utterly insufficient to give the necessary peace, for they are corrupt in heart, if not in form. Thus it comes to pass that, not till the poor sinner flees to Christ unreservedly as the one atoning sacrifice, is he made perfect as pertaining to the conscience. Then, and then alone, does his conscience find the perfect satisfaction which is suited to its constitution and graciously provided by God in the gospel.

True it is that the children of God are not always able to retain this peace in experience. Darkness and unbelief and sometimes mistaken views of the way of life interfere with their happiness in this respect. But still they are not entirely cut off from Christ, though they lose their hold in conscious experience of their perfect acceptance in Him. The blessed Spirit leads them anew to His feet, and enables them again and again to act faith on His perfect sacrifice, and they can bear testimony at such seasons. “I find perfect satisfaction, perfect rest, perfect peace there. When I come as a poor sinner to the precious blood of atonement, and rest by faith on the word in which it is held forth, I am made perfect as to satisfaction for the present and hope for the future; I need nothing else and want nothing more than ‘Jesus Christ and Him crucified.’”

3. Still further, my friends, let us observe that Christ has perfected His people in the sense that by this one offering *He has made perfect provision as to their complete sanctification*. Wherein does this appear?

Well, observe that His name was called Jesus, because He should “save his people from their sins.” He died, not only to save poor sinners from the guilt of their sins, but from the power of their sins. He offered the one sacrifice with a view to make His people holy as well as just – with a view to regenerate and sanctify them as well as to pardon and justify them. He hath perfected in Himself the means whereby He shall make them perfect inwardly in their souls, as well as outwardly in their relation to God. The Apostle elsewhere tells us that “Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27). It may be said that the people of God are *potentially* perfected in Christ as to their sanctification as well as their justification. Everything is in the glorious Redeemer that is necessary to make them holy even as God is holy. As the result of His finished work, Christ has received the Holy Spirit in His saving influences that He may send the Spirit forth to communicate all the blessings of the covenant to His redeemed ones, and thus gives them possession of the inheritance in all its perfect completeness. And if you read the succeeding context, you will see that sanctification as well as justification is in the immediate view of the Apostle. “Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, said the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

4. Let us observe, lastly, in this connection, that Christ has perfected his people “for ever.” It is everlasting perfection He bestows.

This is pre-eminently the case in regard to His representative work on their behalf. He perfected them as to the requirements of law and justice by His one sacrifice, and that perfection can never be annulled, but will stand fast for ever. Similarly, their justification, on the ground of His righteousness, in a day of power, can never be changed. The act of justification on God’s part is complete, perfect, unalterable, and everlasting. The inward changes they experience in their apprehension of their justification do not make void God’s gift or alter their actual and gracious relationship. Their perfect justification is “for ever”. Still, again, though they do not always enjoy inward peace in their consciences, through the inroads of remaining sin, yet they are beside the well of life and will never be vitally separated from it, but will be led again and again to betake themselves by faith to Christ crucified, and find the same perfect satisfaction and rest in their souls as they did at first. Then, their potential sanctification in Christ is also an enduring inheritance which will be enjoyed in its perfect fulness beyond death in the land of eternal uprightness.

IV. – Our fourth and last general head is the description given of the people who are perfected by Christ’s offering, “them that are sanctified.”

Now, friends, the word “sanctified” is used here and elsewhere in this Epistle, not so much in the sense of inward positive holiness, as in the sense of deliverance from guilt and defilement. Those “that are sanctified” in the sense of our text are not those who have been made perfectly holy in heart and life. Not such at all; but those who, by grace, have come to “the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of Abel,” and have been cleansed from reigning guilt and impurity. Every justified person is one of the sanctified in the sense of our text. “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Every poor soul, therefore, who has been led to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness is sanctified in the sense of our Apostle here. His conscience has been purged from guilt in a day of mercy, and he has been separated from a world lying in wickedness in his life and

conversation. Now all these have been perfected by Christ in the manner already imperfectly explained. He has made perfect provision for their everlasting acceptance before God, and their everlasting enjoyment of all gospel benefits. They have a perfect High Priest who has offered a perfect sacrifice, and obtained a perfect redemption to meet their soul's necessities in time and for ever and ever.

Well, my friends, in conclusion, it should be a matter of serious enquiry with each one of us as to whether we are among the sanctified or not. Have we found out to begin with, that as fallen creatures we are among the unsanctified, the unholy, the corrupt, the guilty, the hell-deserving? Have we been led to see that if left to ourselves we shall be with wicked men and the devil and his angels at last? Have we been disposed and enabled to look to the Lord Jesus alone as our Saviour, Redeemer, High Priest and perfect Sacrifice? If so, then we are among them that are sanctified. We may sometimes feel as if it was only more corrupt and unholy we were getting instead of growing in grace, but if the sense of indwelling sin leads us to look to and depend more and more upon Christ as our all in all, and causes us to be more tender and watchful in our life and conversation, it is well. Your complete perfection is in Christ, and will be seen in all its glory and beauty at the last day. On the other hand, pause and consider, you, my hearers, who have no sense of these things pertaining to sin and redemption. If you do not turn to God in Christ by repentance and faith in the days of time, you will yet be perfectly conformed to the image of Satan, and shall suffer along with him in the place of never-ending misery. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The Lord in His infinite mercy open your eyes to see your sins, and to flee for cleansing, renewing and perfect pardon and acceptance to the great High Priest of our profession, now entered within the veil and yet drawing near to us in the Gospel. "Able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." May the Lord bless to us His Word!

[April 1914]

