

Notes of a Lecture.

By the REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.

“And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” – 2 Samuel 9:1.

Although this portion of Scripture is neither a parable nor a type, it is quite legitimate to make spiritual use of it. David’s enquiry here is like the call of the Gospel sent forth to sinners. In making this use of it I shall mention the points as I proceed.

1. The person who sends forth the call –

King David, who is now king of the twelve tribes of Israel, and who seeks to do good to his subjects, even his enemies. In like manner the call of the Gospel is sent forth by God, who is King of the universe, and who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in redemption, and who invites sinners to Him through the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, that He may do everlasting good to them. Seeing, then, that it is God that invites you to come to Him, you have the highest authority to obey the call. You need not ask permission of a minister, priest, or any fellow-creature. This is a great privilege. “Arise, then, for the Master calleth thee.”

2. The persons to whom the call is addressed. –

King David’s call was to those of the house of Saul. You know that Saul was a great enemy to David. The call of the Gospel is to enemies. All the human race are enemies in their minds to God, and showing their enmity by wicked works (Colossians 1:21). Sin is the cause of this enmity. It caused enmity between God and man and between man and man. It is as an enemy you are called, and not better than an enemy. You are called to come as an enemy to be reconciled to God by Jesus Christ.

David’s call was to *any one* of the house of Saul. The call of the Gospel is *universal*, addressed to each and all to whom the Word of God comes. “Preach the gospel to every creature.” “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.” Any sinner who hears the Word of the Lord – young or old, rich or poor, yea, the chief of sinners – is invited. So long as you are in the land of the living you are invited. But the call is not to sinners who have passed from time to eternity. David’s call was to *any* “left of the house of Saul”. Many of that house had died. The call was not to them. In like manner the call of the Gospel is not to those that have died, but to those that are living. Many of our fellow-sinners have died since we were born, and the great majority died in their sins, and are now lost for ever in the place of everlasting despair. What a wonder that we are still left to hear the gracious call of the Gospel!

3. By David’s inquiry there was a person found –

Mephibosheth. The Gospel call will find some sinners who will, by grace, obey the call. What was the condition in which this man was?

(1) He was all exile, far away from Jerusalem – the seat of worship – where the name of God was known, and where the Gospel was proclaimed.

(2) He was in poverty, having lost the inheritance that belonged to him by birth, being of the royal family. So are sinners. By sin we lost God, His image, and all that belonged to us in our first creation. We are, by nature, far away from God – like the prodigal – and in exile, fearing the execution of the sentence of death: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

(3) He was lame in both his feet. How did he become lame? By a fall. When his father and grandfather were killed in battle, his nurse fled with him at the age of five years, fearing that they also might be killed; and in the hurry the child (and probably the nurse too) fell and broke his two legs, and thus he became lame. In like manner sinners are lame in both feet. How did we become lame? By a fall – a far worse fall than the fall of Mephibosheth. The nurse in whose arms we were was the first Adam, and when he sinned and fell from the state in which he was created, we sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. Pelagians do not believe this, but by their practice they prove that they are lame. Their practice contradicts their theory. What are the feet on which we are lame? We are lame on the foot of *faith* and we are lame on the foot of *obedience*. When man sinned he ceased to believe God and he ceased to obey His law and to walk in the way of His commandments. This is true not only of the first man, but also of all his posterity that descended from him by ordinary generation. You have only to look at men's practice as they are in a state of nature as an evidence of this. Some are avowed atheists – all are practical atheists – and do not walk in the way of God's commandments. The Sabbath day will show that sinners are lame on both their feet. They do not believe the Word of God nor obey His law.

4. A messenger was sent to bring Mephibosheth to King David. The Gospel must be sent to sinners, or they must come to the place where the Gospel is preached before they can come to God. Some, in ignorance of the Scriptures, are of the opinion that the heathen may come to God without the Gospel message, but there is not one instance of this in the history of the human race. It is therefore a delusion, and a sign that those who hold this view are not taught of God. They make a Bible of their own heart. The commission given by Christ to His apostles, to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” condemns this false idea.

5. The reception Mephibosheth received when brought to David. David spoke kindly to him. He was full of fear when he appeared before the king. Perhaps he thought that on account of his grandfather's enmity to David, he was sent for to be killed. So David said, “Fear not.” When the sinner appears before God under conviction of sin he is afraid that God will punish him for his sins. But, like David, it is to show kindness to the sinner God cites him to appear at His bar. It is a work of great kindness on the part of God to convince sinners in a day of mercy of their sins, that they may cry for mercy, while others are left to discover their sinfulness in eternity in the place of everlasting torment. But it is a greater kindness to speak peace and comfort to the guilty sinner through the blood of Christ – to pardon all his sins and to remember them no more – and that on a ground on which He is just and the Justifier of Him that believes in Jesus. “Who is a God like unto thee” that does this?

6. David restored to him the inheritance that belonged to Saul but which was now in the possession of David, and at his disposal to give to whomsoever he pleased. And withal Mephibosheth was now to live in the royal palace, to be fed at the king's table, and to be attended to as a prince. What a contrast to his condition in Lo-debar! When the sinner is reconciled to God through the blood of Christ the inheritance which he forfeited by sin is restored to him; God is the lot of his inheritance, his portion; life eternal, grace, and glory are his; and he is now adopted into God's family and has a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. He lives in the palace of the King; is fed at the King's table, eating the bread of life and drinking the water of life; and when he is prepared for heaven – made “all glorious within” – by the work of sanctification, he shall be brought with gladness into the Father's house above, to join the happy company there in the everlasting song, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto

God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever, Amen". This is no fable or an imaginary thing. It is God's word of truth.

7. All the kindness shown to Mephibosheth by David was done for the sake of another – Jonathan, his father. In like manner, all the kindness God shows to the believer – both in the state of grace and glory – is shown to him not for the sake of any merit of his own, but entirely for the sake of Jesus Christ, who alone merited all the blessings of salvation for His people by His obedience unto death. This is clearly revealed in the Word of God, and all who are taught of the Lord know it. It is in judgment hid from those that perish. Oh, sinner, pray that God may open your blind eyes to see the way of salvation by Jesus Christ.

8. The kindness which David showed to Mephibosheth was in pursuance of a *covenant*. David and Jonathan entered into a covenant, in which David bound himself by an oath that he would show kindness to Jonathan's posterity, which he now begins to perform to his needy son. In like manner, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, entered into a covenant, the Father promising to give eternal life to Christ's seed or posterity on condition that the Son should perform His part of the covenant, which cost Him His humiliation unto death. This is the covenant of grace, which is everlasting, "ordered in all things and sure." When Christ fulfilled the conditions of the covenant the Father said to Him, "Ask of me, and I will give thee". Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

9. Although Mephibosheth was now in the palace of the king, living not at his own expense but at the expense of the king, yet he was still lame on both his feet.

The believer, notwithstanding his privileges, as justified, adopted, and made a new creature in Christ, is still lame on both his feet; not, however, so lame as he was in his natural state. He is lame in his faith and he is lame in his obedience. It was to His disciples Christ said, "O ye of little faith." The believer is lame in his obedience. He is not yet perfect in his obedience. He never yet managed to think a perfect thought, speak a perfect word, or perform a perfect action. If he is a preacher he finds that he never preached a perfect sermon, never prayed a perfect prayer – that is, without sin in some form mingling with his endeavour after new obedience. This keeps him from depending in any degree on any thing he does as a ground of salvation, in whole or in part. He is shut up entirely to Christ's finished and perfect work as the only ground of his hope for eternity.

He is imperfect in his nature. Sin still dwells in him; it dwells in all the faculties and powers of his soul – in his mind, will, and affections. There is saving knowledge in his mind and there is ignorance in his mind; there is willingness in his will and there is rebellion in his will; there is holiness in his affections and there is unholiness in his affections too. Grace and sin dwell together in the soul of the believer. The "new man" and the "old man" dwell in the same house. If a murderer dwelt in the same house with you, how dangerous your condition would be! What would you do to protect your life? You will say, "I would put the murderer in one room, and I would live in another apartment and lock the door." But you are to remember that there is no partition between grace and sin in the soul. Hence your danger. You need, therefore, to be always on the watch, and however watchful you may be, it is God only that can protect you from your enemy. The struggle between grace and sin shall continue till death, when the believer shall be completely, and for ever, delivered from sin and all imperfections, and shall enter heaven perfectly holy, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." It shall not be known on his appearance that he ever sinned. There shall not be any lameness in him then.

10. The effect that David's kindness had on Mephibosheth.

(1) *Thankfulness*. – “He bowed himself before the king,” which was an expression of gratitude for the benefits bestowed on him. When you give a penny to a needy beggar he takes off his cap, bows to you, and says, “Thank you.” How much more thankful Mephibosheth was for the dignity to which David raised him, and the blessings which he conferred upon him!

(2) *Humility*. – There can be no doubt but his bowing to David was a token of his humility. David was a king, and he a poor man, and to receive such favour in the sight of the king, instead of puffing him up with pride, had the effect of humbling him.

(3) *A sense of unworthiness*. – He said, “What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?” A living dog may be of some value, but a dead dog is worthless and loathsome.

(4) He is now willing to be David’s *servant* – lame as he is. If he could not walk to serve the king, he could use his tongue to speak well of him to all with whom he came in contact. “Thy servant,” he said.

The application of all this to the believer is obvious. The believer is thankful to the Lord for raising him out of the dust, and lifting him out of the dunghill, in which he was by nature, and setting him with the princes of His people. Indeed, he never thanked the Lord in sincerity and truth till he was converted. But now he sings in the language of the Psalmist – “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits”. Not only so, but he desires that others would praise Him – “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!”

But he is not always in a frame of mind to thank and praise the Lord. The Pharisee, like a machine, could thank the Lord at any time he liked, but his thanks were *lip-thanks*. They did not spring from grace in the heart. There are many professors of religion of that kind. Such are as ready to sing vain songs as they are to sing praise to the Lord, yea, readier, for it is more congenial to their carnal taste. But if the believer is not always able to sing praise to the Lord, he will not sing the vain song. He will leave it to those who think that they can serve two masters – Satan and God – a thing that is impossible. He is dependent on grace for every duty. When he gets an evidence of his interest in Christ, he resumes his work – a pleasant work – of thanksgiving to the Lord for His mercy to him. “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness: to the end that my glory may give praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.”

Like Mephibosheth, the Lord’s loving-kindness humbles him. There is such a thing as *proud humility*, which is to be found in nominal professors of religion for getting a high position in the Church or in the State. When Samuel told Saul that he was to be king over Israel, he (Saul) showed great humility – “Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore, then, speakest thou so to me?” But Saul showed in his after life that his humility was not real. It was quite different from the humility of Saul of Tarsus after his conversion. When the Lord exalted him to the high position of an apostle, he said, in sincerity and in truth, “I am less than the least of all the saints”. The greater the favour the Lord showed to him, the humbler he became. He did not say merely that he was less than the least of all the *apostles*, but “less than the least of all the *saints*”.

Is it a fact that the believer considers himself less than all his brethren and sisters in the Church? If he is in a healthy state, conscious of his own unworthiness and the Lord’s mercy to him in not dealing with him according to desert, I believe it is a fact. He esteems all of whom he is sure that they are in a state of grace, better than himself. He does not wonder so much that the Lord would save other sinners as that He would save himself. This is really the

experience of the true Christian. What brought him to this estimate of himself? The loving-kindness of the God of salvation. Nothing else could do it. Although he should be suspended over hell-fire for many years under law work, that could not work true humility in him. It is God's grace in Christ that humbles the proud sinner and keeps him humble. We are not, however, to think that there is no pride in him at the humblest. There is, but that causes him pain and sorrow, and it forms part of the evil "that he would not". It is a member of the body of sin and death, under which he groans for deliverance.

The loving-kindness of the Lord produces a deep sense of unworthiness in him. What did Mephibosheth think of himself when David showed him such kindness? Did he say he was worthy of it? No, but he said in effect, "I am no more worthy of it than a dead dog." This is what grace works in the believer. He is made sensible that he is no more worthy of salvation – in the sense of meriting it – than a dead dog. He is saved by grace – the free favour of God – the original source from which every blessing of salvation flows to the sinful children of men. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5).

Those who think that they can merit salvation are under a great delusion, and are ignorant of God's plan of redemption. This gracious plan is hid from the wise and prudent but revealed unto babes – those that are born again of the Spirit. Not only does the Christian not merit salvation by anything he did in a state of nature; he does not merit it by anything he does in the state of grace. Although he would do the largest amount of good works by grace during his time on earth which any Christian ever did, he is at death as shut up to free grace as he was when he began his Christian course. He cannot – yea, he *will not* – claim salvation on the ground of anything he has done or suffered in the Lord's service. He is a *debtor* to free grace entering heaven.

May the Lord add His blessing to these remarks, and to His name be the praise. Amen.

[May 1914]

A Sermon.

By the late REV. FINLAY COOK, Reay (1778-1858).

[Preached in the First Free Church, Thurso, on Monday of the Communion in June, 1855. The preacher was then seventy-seven years of age. The sermon is taken from the "Ministers and Men in the Far North," by the late Rev. Alexander Auld, Orlig.]

"If we walk in, the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin" – 1 John 1:7.

We are met together, professing to thank God for His goodness – for our privilege in having got another opportunity of renewing our vows and of binding ourselves afresh to Him in a well-ordered covenant. We must soon separate, each to his own home, and these words in the text are very suitable for the meditation of Christians going out again to the world: “If we walk in the light,” etc. We are walking on the way to eternity. You and I will soon be there. Where shall we meet in eternity? What shall be our dwelling-place? Who shall be our companions? What shall be our portion? Now, some are going to heaven and some to hell; and how shall we know which way we are going? The text and the verse preceding give the character of both parties. In the sixth verse it is said, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.” We lie to God, and we know that all liars shall have their portion in the lake of fire. But says one, “I am a Christian.” Then do the truth: do not walk in darkness – in the darkness of wickedness – darkness of worldliness – darkness of error. Sin, alas! hath brought us all into darkness. In the seventh verse it is said, “But if we walk in the light”. This, then, is the way in which those who are going to heaven walk – they walk in the light as Christ is in the light; they have fellowship one with another; and being poor sinners, they have the blood of Jesus cleansing them from all sin. Take your choice now. Here are both ways set before you – light and darkness. Which do you desire to walk in? “Well, I’ll think of it, and begin to-morrow.” Long since that to-morrow was looked for. It will ruin many of us. When to-morrow comes, I fear it will not be known that ever we read the Bible, heard of God, or had an offer of the Saviour. Now, let us look for a little –

I. – At the character of believers. They walk in the light as Christ is in the light. They are, indeed, often in darkness in their own experience, but never in the darkness of the world.

II. – Consider their fellowship. They have fellowship one with another. The sheep do not care to keep company with the goats.

III. – Consider their encouragement. Whatever of sin is in them, yet the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth them from all sin.

I. – They walk in the light. Christ Himself is the light. He is the true light that shineth in darkness. He is the life, and the life is the light of men (John 1:4,5). The apostles saw Him personally. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” But they had eyes to look further. “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” They saw Him thus by faith. By faith as well as by sight they saw Him, heard Him, looked upon Him, handled Him. Oh, the blessed eye of faith, that sees the beauty of Jesus; the blessed ear of faith, opened to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd; the blessed touch of faith – “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands.” It is easy to speak about faith – to prate about it like parrots; not so easy coming to the blessed experience of it. We shall not see Jesus by sight until death, but we must now, by faith, get some glimpses of the King in His beauty and of the land that is very far off. We must now behold, as in a glass darkly, the glory of the Lord, if we would be changed into His image. Oh, you who are looking and living to worldly conformity, you shall yet take fully on the image of the devil. But you walk in the light, believer. Who gave you this light? God Himself. What gives you the light of the sun? The sun itself. Until God says, “Let there be light,” the light that is in us is but darkness. And when He comes as the light, he gives us to believe that he is, and that He demands our worship in spirit and in truth. Then we begin to go to prayer, to preaching, to those who know the Lord. But even in these means we cannot rest. Many, indeed, whom the Lord never set a-seeking in quest of Himself, thus get some notions of religion. Yes, I have people in my parish who can talk about God and about faith, and who could preach, too, very well about these things, but who are really ignorant of them. And you too, believer, were

ignorant of them till God came. You remember your ignorance of a soul, of sin, of God, and how Satan took advantage of your ignorance, and made you live like the rest of the world, till God came and revealed Himself to you and set you seeking Himself. Now, you believed there was a God – a God in creation and in providence, and a God in redemption. You believed that this God revealed Himself as one God in three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – each Person having His own office in the salvation of our lost race, and each Person equal in power and glory. You believed that you could get no rest, no satisfaction, till you knew Him as reconciled; and hearing Him making offer of Himself to you, you rested your soul upon Him alone for salvation, as He is freely offered in the Gospel. Knowing the Lord, you now know the way wherein to walk. “When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me,” says Paul, “immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” There is now a walking in the light – a renouncing of the works of darkness. “I am the way,” says Jesus; “no man cometh to the Father but by me.” Coming into this way by the gate of regeneration, we now walk in the light of the living, and renounce everything that would keep us walking according to the course of this world.

Happy ye who have thus been taken, one of a city and two of a family, and brought to Zion! Will you not, this day, bless Jehovah for having not left you in the darkness of the world – for having brought you into the footsteps of the flock? Perhaps you remember some one of the Lord’s people through whom you were brought to leave the broad way. You will have fellowship with that soul yet in heaven, though now you can perhaps but weep at his grave, remembering his conversation and prayers, and fearing you will never be like him. Yet the light gains ground. Drops from heaven fall on the soul like rain upon the mown grass, and keep you following on till you shall appear before God in Zion.

More particularly as to this walking, I observe that in order to it we need *light upon the way and strength to walk in it*. There is, therefore, wrought in the soul dependence upon the good Spirit that leads to the land of uprightness. In His light faith turns earth’s midnight into heaven’s noonday. “I press toward the mark,” says Paul. The mark is before me; I see it. So I must press forward to reach the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is true that I have met with many mercies and deliverances, but these are behind me, and much of the wilderness, and Jordan also, is before me; so I must press forward in face of all opposition, giving up everything that would keep me back. The believer has, indeed, many sins that beset him, but these must be set aside by faith and repentance. Without this there can be no true walking. Tell all your lets and hindrances to Him in whose way you are walking. He is the blessed Shepherd, who will suit Himself to your case – sometimes leading, sometimes drawing, sometimes carrying you. “He feedeth his flock like a shepherd.”

Again, this walking is *a walk in the fear of God and with a tender conscience*. “I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.” “Walk before me,” says God, “and be thou perfect.” We must walk believing that His eye is upon us. God sees me at all times – in company and alone – and He sees my heart. Is my heart right with Him? Am I in His fear all the day long? Parents, how do you conduct yourselves before your families? God’s eye is upon you. Masters, how do you deal towards your servants? From God’s presence whither can you flee? Ministers, you and your people, remember it is before Jehovah that you are.

This walking is also a *walk in humility*. What makes you humble? The light of God that has entered your soul. What is the cause of all our strifes and divisions? What but pride! Oh, this must be destroyed. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble, to keep them in the way. So when pride gets up in those who are walking in the way, they may look for the whip: “a rod for the fool’s back”. You were at the table yesterday. What were you doing there? Setting Christ before you? And did you get a glimpse of Him in His humility, poverty,

lowliness, love, yet with ever an eye to His Father's glory? And will not that crucify your pride?

Lastly, as to this walking, I remark it is a *walking in love*, as Christ walked. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." Walk in love, as Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it. Follow Him; imitate Him. A child will imitate his father; a scholar his master – not that he will come up to the master, but he will write the copy after him. His fellowship will now be your chief desire. "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Did you ever meet a poor wife in the street who had lost her husband? At every one that passed by she would ask, "Did you see my husband?" So with you, believer. No one will fill His place with you but Himself. No one else would satisfy Mary. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." "I know my sheep," says Jesus, "and am known of mine." This fellowship engenders holiness of heart and life. Christ is holy, and they drink into His spirit. Drops of holiness drip into their souls through this fellowship. Secret sins thus get less, and victory over lusts of the flesh and of the mind is thus obtained. Oh, then, walk in the light, as He is in the light. Satan, indeed, will be setting baits for you, both in the world and in the closet. But He has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in thy weakness." Oh, sinner, will you not be persuaded to walk in this way – you who are walking in the world as if you were never to leave it? But the time is not far off when the world will be glad to get rid of you, and heaven's doors will be shut upon you. Oh, think of this! And you who profess the Lord's name, see that you indeed walk in Him. If I walk not in the light, as Christ is in the light, though I be an apostle, yet I will be with Judas at last.

II. – Consider what is the special mark given in the text of those who walk in the light. They have fellowship one with another. They have the same God, the same Saviour, the same indwelling spirit – ay, and the same devil. They have been enabled to break fellowship with the world, and to say, as Ruth to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." Do you say so? Well, our fellowship truly is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Will you come into this fellowship? "Our Father which art in heaven." You must begin here. You may join yourself to the people of God, but you will be as the foolish virgins till you know something of this. A child, if among strangers, will cling to his father. So you must have fellowship with the Father before the world can be empty to you, or heaven be longed for. Now, there can be no fellowship, no communion, without first union. What unites to Christ and to God in Him? Faith. What unites to His people? Love. First be united to Christ, and love, which comes out of the womb of faith, will then unite you to the brethren. By union to Christ you and they will now be branches growing on the true vine. The Lord is, indeed, cutting down the fruitful branches, and oh! to see young ones rising in their room. What a blessed sight to see young people reading the Bible, praying, conversing about eternal things! I have seen this, but I fear it is now out of fashion. When I see young people meet together, I see them – yea, even on the Lord's Day – walk and talk as lightly as if they were at a fair. Oh, young people! remember you have been baptized in the name of the Three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost – and you shall know that yet, either in mercy or in judgment. But as to this Christian fellowship. Being, as we have said, united to Christ, the blessed Spirit of God that dwells in your brother now takes possession of you, and you are now joined in heart, like Ruth and Naomi or like Jonathan and David; and when you meet you will be better of one another. I like to meet my fellow-Christian – to have him tell me of the Lord's dealings with him – of his trials and of his deliverances. Indeed, if we both knew the Lord as we ought, we would not want a subject. I like to have my fellow-Christian praying for me – giving me a promise – telling me of my evil heart, for I have one. I like also to see him mourning over sinners that are going to hell, and to see him wrestling with the Lord that He would revive His work in the Church and raise a seed to do Him service. These are the things we will have in common. There are some, indeed, who are like a bird I have

heard of – that whatever birds it met, it took feathers to suit theirs. Take you care of that – suiting yourself to the worldling, to the Pharisee, to the hypocrite. You know your own heart. Be watchful; have a sense of your own weakness; always afraid of yourself; remembering you have a deceitful heart, a corrupt mind, a tempting devil.

Now, in our fellowship there are two duties not to be forgotten. *One*, that we must bear with the infirmities of one another; and so we may when we know something of our own hearts. We need not expect to find a perfect Christian on this side of heaven, and the more forbearance the more sympathy. *Another*, we must be helpful to one another. Has your brother burdens? – help him. Is he in worldly trouble? – do what you can for him. Is he in spiritual trouble? – try and be useful to him. Alas! when through pride and self-seeking our fellowships are broken – when mutual prayer is neglected – when one will not encourage or reprove another, but when every one goes his own way! Woe to the Church that day! Oh! people of God, keep up fellowship “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I.” And see that you bear a rising generation upon your spirits. You parents, you like to see your children getting on in the world, but would you not rather see them begging from door to door if Christ were formed in their souls the hope of glory, than see them crowned heads if without the Saviour? Let us walk, then, as for eternity, in fellowship with Christ, and with one another in Him. But I am a sinner, and how can I do this? I who am shapen in sin, how can I walk thus? Well, this leads us to speak of, –

III. – The encouragement here presented. “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” Oh! believer, this is your mercy! – your cause of rejoicing! Do not say, “When I am in a better frame I will follow Christ, and walk with Him.” There is no remedy for – no destruction to – the works of darkness but the blood of Jesus. He took flesh and blood. Oh! how is it that we do not love Him? How is it that we can let Him a moment out of our thoughts, when He took our nature? The blood is the life. “The life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11). Jesus shed His blood. He could not as God die, but He took our nature, and shed His blood – hence it is called the blood of God. This makes it meritorious; puts value on it. Is not this wonderful? Jehovah, who created all things, and upholds all things, taking flesh and shedding His blood. Here go, oh sinner! if out of hell – if soul and body are yet together – go to the blood of Jesus Christ. There is enough in Him to cleanse from all sin. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” And what follows? “If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” – that is, a blessing with everything you enjoy, through the virtue of the blood of atonement. Atonement has been made by this blood. God’s broken law required a sacrifice, and Jesus gave the sacrifice. The blood was sprinkled on the book and on all the people, to show that it satisfied God and purged the sinner. Therefore, as surely as it has been offered up to God, it must be applied to your conscience. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Nothing else will do. This is the only shelter from the wrath to come. It is also peace-speaking blood. It speaks peace in heaven. The speaking of this blood brings the Spirit to your soul. Abel’s blood brought death to Cain. Christ’s blood brings mercy, pardon, love, to your soul – brings faith, repentance, and every grace – all come through this blessed channel.

The blood of bulls and of goats, of saints and of angels, could not bring one sinner to heaven, nor bring the pardon of one sin; but the blood of Christ brings the remission of all sins. It is said here, “cleanseth us from *all* sin” – from little sins, from great sins – from sins of omission, from sins of commission. Do not hide your sins from this blood. Before the Lord began to deal with you, you had buried your sins out of your sight; but now there will be a resurrection of them, and this loads you with the burden of guilt. And, oh! what a burden that is to an awakened conscience. But the precious blood of Christ can remove it. Turn not away, then, from this blood. Every time you reject it, you leave a sting in your conscience, which shall be to you yet the worm that dieth not. You have secret faults. David said, “Who can

understand his errors?" Oh! bring them to the blood. Let them give you errands to Christ. This will keep you little in your own eyes, and make Him precious to you. Are you more afraid of sin than of hell? Are you saying, "Will ever I get free of sin?" Well, you will get it removed in this blood – even now, and at length you will be as free of it as if you had never known it.

But I cannot continue. I must leave it with you. You are now going each to the world. Will your families and neighbours take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus? Go not out in your own strength. "If thy presence go not with us," said Moses. "My angel shall go with you." "Oh! no, even an angel will not put up with us. Come with us Thyself." "Well, My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." Depend on the Lord alone, and beware of grieving His Spirit from your soul. I read of a lady of whom it was said she was an angel in

church, but a devil at home. Be not so; but set the Lord before you at all times. You know not what troubles, what trials, what crosses are before you; but you know that such *are* before you, for His people are a people who come out of great tribulation. Oh! but what of the tribulation? It leads them to wash their robes, and to make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, shall they be before the Throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple. Shall we be among that company? Well, they were sinners once, but sinners led to the blood. Therefore say you, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." The hyssop of the promise dipt in the blood of Jesus, and sprinkled on your soul, can alone fit you for glory. "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you."

[June 1914]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the REV. NORMAN MATHESON, Halkirk, Caithness.

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" – Hebrews 7:25.

In this verse the Apostle looks back upon what he has already stated concerning Christ and His priesthood, and declares what it means to true believers and worshippers of God. Believers under the New Testament dispensation have more light given them on the nature of their salvation by the coming of Christ and by the fulfilment of God's will in His death and resurrection, than there was or could be under the Old Testament dispensation. Then the character of their salvation was held forth to them under types and

outward ordinances. These types and outward ordinances were abolished by Christ. May grace be given us to gather strength and comfort from this most precious portion of God's Word! We shall notice, –

- I. in the first place, as we shall be enabled by the Spirit of the Lord,
– the Person spoken of in our text; then,
- II. in the second place, – the power ascribed to Him;
- III. and in the last place, – the effects of His power.

I. – Let us notice the Person spoken of in our text. This is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is referred to in the fifteenth verse: “After the order of Melchisedec, there ariseth another priest.” The name, “Melchisedec,” means “king of righteousness.” Christ is also King of Righteousness, or a righteous King. He rules in righteousness, and expects that all His subjects render homage to Him and obey His laws. Few there are who submit to His righteous rule, and these are made willing subjects in a day of His power. God the Father has appointed Him King. “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Sion.” From the righteousness of Christ's nature proceeds His righteous government, and as a righteous Governor He has a law that is consistent with His own nature – holy and just and good. He demands complete obedience to this law, which is summed up in these words: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.”

This law was written on man's heart when God created him, so it was no constraint upon him to obey it, but it was the delight of his soul; and it was so until he fell from his original state of righteousness by sin. Man, by his act of disobedience in eating of the forbidden fruit, which God commanded him not to eat, under pain of death, broke God's law and covenant, and so incurred His wrath and curse. He brought temporal, spiritual, and eternal miseries upon himself and his posterity, and became totally unable to deliver himself from them, but still God's obligations upon him continued the same. He demands perfect obedience to His holy, just, and good law. “Do this and live,” was now as much as ever God's command to the sinner. Yet, He knew man of himself could never render satisfaction to Him for His broken law and clear himself of guilt. And where was the remedy found? The remedy was found in God Himself. God the Father appointed God the Son as substitute, to render complete satisfaction to justice and meet the just claims of a broken covenant. He laid help upon Him as one “mighty to save.”

(1) The substitute for sinners is Christ, who is spoken of under the similitude of Melchisedec or King of Righteousness. As King of Righteousness Christ has the government upon His shoulder. As King of Righteousness He is sovereign in His dealings with the breakers of His law. He would be just in punishing eternally its transgressors. But because mercy was His delight and judgment His strange work, He willed in a very wonderful way to satisfy the claims of His law and to deliver many of the human race from the penalties of disobedience. As King of Righteousness He manifested the nature of His justice in a more glorious manner in His gracious dealings with sinners, than He could have done (speaking in the language of men) though man had retained his state of innocence. God takes just dealings with sin, for His own glory, when He imputes the sins of His own elect to Christ, who, as His willing servant, became obedient unto death – even the death of the Cross. He said, “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.” It is He, who is King of Righteousness, who engaged to become the servant of the Father and a substitute for sinners. It was the obedience and death of Christ, “who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,” that made an end of sin and the wrath of God against sin. In human nature – in which nature He could suffer – He rendered perfect obedience to God's law, and that was His own law, and gave complete satisfaction to

God's justice, and that was His own justice. He is King of Righteousness in respect of the righteousness He wrought out for His people.

(2) He is spoken of under the similitude of "King of Salem," which is "king of peace." Christ is King of Righteousness and also King of Peace. Peace was a thing which God loved, but He could not speak peace to sinners without satisfaction being given to His offended justice. God the Father, as Judge, required this satisfaction from His Son as the sinners' substitute. His Son rendered it by His obedience unto death, and said, "It is finished." To procure reconciliation and peace for sinners meant death to the Lord of Glory. The sins of the elect children of men stood between their souls and peace, but an end has been made of their sins and guilt by the atoning death of Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." He shed His blood for the remission of their sins.

Before peace is spoken to the guilty sinner he is condemned in his conscience by God's law, and becomes truly conscious that he deserves death and cannot save himself. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," sounds with true, convincing power in the ears of his soul. He believes that God would be just in handing him over to eternal death. He looks to his own righteousness for salvation, and keeps looking until he is made to know that it is filthy rags. Then the righteousness that Christ wrought out on behalf of such a sinner as he is, is presented to his faith's view. He sees it to be all-sufficient and suitable for such a condemned criminal as he is, and is made willing to be clothed in it. Then he is enabled to accept of Christ as His righteousness and finds peace of conscience.

Do we know that peace which the reconciled sinner has through the blood of Christ? If not, it is our unbelief in the righteousness and power of Christ that is the cause. One may be, indeed, a reconciled sinner, yet not always experience peace of soul owing to the strength of sin and unbelief. So the command is, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Christ is not only King of Righteousness; He is also King of Peace. May we know Him as our righteousness and peace!

(3) Melchisedec is a suitable type of Christ, being spoken of as "priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him." Christ is Priest of the Most High God. As Mediator between God and men, He exercises the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. It is through Him as Priest that sinners draw nigh unto God, and through faith in His atoning blood they obtain the pardon of their sins. Any who come pleading the merits of Christ's finished work are welcome to the throne of grace and are admitted into the presence of the Lord. "He will in no wise cast out" any who come in Christ's name. The sinner who confesses his sins before Christ as Priest gets forgiveness and acceptance before God. We are not asked to come to an earthly, sinful priest to confess our sins, but to a heavenly Priest, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Christ, as High Priest over the house of God, has kingly authority to speak forgiveness to those whom He has loved. He is appointed by the Lord a Priest for ever, and is exalted to His right hand a Prince and a Saviour, "that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in His name among all nations."

Melchisedec blessed Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings. So does Christ bless sinners with all spiritual blessings. He makes those who come unto God by Him perfect as to their privileges. Melchisedec was ordained a priest to the Gentiles. So is Christ ordained a Priest to the Gentiles. He is able to speak peace through His blood to those who were excluded under the law from "the covenants of promise." And now Jew and Gentile are invited to peace with God through Christ as their Mediator. "Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

II. – We shall notice the power ascribed to Christ. Christ, as king-priest, exercises all power on behalf of those whom He loved in the covenant of grace. That power He has founded upon His life and work as mediator and intercessor. "He ever liveth to make

intercession.” He lives at the Father’s right hand, pleading the merits of His atoning blood for “the election of grace”. The power of His love He puts in exercise for them on the ground that He wrought out their complete redemption by His death, and ever liveth to make intercession.

It was God’s purpose from eternity that the power of His love would take effect upon the objects of His love by the obedience and death of His Son, who offered Himself up as victim upon the altar of sacrifice. His Son had the same love to the elect as the Father, and His love was such that many floods could not quench. He was willing to endure all the persecutions that come from men and devils. The hatred and scorn of the proud Pharisees He patiently endured, and no sooner did He begin His public ministry than He was tempted of the devil. He endured the forsaking of His disciples, who all left Him in His agony in Gethsemane’s garden. He was also forsaken of God when suffering unto death on Calvary’s cross, because our sins separated between us and God. All that He suffered was in human nature, in which nature He was upheld by His Godhead. Death was the penalty that sinners deserved, and to make an end of their sins, Christ laid down His life unto death, even the death of the cross. He manifested the strength of His love in His death.

But not only does He manifest His love by His death, He manifests it also by His resurrection from the grave of death. He said, “I have power to lay down my life and power to take it again, this commandment have I received of my Father.” He rose from the dead by the power of God. The resurrection of Christ was a certificate bearing testimony to the worth and efficacy of His finished work, to satisfy justice, and to save the objects of His love. He died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living, so that the dead bodies of His people, as well as their souls, might be quickened. “I am, He said, “the resurrection and the life.” Christ, in His resurrection, raised His Church with Him. In regard to all other sacrifices, there was need of their continuance, because, once slain, they could not live again, and there was also need for their continuance to keep the Church of God in remembrance of the one great sacrifice that alone could render complete satisfaction to God. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 1:8).

III. – The effects of the power Christ has as Priest. “He is able also to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession.”

In saving His people, Christ saves them perfectly. Not only are they delivered from sin and the wrath of God, but they are made recipients of all divine blessings. The blessings that are bestowed upon them by Christ in this world are an earnest of the blessings they shall have in heaven. The blessings Christ purchased by the obedience and sufferings of His life and death were for those whom He loved from before the foundation of the world. He did not love them because of anything good He foresaw in them. They were rebellious sinners, children of wrath, as well as others, and they deserved no deliverance from their state of sin and wrath. What a wonder that He would ever think of the salvation of such enemies of His glory, but this He purposed from eternity in the covenant of grace! Christ makes His power known in saving “to the uttermost” the objects of His love.

(1) Their salvation to the uttermost consists in blotting out their sins from the book of God in a day of His power. They stand as guilty criminals before the bar of God. If they are to be dealt with according to their sins, they shall be cast away for ever from His presence. But God the Father, as Judge, looks upon the righteousness of Christ, which He, as His righteous servant, wrought out for them, and justifies them on that account. Their sins are pardoned, and their persons accepted as righteous before Him. It is not merely the guilt of their past and present sins that is wiped away when they are justified, but also of their future sins. As justified sinners they are for ever set free from condemnation. “There is therefore

now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” They are saved perfectly as regards their justification.

(2) Their salvation to the uttermost consists in Christ overcoming, by His grace, the corruptions of their evil nature. They feel the power of the carnal mind, which is enmity and death, and their own weakness and helplessness in overcoming its power. Some of the Lord’s people are more harrassed by the temptations of sin and the carnal mind than others of them, but however great their temptations and the assaults of Satan, God’s grace is sufficient for them, and His strength is made perfect in weakness. They come to know more and more that unless sin is made an end of by the power of grace, sin will make an end of them. Their cry is, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?” Christ pleads on their behalf for their complete deliverance from the remainders of sin in them, and by His word and Spirit He subdues their corruptions. Christ prayed to the Father – “Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth.”

(3) Their salvation consists in being delivered at last perfectly from the world. Sin in the Lord’s people sides with the world, its ways, and practices, but the more they die to sin, the more they die to themselves and the spirit of the world. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

(4) They are delivered from the power and dominion of Satan, “the god of this world.” Satan claimed them as his own when they were in a state of nature, and they remained in his service as willing dupes until they were made to believe it would be death. Death was the wages they were to obtain in his service. But Christ claimed them as His own and took them from Satan, having cast him out by His death. He that overcame sin and death overcame him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. But though his power is taken from him and destroyed by Christ’s death, he is still permitted to tempt the Lord’s people, and shows more of his enmity to them now in their regenerate state than ever he did in their unregenerate state. Satan bears the same hatred to the Lord’s people that he did to Christ. He is the accuser of the brethren. But Christ intercedes for them, that they might be delivered from the temptations of Satan. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.”

(5) Their salvation to the uttermost consists in their being delivered from death. Death shall have no dominion over their mortal bodies. The bodies of the saints of God who shall be in their graves at Christ’s second coming, shall be raised from the dead. Death is the king of terrors, but Christ has conquered him. As a proof of His power, many of the bodies of the saints came out of their graves after His resurrection. And so shall it be at the last day. The bodies of His elect shall be raised out of their graves. Their bodies shall be joined to their souls and made suitable for their heavenly abode. He that can quicken the dead can quicken our dead souls. May we know His power in quickening us to “newness of life.”

(6) Christ’s power takes effect upon the objects of His love; they are referred to as coming unto God by Him. Not only do they by faith embrace Christ as their righteousness, but they come by Him as worshippers to the throne of grace. The latter sense is what is principally intended. If they come as true worshippers, they must come through Christ as their sacrifice. Their faith must have an eye to Christ as their propitiation before their worship can be accepted. Faith on His atoning blood cleanses their consciences from dead works to serve the living God. It is then they have true boldness in coming to the throne of grace. In regard to the sin-offering under the law the guilt of the worshipper, whether it was the priest or the congregation, was atoned for by the blood of a bullock without blemish, signifying that it was a wholly perfect sacrifice that God required to make perfect atonement for sin. God found in Christ a wholly perfect sacrifice, and through His shed blood atonement is made for all who come to God by Him. As the Israelite needed the intercession of the priest to obtain forgiveness of sins, so does the believing worshipper who comes to God by Christ need

Christ's intercession to take away his guilt and imperfections. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Oh! to experience this cleansing, so that we might have true boldness in worshipping the Lord. Our unbelief in the power of His intercession "to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him" is the cause of our bondage. May we be set free from the power of sin and unbelief!

(7) Christ manifests His power now towards the objects of salvation in making continual intercession for them at the Father's right hand. "He ever liveth to make intercession." He continues without any intermission to present His atoning sacrifice before the Father. The prayers of His people may cease for the interests of Christ's kingdom, but Christ's prayers never cease for His cause and people. Even in their backslidings He cares for them. He chastens them because of their sins, but He does not cast them utterly away. They cost too dear to Him, that He would cast them off. They are engraven on the palms of His hands. He interceded for them even when they were His enemies in a state of nature, and now that they are reconciled to Him by the power of His love, much more shall He manifest His interest in them by His life of intercession. Their love gets cold towards Him, but His love never changes. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." What a wonder it is that Christ makes intercession for sinners at all! Even when suffering the agonies of death He made intercession for sinners. When His cruel persecutors were nailing Him to the cursed tree, He cried out, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." He is now interceding for sinners at the Father's right hand as the exalted Saviour. He continues to intercede for sinners as long as there are any who come to Him, and if He intercedes for sinners who have not yet found repentance or faith, will He not manifest His power in interceding for His own whom He has redeemed from sin and the world by His grace? He has given every reason to His own to exercise confidence in Him. Have we confidence in His intercession?

Do we come with all our needs before Him and believe that "He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him?" The leper who came for healing to Christ said, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," and the answer that Christ gave him was, "I will, be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy left him." There may be a sinner who does not deny Christ's power to save others, but doubts His power to save him, but the same power that saved others is able to save you, and in the day that the Lord will make you believe in His power to save you, a hell-deserving sinner, He will give you also to believe in His willingness to save you, and cleanse away all the guilt of your sins.

These words in our text, though specially referring to the perfecting of salvation and the continual care that Christ has of those in whom He began the good work of grace, yet there is a voice in them to the consciences of those who are yet without Christ and unsaved. Your question, then, should be, "Am I sensible that I am a guilty, lost sinner, standing in need of the obedience and intercession of Christ?" Shall my sins be blotted out in His atoning blood, or shall they bring me to eternal woe? If you have become truly anxious in regard to this most important matter, you are invited to come to the throne of grace, though not in the first instance as a spiritual worshipper, yet in the sense of reasoning with the Lord regarding your case. The invitation to other great sinners is the same to you: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." May the Lord bless His word. Amen.

July 1914]

Justification by Faith.

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

“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins” – Romans 3:24,25.

If I were asked to say where, in all the Scriptures, one could find the doctrine of gratuitous justification most amply declared within the smallest compass, I should certainly point to the words of my text. In order to think our thoughts concerning this fundamental doctrine with the inspired Apostle, it will be necessary for us, in our endeavour to unfold the meaning of our text, to consider: –

- I. – The need that men have of being justified.
- II. – What is the nature of that justification which the Apostle Paul held to be so essential a part of his Gospel?
- III. – What, according to our text, may be said to be the causes of justification?

I. – The need that every sinner of mankind has of being interested in justification, in the Gospel sense, is inexpressibly great, and, indeed, until one is brought to regard it thus there is little probability of one's doing justice to God's mind, revealed in the Word of Truth, in connection with it. The need we speak of is evident, from two considerations.

(1) On the one hand, we are all sinners – guilty sinners. And this guilt is, for one most important consideration, in proportion to our privileges and opportunities. The heathen – to whom the Word of God came not – are guilty, because they have not acted in accordance with the light wherewith, notwithstanding how comparatively forsaken they have been, they have been privileged. The material universe utters a speech – in the sense that itself is not eternal – that it owes its being to One to whom infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite goodness belong. That revelation of God in the work of creation ought to have prevented rational beings from falling down to worship stocks and stones, or images of corruptible man or of birds, or of four-footed beasts and of creeping things. It ought to, but it did not; and the heathen, in thus refusing to yield to walk in the light of nature, have brought guilt upon themselves. Nor is the glory of God, as revealed in the work of creation, in the sense now referred to, the only revelation that has been made to those heathen, nor the only light they have traversed. They have had, besides, the work of the law written in their hearts, or in other words, the apprehensions and judgments concerning conduct which the natural conscience – even in the case of a heathen – does not fail to give forth. But this light also has been traversed; these judgments have been practically despised by them; and because of all this the heathen have brought upon themselves aggravated guilt. Certain it is that the heathen stand in need of deliverance from great guilt, and that is as much as to say that they stand in need of gratuitous justification.

But if the heathen thus stand in need of the Gospel, in a certain regard sinners of the Jews – I refer just now to the Jews simply as that nation stood before Christ came – stand still more greatly in need of it. For as men's opportunities are increased so also are their responsibilities. Therefore is it that if the heathen who sinned without the law, that is, without their having the Old Testament, were liable to perish without their being judged by that written law, the Jews to whom the Word of God came must be judged by that Word. The Jews were themselves conscious of their superior privileges, and in virtue of these privileges were ready to reckon themselves as fit to give counsel to the benighted heathen, and to condemn them in the light of the standard which God had placed as a privilege in the hands of the Jews. But if in the secrecy of their heart, at the centre of their being, they did not themselves yield implicit obedience to the law by which they condemned others, it is self-evident that the judges in this case could not escape being judged, and if they but listened to what the oracles of God uttered as a true judgment, they should hear it say to the very Jews:

“There is none of you righteous, no not one.
There is none of you that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
Your throat is an open sepulchre.
With your tongue you have used deceit.
The poison of asps is under your lips.
Your mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Your feet are swift to shed blood.”

Thus does the Apostle Paul bring in the Jews as guilty before God with an aggravated guilt even above the heathen, inasmuch as their life of godlessness was spent in contempt of a light greater than the heathen were privileged with.

But as for us, we should remember that one and all of us have been privileged, in common with the heathen, with the revelation which God gives of Himself in the works of nature, and with them also we have been privileged with the light of a natural conscience. Further, we have, with the Jews that were of old, been privileged with the light of the Old

Testament Scriptures. But over and above those privileges we have been visited with favours such as neither the heathen nor the Jews of the Old Testament period ever had. God spake to the Jews of the Old Testament period in the prophets. But He hath spoken unto us under the Gospel in a Son. And such a Son! The brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person. We are obliged therefore to ask ourselves – With what esteem have we esteemed the Son of God? For the New Testament does not allow us to think that it is a matter of indifference what we think or do not think of Jesus Christ. “If any man,” says the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 16:22), “love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.” Have we, as gospel hearers, lived up to our privileges? Have we ceased from imagining that we can be our own saviours from sin, in order that we should yield up the work of our salvation into the hands of Him who is called Jesus, because He saves His people from their sins? Have we by faith entered into this rest? Think not that in this respect the gospel does not lay upon each of us a fresh responsibility. Was the unbelief of the children of Israel, when at God’s command they refused on their arrival at Kadeshbarnea to go up straight to take possession of the land of Canaan, so great that they must wander in the wilderness for forty weary years until the carcasses of that generation fell in the same wilderness, and shall not the guilt of gospel-hearers, who are invited to come to Him whom none knew thoroughly but the Father, and to whom alone the Father was thoroughly known, but who is pleased to make the Father known in a saving measure to such as come to Him, and who invites all the weary and heavy-laden to come to him that He may give them rest – shall not the unbelief, I say, of such rejectors of Jesus Christ, be reckoned as ever so much more culpable than was that of the Israelites of old at Kadesh? What fruit of the Spirit have we brought forth – in love, in joy, in peace, in long-suffering, in temperance, in meekness, in faith, in crucifying of the flesh? Is it not to be feared, with regard to many gospel-hearers among us, that they stand in danger of being, in the sight of God, comparable to the ground upon which much pains have been spent, and upon which the showers from heaven have been falling, and yet that has brought forth only briars and thorns? Surely they are near to cursing, and if they repent not, their end must be to be burned (see Hebrews 6:8). Which of us, when we remember how God privileged us from our infancy with His gospel, His Sabbaths, His means of grace, and His people’s fellowship, but must take guilt to ourselves for not having brought forth fruit comparably to the pains that have been taken with us?

I have dwelt long on what I conceive to be the need which sinners under the Gospel dispensation have of the great benefit of gratuitous justification. The need is realised as we realise our guiltiness. But that is only the first of the two considerations of which the Apostle Paul makes use, when he would bring home to all and sundry their need of the Gospel which he was commissioned to preach. For

(2) the implicate of guilt is wrath, the wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. Now as long as we are guilty, we are in danger of having that wrath inflicted upon us. Indeed, it may be in process of infliction without our realising it. For, according to the teaching of Paul, God’s wrath shews itself mainly in two ways. In time, He may shew His wrath by withdrawing His common grace from us, so that we fall into deeper sin, and sin becomes the punishment of sin. Thus it was with the heathen. Because they trampled upon the light of nature to the extent of imagining the Creator to be like corruptible man, or even creeping things, therefore God withdrew His restraining grace from them so that both men and women were guilty of unnatural sins of uncleanness. And from this there flowed sins of covetousness, of maliciousness, of envy, and even of murder. Now, all this was an expression of the divine displeasure. It was wrath; and so it will be reckoned by every soul whose conscience has been so washed as to be able to understand that sin itself is the greatest of all evils.

But that is not the only form that wrath assumes. For there is ahead of us a day of wrath that is peculiarly deserving of that epithet. It will be a revelation of the righteous judgment of God, and in that day it will be very evident that the punishment of no one will for intensity be comparable to that of those who under the Gospel trampled upon the Son of God, counted the blood of the new covenant a common thing, and did despite to the Spirit of grace. For, for them is reserved the knowledge in full measure of what that means: "Vengeance is mine, I will recompense, saith Jehovah."

II. – Yet for such guilty sinners, who are by nature wedded to the law as to a covenant, is there, whilst we are yet upon praying ground, hope in virtue of the Gospel. Sinners may incur a responsibility under the Gospel greater than they could incur under the law of nature, or even under the law in the sense of the Mosaic economy. But there is a great difference between being under the law as a covenant of works and being under the Gospel or the covenant of grace. The law as a covenant knows no mercy, even after one has acknowledged one's fault. Not so the Gospel. With Christ there is forgiveness. Even some of those whose hands were literally red in His blood, found forgiveness on the Day of Pentecost. It is the language of the forgiving Christ and of the covenant of grace one hears addressed to sinners whose guilt was truly aggravated, in Isaiah 1:18: "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." And therefore is it that the Apostle Paul in this great Epistle – I mean that to the Romans – after having at the outset shown the need which every creature of the human race (whether Gentile or Jew or, we may add, Christian) has of the benefit of a gratuitous justification, proceeds to explain the nature of this benefit. (See especially the beginning of the fourth chapter of this Epistle.)

Briefly, justification, in the Gospel sense, means two things, to wit, pardon and acceptance. It is explained in the place just now referred to, as meaning on the one hand the benefit of not having one's sins put to one's account, which is only another way of saying, pardon of sins. On the other hand it implies, according to the teaching of the same passage, the imputation of righteousness. One thing worthy of note, as it is a matter much emphasised in the Apostolic writings, is that pardon in the Gospel sense does not mean merely partial forgiveness. It does not mean that one should be forgiven in ninety-nine out of every one hundred transgressions, but it is a case of what we call "cent. per cent." "Forgiving you," says the Apostle Paul (Colossians 2:13), "all trespasses." "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son," says the Apostle John (1 John 1:7), "cleanseth us from all sin." "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," says God in the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:12). This is a truth which the Biblical writers insist upon very largely as being a matter that not only touches upon the comfort of believers, but also upon the glory of Christ and of the work which was perfected upon Calvary. Therefore does the Holy Ghost speak of casting our iniquities into the depth of the sea. Therefore also does He use the expression that He will blot out our sins. It is as if something were written contrary to us on, say, a slate, with a slate pencil, and a wet cloth were taken and the thing written removed as perfectly as though it had never been there. Such is the way God proposes to deal with the most aggravated sins of such as now flee to Him for refuge. But He proposes for our security to do still more. He imputes righteousness apart from works. In other words, He puts to our account the obedience of the Son of God in our nature. I know that it has been maintained that the obedience of one could not be put to another's account. But it is impossible, if we take words in their plain meaning, to understand in any other sense than in that of imputed righteousness, what the Apostle Paul, in the fifth chapter of this Epistle, and at the nineteenth verse, says: "Through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous."

To justify does not mean to make just, no more than to condemn means to make wicked. Both these terms are judicial terms. When an evil-doer is arraigned before a judge and convicted for evil-doing, the judge, in pronouncing sentence, does not make the culprit an evil-doer – that was the culprit’s own work. What the judge does, is to set up the law of the land as a standard of measurement, and, on comparing the culprit’s life with the law of the land, to point out the discrepancy, and because of this discrepancy he pronounces the evil-doer guilty and sentences him to condign punishment. Similarly, when a judge justifies, what he does is virtually to declare that there is no reason in law or in justice why the person arraigned should be condemned to punishment, that, on the contrary, he is entitled to honour and freedom and life. In no other sense can we, if we accept Biblical terms in their plain meaning, regard the expression “to justify” here. In a word, the meaning or result of gratuitous justification is deliverance from hell and the granting of a title to heaven.

III. – We proceed, therefore, to consider the ground of this procedure, for it is a matter of astonishment that the Righteous Judge should “justify the ungodly,” yea, every ungodly person that “believes upon Jesus.”

(1) If, then, the reason or cause of this procedure be asked for, the first answer which our text gives us is, that it is done *freely* – that is, as much as to say, without any reason at all on the part of the sinner justified. It is the same word which is rendered “without a cause,” in John 15:25, that is rendered “freely” in Romans 3:24. And a comparison of the two places now named leads us to say that just as those who hated Christ could have found no reason – that is, substantial reason – in Christ for their hatred, so God, the Judge of all, finds no reason in the sinner justified why He should justify him. And if one should argue that, although no reason for a sinner’s justification could be found in his life previous to union with Christ, yet, that we should not exclude as a partial ground of justification that sinner’s life of godliness subsequent to his believing upon Jesus Christ; the answer must be, that fruit borne after conversion enters not at all into the ground of our justification. The Psalmist, who composed the one hundred and forty-third psalm, was, we may well suppose, long ere he composed that psalm, a God-fearing person, and yet he pleads with God that He would not enter into judgment with him, because in God’s sight no living man, whether in the state of nature or in the state of grace, could, on the ground of personal merit, be justified. Yea, and one may go on to say that, although the redeemed of the Lord shall through endless ages serve Him even as angels now do in heaven, yet that service enters not at all into the ground of their justification, and to imagine that it does or that it could so enter, would be comparable to the madness of a gardener who should proceed to pluck up a tree, which was bearing much precious fruit, by the roots, with a view to making the fruit itself take the place which, in all sane gardening, is occupied by the roots.

(2) As the cause of a sinner’s justification, in the Gospel sense, is not in the least degree found with the sinner, we are compelled to go on still in search of its cause. And in answer to our question – What is the cause of a sinner’s gratuitous justification? – the Scriptures give several answers.

(i) To begin with, our justification is said to be by *the grace of God*. The grace of God is, in some sense, the cause of our justification. In what sense are we to understand the expression, the grace of God? It does not mean grace, in the sense in which a believer, whose nature has been changed, may be said to have been made a partaker of grace, and so to have become a gracious person. The grace of God means the infinite compassionate love of God. It is grace, not in the stream, but in the fountain. This grace or compassionate love towards the guilty is ever set before us in the Word of Truth as the very fountain of our salvation, and may therefore, in the language of the schools, be well called the moving cause of our salvation in general, and of our justification in particular. Thus the matter is constantly

pressed upon our notice in the Word of God. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

(ii) But again: we are said to be justified “*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*” or as it is put in Romans 5:9, we are justified by or in Christ’s blood. This really is the one proper ground, in law, of our justification, *the meritorious cause of* our justification. Christ’s life, which He laid down upon the Cross, was a true ransom. It was received by God in lieu of the lost, whom Christ came to save – the lost who had forfeited their own life and all title to it. And this ground of a sinner’s justification, that is, of complete pardon and acceptance before God, is so perfect for its own ends in its very nature that it does not bear to be added to. This is the meaning of the Apostle’s contention in a large part of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and especially in the tenth chapter, where the perfection of that sacrifice whereby those who are “sanctified” were “perfected for ever,” is most insistently and emphatically asserted.

(iii) But still another answer which the Scriptures give to our question, and an answer that is in thorough consistency with the foregoing and succeeding answers, is that the cause of our justification is *faith*. We are said to be justified by faith, and unbelievers can in no case be justified by God. Faith is *the instrumental cause* of our justification. Faith is an empty hand, and that is the reason why, in a sense in which that cannot be said of repentance, or of hope, or of love, faith is said to be the cause of our justification. In the nature of things, we cannot be believers without our self-confidence having been spoiled. Believers are on this account compared to little children, that is to babes, who can do nothing for themselves, but must be altogether dependent upon their mother, or nurse, for their well-being.

(iv) The result of this dependence upon Christ is union with Christ, yea, in a sense with God in Christ. What, then, takes place in this mysterious transaction of justification? God, as the Judge of all, imputes, that is, puts to the account of the believing sinner, all the merit of the life and death of the Redeemer. And so is it that, in the language of the schools, we say that *the formal cause* of our justification is *imputation*. And upon this proceeds the real sentence of the Judge in the great matter of our justification. For, the Judge now regards us as invested with this imputed righteousness, and on this account His sentence is that there is no reason in law or in justice why we sinners, to whom Christ’s obedience unto death is imputed, should be adjudicated unto death, but that, in virtue of Christ’s obedience, thus imputed and received by faith, there is brought forth, for our benefit, a sure title to eternal life.

(v) Our text gives yet a sixth answer to the question, “What is the cause of our justification?” in the sense, that it is for *the glory of God*, and especially for the glory of His righteousness. This is what we call *the final cause of our justification*. When God justifies the ungodly that believes upon Jesus, He does this, we are told, in order that His righteousness might be declared for the remission of sins. For inasmuch as the sentence of pardon and acceptance manifestly proceeds on the basis of an adequate ransom, therefore is it brought to light that if God’s righteousness as a Judge is seen in the destruction of impenitent, unbelieving sinners, it still more brilliantly shines forth in the pardon and acceptance of the penitent believer in Jesus. It would not seem so strange or wonderful, if it had been said that God’s purpose in gratuitous justification is the manifestation or declaration of His mercy; but it does seem wonderful that it should be said to be the manifestation of His righteousness, even of His righteousness as a Judge, How sweet a thought it is to a tender conscience that pardon and title to life are founded upon justice!

Conclusion. –

We have thus endeavoured to bring before you –

- (1) the need sinners have of justification;
- (2) the nature of this blessing; and
- (3) the causes of justification.

May we not say that the Biblical representation of this great theme is, under every aspect by which we have sought in this connection to set God's truth before you, fitted in its own nature to allure sinners to Jesus Christ? If, then, it is in its nature fitted to draw sinners to God in Christ, and if, notwithstanding, sinners are not drawn, is not the fault the sinner's own? If this Gospel is "hid," must it not be to "the lost" that it is hid, and must we not conclude that this unwillingness to be drawn is not to be fully accounted for apart from a recognition of Satanic agency, that "the god of this world" successfully blinds the minds of impenitent unbelievers? On the other hand, are there not among us some who say of God's way of saving sinners by gratuitous purification that it is all their salvation and all their desire? In this attitude of soul, of which we have just spoken, we have the clearest indication of an effectual calling, and God, who promises to remember His covenant, assures those who thus fall in with His way of peace that He will never leave them, nor forsake them.

[August 1914]

A Sermon.

Preached by the REV. ANDREW SUTHERLAND, Ullapool,
Moderator,
*Before the Free Presbyterian Synod at Inverness,
on the 30th June, 1914.*

"Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" – Acts 20:28.

Ephesus sat in heathen darkness before the light of the Gospel shone in its midst. The inhabitants worshipped the goddess, Diana, and considered her greatness imperishable. When the Apostle Paul went to that city to declare the Gospel of Christ, "who is the image of God," many were persuaded that they were no gods which are made with hands, and therefore turned from the worship of the "great Diana" to serve the true God, whose greatness is unsearchable and immutable. The apostle continued for a time at Ephesus, preaching the kingdom of God. The result was that a large Church was founded, over which presbyters were appointed. After various journeys undertaken by Paul, he was at this time hastening, "if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." He could not thus conveniently visit the Ephesian Church, but sent for the elders to meet him at Miletus. They readily complied with his request, and went. In his parting address to the "overseers," one observes how incessantly, affectionately, and faithfully the apostle laboured for the salvation of sinners. He was convinced that there was no other Gospel of salvation than that which he proclaimed. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach *any other* gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Furthermore, knowing the

dangers to which the Church was exposed through her adversaries, he warned the elders to watch over themselves and the Church of God, which is so precious, being bought with the blood of Christ.

I. – Let us consider, first, the Purchaser.

He is Christ, the Son of the living God. Here we have a mystery. The angels desire to look into the unfathomable wisdom of God manifested in it. How ought we, therefore, who are more immediately concerned with “the mystery of godliness,” be exercised in divine contemplations of it? Such knowledge is undoubtedly high for finite creatures to comprehend, yet the Spirit, who knows the deep things of God, has revealed the excellency and majesty of Immanuel in the Holy Scriptures.

Christ, as the Son of God, is equal with the Father in every respect. All the attributes communicable (such as holiness, justice, etc.) and uncommunicable (such as omniscience, omnipresence, etc.) subsist in the Son. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the great, the mighty, One, whose greatness is unsearchable. He is the Creator of all things. The number of the angels is “ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands.” Every one of the angelic host was called into being by Him. He also created the heavens and the earth. “For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Colossians 1:16). He constantly upholds all His works by the word of His power. What a word is this! “By him all things consist.”

The glorious Creator is infinitely higher than all the works of His hands. It is an act of condescension when He looks on anything that is not Himself. He, therefore, humbles Himself “to behold things that are in heaven, and in earth.” He looked upon the world before time was, and His delights were with the sons of men. When the Psalmist considered the heavens, the work of God’s fingers, he asked the question, “What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?” Though God be high, yet He purposed to “dwell in very deed with men.” God, the Father, willed to send His Son into the world. The Son was willing to humble Himself. “Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God” (Psalm 40:7-8). At the time appointed in the decree of God, the Word was made flesh. He was conceived in a supernatural manner in the womb of the Virgin. His conception was without sin. The humanity of the Son of God was an “holy thing.” “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Though He assumed human nature, He ceased not to be what He was – the Eternal Word. He continued to be the Beloved of the Father. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The angels rendered their wonted homage to Him. “When he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.” The Church saw “his glory; the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” What a mystery, that the Word by whom all things were made should be made flesh and tabernacle among men! Christ, therefore, whose riches are unsearchable, is the elect of the Father to be the Purchaser of His Church.

II. – We will observe, in the second place, those whom He purchased – “the Church of God.”

The Church of God does not include *all* mankind, though many would make it universal. It consists of those whom the Father has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. He gave them to His Son to redeem. “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.” To them only will He give eternal life. “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (John 17:2).

The elect were not by nature deserving life, but death. They were, like others of the human race, sinners – ungodly and unjust. There was not any good thing found in them towards God. There was none good; “no, not one.” Hence they were in a miserable condition. How did they come to be in such a lamentable state? When God created man He made him very good. He, being holy, righteous, and good, delighted in the blessed Creator and in His holy law. While he continued doing what God commanded him he enjoyed the favour of the Lawgiver. No sooner, however, did he transgress than the righteous displeasure of God was revealed against him. Sin will not pass unobserved by God. Adam sought in vain to conceal himself among the trees of the garden from the Omniscient One. He was summoned to appear before Him against whom he had sinned. “And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where art thou?” Instead of acknowledging his sin, man endeavoured to plead “Not guilty.” When the righteous Judge examined him regarding his action he was found out to be an offender, and hence guilty. His sin not only implicated himself but also his posterity “descending from him by ordinary generation.” Men may seek to free themselves from the guilt of Adam’s first transgression, but it is impossible. The fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and other places in the Word of God, prove our connection with Adam’s first transgression. All are brought in guilty before God. “Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon *all* men to condemnation” (Romans 5:18). The chosen people were therefore sinners by nature and by practice. They, being the servants of sin, were in bondage. “For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

Moreover, by sin, the elect were by nature under the curse and divine wrath. Men may despise the law of God and defiantly say, as it were, “What have we to do with thee, O law?” But they cannot say, “What hast thou, O law, to do with us?” The holy law of God has to do with every man. It denounces the transgressor with its curse. “Cursed is *every one* that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Galatians 3:10). Therefore every one of the Church of God was, by nature, exposed to the curse. Consequently destruction was in their ways. The wrath of God was revealed against them on account of sin. His wrath proceeds from His holiness and justice. It is, therefore, righteous, despite the cavils of ungodly men against it. The divine anger, manifested in earth or hell, is accompanied with justice. “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness” (Psalm 11:7). Justice requires the punishment of sin. Among men a crime may pass with impunity, but no sin shall thus pass. God is angry with sinners, and His hand will find them out. “Thine hand shall find out *all* thine enemies” (Psalm 21:3). The Church, as children of disobedience and of wrath, could not escape had not God been pleased to think of their deliverance from “the wrath to come.”

Further, the elect, as fallen creatures, were justly condemned to die. The sentence was pronounced, “Thou shalt surely die”. “Death passed upon all men for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). Sinners desire to banish thoughts of death from their mind. Though they should endeavour to do so, death will come as the king of terrors to them. The sentence of death may be delayed, but it will be executed at the appointed time. “The soul that sinneth it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). Death, with all it implies, would have overcome the chosen as well as others, had it not been that One was found who would abolish death for them. Moreover, by sin, the elect were justly imprisoned. If you saw one confined in a prison and enquired what brought him there, the answer would be “Guilt.” Guilt, therefore, brought all to imprisonment. This world may be compared to the outer court of the prison, where sinners go about chained by “the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life”. The devil, as Pharaoh did with Israel in the house of bondage, holds them fast, and will not let them go. If deliverance reaches not sinners in this world, they will be shut up in the horrible pit of outer darkness, where there is “weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” God, however, purposed to deliver His people from the pit of eternal death. To effect this, the righteous

Judge had to be satisfied. Justice demanded the payment of a ransom of infinite value before the prisoners could be liberated. No one was able to pay such a price but the glorious and powerful Redeemer – Jesus Christ.

III. – We will now consider the price paid for the purchased” – His own blood.”

Christ, as the Creator of the world, knew its worth. “The world was made by him” (John 1:10). He weighed the world and the soul of man in the balances, and declared that the soul is the more precious of the two (Mark 8:36). The whole world, therefore, though offered to save a soul, would not be accepted by the Supreme Judge as a ransom. “For the redemption of their soul is precious; and it ceaseth for ever” (that is, as far as man is concerned) (Psalm 49:8). How vain it is, then, for those who expect that by their wealth they can obtain salvation! The Church was not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold (1 Peter 1:18).

Furthermore, all the sacrifices offered under the Old Testament dispensation were not able to redeem. The priests ministered and offered frequently the same sacrifices, but they were ineffectual to take away sins (Hebrews 10:11). The blood of those sacrifices, being that of mere creatures, could not remove sin. “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). As sin, therefore, was not thus purged, the divine wrath was unappeased. The sacrifices were only types of the great ante-typical sacrifice to be offered by Christ, who was foreordained and called of God to be a Priest for ever. Justice could not find satisfaction in the sacrifices which were shadows; and therefore Christ says, “Sacrifice and offering and burnt offering and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:8,9). It was the will of the Father to send His Son to be a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of His chosen people. It was the will of the Son to come. Though the Son knew all things He should have to do and suffer, He said, “Lo, I come.” The will of the Father was the delight of the Son. As the Son could not have suffered in His divine nature, a body was prepared for Him in the fulness of time. The two natures – human and divine – are distinct in the person of the Son. The Son became incarnate that He might suffer for sins and pay the price of redemption for His people. He therefore came under the law which they transgressed, to give a complete obedience to its commands. He, being holy, just, and good, gave a perfect obedience to the holy law of God. Christ fulfilled all righteousness. He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, with all His soul, with all His mind, with all His strength, and His neighbour as Himself. Greater honour could not have been put on the law of God than that Christ, the Son of the living God, should have come under it. There was infinitely more value in the obedience of Christ than though Adam and his race should have continued to do all the commands of the law, for the obedience of Christ was not that of a mere man, but of the God-man. He magnified the law and made it honourable (Isaiah 42:21). In paying the price, He had not only to obey but also to bear the curse of the divine law. He bore the sins of the elect by imputation. “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). He, as Turretine says, offered Himself to bear sin, and bore sin to take it away. As He took upon Himself the guilt of the sins of His people, He had to endure the punishment due to sin. He was therefore wounded, bruised, afflicted for the transgressions of His elect. He was made a curse for them, so that they might not be eternally under the curse of God. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13).

Furthermore, He had to pay what justice demanded. It said, as it were, “Pay me that thou owest.” The elect could never pay the debt; but Christ, their Surety, paid all. The sword of divine justice smote the Surety. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd,” etc. (Zechariah 13:7). Christ

endured not only the finite, unrighteous, and sinful wrath of men and devils; but also the infinite, righteous, and holy wrath of God as Judge. The flaming sword awoke, at the command given, and rested not until its devouring flames were quenched in the blood of Immanuel. When justice was satisfied, the sword was put up in its scabbard; it is at rest; it is still. Never, never shall it receive a charge against any of those for whom Christ died. When Christ died, all were dead. "If one died for all then were all dead" (2 Corinthians 5:14). He, having shed His blood, expiated the guilt of His Church. There was peace in heaven, for God was reconciled through the propitiatory sacrifice, namely, Christ himself, offered without spot to God. The blood speaks peace. For, as Dr. Love said, the sound of the blood has gone upwards, to the heavenly places, addressing Him who sits on the throne thus, "O thou justly offended majesty, withdraw thy wrath, be propitious to miserable sinners." The precious blood of Christ is the price of redemption. It is an evidence that, Christ having given His life, gave a sufficient ransom to God, because "the God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Hebrews 13:20). Christ paid the price and obtained eternal redemption for the Church. He saved His own from the curse and wrath of God, and liberated them from the power of the devil and the other miseries in which they were. "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zechariah 9:11). All the blessings also, bestowed on His people, were purchased with His blood. They may see by faith that the gifts received by them are through Christ's death. What a price was therefore paid for the elect! Its value is eternal. How precious are those bought with the price of blood! God cares for them, and it behoves the overseers of the flock to watch over them.

IV. – We will observe, in the last place, the duties incumbent on the overseers.

They owe a duty to *themselves*. They must take heed. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves." Christ frequently inculcated this exhortation on His disciples. He knew the necessity of it. Enemies lurk on every side, within and without, to take advantage of any unwatchfulness. The deceitful heart, the world, and the devil, lie in wait to assail the overseers and the flock. They have, therefore, to watch constantly unto prayer, seeking to hold "the faith and a good conscience."

Furthermore, they owe a duty to *the flock*. They are accountable to God for the manner in which they discharge their duties. Every true watchman of Jesus Christ watches for the souls of the people. "For they watch for your souls as they that must give account" (Hebrews 13:17). When the apostle exhorted the Ephesian elders, he knew that the Church was to be subjected to a sore trial. Grievous wolves were to enter among them, not sparing the flock. So likewise, in Scotland, wolfish men have secretly crept into the Church by assuming a friendly appearance. They disguised their motives until a favourable opportunity presented itself to accomplish their fell purpose. There are many, at the present time, under the guise of Presbyterianism, sapping the foundations of the Reformation in order to set up Papacy again. Dr. Wallace Williamson, Ex-Moderator of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Dr. Whyte, Principal of the New College, Edinburgh, and others, have, by word and deed, unmasked themselves so far, that it is plain that Presbyterianism is to them a thing apart, and that their proclivities are Romewards. They speak so glibly of Rome that the unwary are apt to be misled. It is our duty, as watchmen, to warn the people of the Jesuitical intrigues practised, lest souls should be engulfed in the vortex of ruinous error. "Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head" (Ezekiel 33:4).

Moreover, we, as the Ephesian presbyters, must take heed when men arise "speaking perverse things." God has given us the touchstone of His Word to try what is said by men. If they speak not in accordance with truth, their doctrines are to be rejected. "To the law and to

the testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). Our land is overrun with false teachers. Instead of Churches exercising the arm of discipline against them, they only raise them to the highest posts. They have got them as professors in their colleges, where they can disseminate their erroneous views regarding the inspired Word of God. Men are given up to strong delusions that they believe a lie. We may say, as the Rev. John Brown of Wamphray said on one occasion, “Alas! the clouds are not now gathering, but our horizon is covered with blackness, and great drops are falling, that presage a terrible overflowing deluge of error and apostacy from the truth and profession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be at hand.” This deluge is upon us. And may we be kept by the power of God from being carried away by it.

When there are such ravening wolves and speakers of perverse things abroad, it is the duty of the overseers to take heed and feed the Church of God. The Church is to be fed with Christ and Him crucified. He is the bread of life. His flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed. There is an infinite fulness in Christ to satisfy all the needs of a hungry soul. “For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness” (Psalm 107:9). In our preaching we set forth the person, two natures, and mediatorial offices of Christ. We also have to declare that He is to be the Judge. “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead” (Acts 10:42). The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The servants of Christ therefore preach the Gospel, seeking that sinners may be drawn to the Lord’s Christ in a day of His power, and that the Church may be fed with the sincere milk of the Word. “Feed my lambs; feed my sheep” (John 21:15,16).

How lamentable is the state of the blind, dumb, and treacherous ministers in our day that feed not the flock! God has denounced a woe against them. They fear not God; they seek not for Him; and they pervert the Word. “For the pastors are become brutish and have not sought the Lord; therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered” (Jeremiah 10:21). They imagine that they shall have peace; “but their damnation slumbereth not.” On the other hand, the true overseers shall receive a crown of glory when Christ shall appear. We will conclude with the apostolic exhortation and encouragement. “Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” May we be found faithful unto death! And to His name be praise for evermore. Amen.

[September 1914]

A Sermon.

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

“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” – Psalm 50: 15.

The Lord Jesus said, in the days of His flesh, that “men ought always to pray and not to faint,” and the Apostle Paul, as an inspired teacher, pressed home the same important truth when he exhorted the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing.” Prayer is a divinely-appointed means of grace. It is not confined to an audible form, but may be exercised in the secret recesses of the soul, as an expression of the desires of mind and heart. Prayer is therefore a means of grace that admits of constant exercise, and, as the soul's needs are unceasing, so there is abundant scope for continual supplication before God. There are seasons also, such as days of trouble, when special earnestness and urgency in this exercise are called for. The Psalmist was of this mind, for in the 86th Psalm he declares, “In the day of my trouble, I will call upon thee, for thou wilt answer me.”

It appears, however, from the Psalm before us, that the people of Israel were ready to get remiss in the matter of prayer. The Lord here complains in a solemn manner of them that, while they were diligent enough in bringing up the sacrifices of bullocks and goats to His altars, they were not attentive to the spiritual exercises of His house. They vainly imagined that the multitude of their material sacrifices would fully satisfy the divine claims and secure their own safety. But they were grievously mistaken, and so are all they who act in a similar manner still. “Man looketh at the outward appearance; God looketh upon the heart.” He exhorts them here to do three things, which they had culpably neglected – “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows to the Most High; and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” True prayer, in the highest sense, is the fruit of the Spirit's work in the soul of man, and none will call upon the name of the Lord so as to secure their eternal salvation, but those who obtain “the spirit of grace and supplication” from above. Still, prayer is a subject of exhortation, and its exercise is pressed home as a matter of duty, which teaches us that it is in the pathway of the observance of this divine ordinance that we may expect to get the Spirit from on high. You are not to wait until you are sure that you have the Spirit before you will call upon the name of the Lord, but you must call upon His

name in order to obtain the very Spirit by whom alone you can rightly or spiritually perform any commanded exercise. Let us, further, remember that there is a natural obligation resting upon every creature under heaven to acknowledge and worship his Creator, and the sinner who neglects this to the end will find out his serious guilt at last to his endless confusion (Acts 17:22). “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”

In considering the words of our text for a short time in dependence upon the Spirit of truth, let us observe –

- I. – Certain days of trouble;
- II. – The exhortation to call upon the Lord – “Call upon me;”
- III. – The promise of deliverance – “I will deliver thee”; and
- IV. – The fruit which is to follow – “And thou shalt glorify me.”

I. – Let us notice *certain days of trouble*.

These days I shall consider under two main divisions for the present purpose, namely, *personal* and *national* days of trouble.

1. Observe, then, *personal days of trouble*.

(1) There are, first, days of common tribulation. Both the righteous and the wicked experience those days. Man as a sinful creature is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward, though every member of the race does not suffer in exactly the same manner or measure. Some persons are much more deeply afflicted than others. The common troubles of life consist mainly in such things as the loss of health, the loss of friends, and the loss of temporal means. Some are laid up a long time on beds of sickness and pain. They know what it is to lose the precious boon of health, and to spend many wearisome days and nights under bodily trouble. Others are deeply afflicted by the loss of friends. Many of those who were near and dear to them have been removed, by various causes, from their society, or cut away by the hand of death, and they are left sad and desolate. Others, again, have been deprived in providence of the means of their temporal subsistence, and have come to know the pinch of poverty and want. Some indeed are acquainted with all those forms of trouble in their individual experience. It is to be remarked that these common afflictions are taken notice of by God, and many are the words of counsel and instruction that are addressed in the Scriptures to afflicted ones, and that are fitted to lead them, if they have ears to hear, to the heavenly fountain of help and consolation. One thing is certain, that these painful trials are so many voices proclaiming the duty and privilege of calling upon the name of the Lord. “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” Happy are those who are enabled to “hear the rod, and him who hath appointed it.” Such may come “to glory” even in tribulations also, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope.”

(2) I observe, secondly, certain days of spiritual trouble.

The *first* of these that falls to be mentioned is the day of conviction. “When the Spirit is come, he shall convince the world of sin; because they believe not on me.” Thus spake the glorious Head of the Church, when He was about to depart as to His bodily presence and “to go unto the Father,” and every soul, who has “tasted that the Lord is gracious”, has had experience in more or less degree of a day of conviction. All such have had a day of trouble, an account of their past and present sins, sins against law and Gospel, and their danger as a consequence of being lost for ever.

A *second* day of spiritual trouble with which God’s children are well acquainted, is the day of conflict with indwelling sin. When a soul passes from death unto life – from a state of nature to a state of grace – by faith in Jesus Christ, he enters into the enjoyment of peace of conscience and peace with God. But he is not generally long in that happy condition, before he begins to realise that there are two principles in his heart – sin and holiness. “The flesh

lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Many painful days of conflict with the old man "who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," are his portion in this present life.

The *third* day I notice is a day of trouble from Satan's temptations. The great adversary does not generally disturb those who, being asleep in spiritual death, are securely settled in his arms, but he shoots thousands of his fiery darts at those who have fled from his embrace to Christ the Saviour "of that which was lost." He uses also many subtle forms of temptation with a view to lead them into sin and to do what is dishonouring to the name of the Redeemer; and, alas, he sometimes succeeds in his purpose, but it is only for a season. The poor believer may cry, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet shall I arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

The *fourth* and last day of trouble I shall mention is a day of the Lord's fatherly displeasure. "He hides his face, and they are troubled." Sometimes for secret reasons that are only afterwards known, but often for their own deliberate sin, the Lord takes away the light of His favourable countenance from His people. He removes their souls far from prosperity, and gives them to experience in their consciences drops of His holy anger. They seem to see all the threatenings of His word levelled against them, and they feel utterly unable to lay hold of any of the promises. This is a day of sore trouble in their wilderness journey, but still it does not usually last long, though felt long enough by the poor soul. "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer" (Isaiah 54:8).

2. We must pass on now to notice some special *days of national trouble*. These days, though referred to as national, are in an important sense also personal. The troubles of the nation ought to be, if things were right, the troubles of every one of its subjects.

(1) I observe, first, under this head, that days of national *backsliding* are days of trouble. They are not so to all persons. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case with the majority. The multitude often rejoice in the backsliding steps of a nation, as if they were steps of enlightened progress. It is clear enough, however, that both in Church and State we have departed from the purity and faithfulness of other and better days. We have gone backwards. Both Church and State are opening wide the arms of a false charity to the emissaries of the "Man of Sin," and giving them unwarrantable advantages which, if the Most High prevent not, will yet work grievous havoc in our country. Ritualism and Rationalism have led the larger representatives of the visible Church among us far from the paths of truth and righteousness. A false gospel is preached from the pulpit, while a dead formality prevails in the pew. The State has become imbued with the spirit of infidelity; the sovereignty of Christ is not acknowledged, and His word is lightly esteemed. Gross materialism seems to dominate the thoughts and lives of the general mass of the people. For many years past, national backsliding has been a source of much mental trouble to those whose eyes are enlightened and who love the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

(2) Observe, further, that days of *national suffering* are days of trouble. At the present moment we are face to face with these days. There are three great scourges which the Lord, in righteous judgment, sends upon the earth – famine, pestilence, and sword. We have reason for thankfulness that we have hardly known, as a nation, what famine and pestilence mean, and comparatively little in recent times of the scourge of war, but at present we are engaged on the Continent of Europe in a conflict more terrible than anything of the kind we have hitherto met with. I am fully convinced that our cause is a good one – the cause of justice, honour, and peace, as against tyranny, greed, and brute force – and that we shall ultimately obtain the victory, but all the same we are to suffer, as we have suffered already, chastisement at the hands of the Most High. Many precious lives have perished on the field of battle.

Now, these days of national suffering are days of trouble in a very special way to those who fear the name of the Lord. They cannot but tremble at the signs of the Lord's indignation against the nations. They feel deeply concerned about the souls of those who go forth to battle, thousands of whom are quite unprepared for death and judgment. They are also troubled at the prospect of the suffering and loss inflicted on many families by the removal of men in the various relations of life – husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers. If these trials do not visit their own homes – they may do so – they desire, according to the command of Christ, to “weep with them that weep.”

II. – Let us now observe the second general head, the exhortation to call upon the Lord – “Call upon me.”

1. The first thing to be noticed is that it is the Lord Himself who here addresses this exhortation to the sons of men. It is not any man or angel that is the speaker, but Jehovah. He is the one being in the universe who can give effectual help in spiritual trouble. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” He has made Himself known as a God who pardons iniquity and delivers sinners from going down into the pit, seeing that He has found a ransom. He sent His Son to save that which was lost, and where He begins the good work of applied salvation, He will “perform it till the day of Jesus Christ.” It is of the greatest importance that sinners who are in trouble about their soul's salvation should consider that a gracious God in Christ is exhorting them to call upon Him for help and deliverance. He does not mock poor sinners with these encouraging addresses, but will be as good as His word. “It is not a vain thing to draw near unto God.” In like manner, the Lord is the effectual helper in all common or extraordinary troubles affecting the individual or the nation at large, and it is perilous in the extreme to disregard His gracious voice when He invites – yea, commands – us to call upon Him in the time of distress.

2. I notice here, secondly, that this exhortation is addressed to men in all places in society, and especially to the people of God among them. It was originally addressed to ancient Israel in general. Let all who are in trouble at the present moment, whether at home or abroad, understand that the Lord is here addressing them – kings, rulers, generals, soldiers, sailors, and citizens. Let no one imagine that it bespeaks cowardice to call upon the Most High God. War is a serious business – the eternal destinies of thousands of human beings are in the balance – and it is only foolhardiness in the extreme for men to think that they can meet death or obtain the victory without the favour and help of God. Let the sinner who never uttered one sincere prayer in his life now begin to call upon the Most High, lest in a moment suddenly he be cut down to eternal destruction. But whoever is silent or not, let God's people be very diligent at the throne of grace, seeking displays of God's mercy and power.

3. The third thing I desire to notice under this head is the manner of this calling upon the name of the Lord.

First, let us remember that if it is to be prayer worthy the name, it must recognise the holiness of God as lawgiver and the grace of God in Christ as Saviour. It is not an absolute or abstract Deity that we are to call upon.

Secondly, it must contain a real confession of sins – “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” – and whether we are concerned about the soul's salvation or about any providential trouble, great or small, we must be brought to see our sins in their enormity and guilt, and confess them with deep sorrow before God. They are the root causes of all our personal and national troubles.

Thirdly, we must plead only the merits of Christ. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” but His righteousness is perfect and all-sufficient. It is not our prayers that are to purchase God's favour. The appeal that the child makes to his parent for help does not purchase that help in any way. In all our cries at a throne of grace we must present the perfect

merits of the Divine Redeemer who procured, by His obedience unto death, all the blessings of the covenant that shall descend upon the nations of the world.

And fourthly, let prayer be pursued with earnest and unceasing importunity. Christ spoke several parables with a view to stimulate sinners to persevere in prayer. It is they who will not give up calling that shall be heard and answered (Luke 18).

III. – The promise of deliverance: “I will deliver thee.” The Lord promises deliverance to the person who sincerely calls upon Him for help in the day of trouble.

1. Allow me to point out that there are two ways in which the Most High grants deliverance to those who cry to Him in the time of need.

There is first, the way of deliverance from the particular trouble with which they are burdened, or tossed; and

there is secondly, the way of gracious support under the trouble. Though the latter may not seem at first sight a deliverance at all, it is oftentimes the better deliverance of the two, especially in common troubles.

The greatest trial oftentimes in a particular affliction of a natural kind is the felt want of a spirit of patient endurance. The poor believer does not feel that he has grace to endure the trouble in a way that is of the glory of God and his own benefit; he is conscious of a rebellious, sinking spirit, and cannot rise above the affliction so as to regard it as a chastisement in love at the hands of a gracious God in Christ. Thus, when the Lord graciously sends forth His Word and Spirit in such a way as to produce the spirit of filial submission, and to enable him to see love in the bitter cup, he finds the sting taken out of his affliction, and rejoices as a bird that has escaped from the fowler’s snare. He is enabled to say, “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.”

2. Observe, then, that the Lord holds out a promise of deliverance in either or both of these ways. Certainly He has given definite promises as to deliverance from spiritual troubles. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” He has promised with absolute certainty that He shall deliver His people at last out of all their afflictions. But, on the other hand, He has not promised absolutely to deliver all who call upon Him from the common troubles of life. He shows His sovereignty in this matter, and such must be satisfied at times with the deliverance of gracious support or consolation in the midst of trouble. At the same time, we are encouraged to come with all our present temporal troubles, great or small, to Him at a throne of grace, and ask Him, if it be His good pleasure, to deliver us from them, and we can have the satisfaction then of knowing that if He does not grant our request, He has wise, gracious, and just reasons for not answering us as we desire. This itself is something better than man at any time can give us. However, let us not take a denial too readily from Him. He often delays to grant a particular deliverance to put our sincerity and love to the test, and to make us value the deliverance all the more when we get it.

3. Let me say, however, lastly on this point to every sinner to whom this portion of divine truth comes. Are you in any trouble with respect to yourself, or others – it may be great, perplexing, overwhelming trouble – it matters not how seemingly insurmountable it appears – make use of this word of invitation and promise. Call upon His name; look to Him as the one all sufficient, almighty helper and deliverer who for His own name’s sake can make a way through the sea and a path through the mighty waters; plead His own word; and you know not but you may get a most unexpected, surprising deliverance at His hand. He is the wonder-working Jehovah, “wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.”

IV. – Our last general head is the fruit that is to follow: “and thou shalt glorify me.” The Lord here intimates that the person whom He delivers will glorify Him, or show forth His praise.

Possibly this word is fulfilled on a natural scale by people who never knew the grace of God in truth. They have been in some trouble; they have raised their voice in natural supplication, and they have been delivered, with the result that they acknowledge that the Almighty helped them in the time of need. Many people in the days of Christ “glorified the God of Israel” for His wonderful miracles, who were never truly born from above, and never spiritually served the Lord. Such, however, is not the kind of glorifying which is set before us in God’s word as the best attainment.

The best gift is the ability to glorify the Lord with a new heart and a right spirit, and a godly life becoming the Gospel. None can show forth His praise like those whom He has formed anew for Himself. They shall praise Him with all the faculties of their souls, and all the members of their bodies – all dedicated to His glory and service. Happy are these, then, who come out of their days of trouble with grace given them to “show forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

I am reminded here of an incident which may be worth relating. On one occasion when travelling, I happened to meet an elderly gentleman who told me something of his spiritual history. He said that as a young lad, he was well brought up and was moral in his habits, but somehow he began to entertain the idea that he would like a little more liberty of life, and at last he decided he would join the army. He did so, and was with his regiment in India at or about the time that the Indian Mutiny broke out. At a great distance from home, and separated from all his friends, he began to feel somewhat lonely. His thoughts went forward to the prospect of conflict and probably death, that lay before him, and while meditating as to how he was to get through the trouble that loomed ahead, these words came strongly before his mind, “Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” He then said that he began to call, as well as he knew, on the Lord to preserve him and carry him safely through the struggles of the Mutiny. The result was that he was completely preserved amidst the whole stirring time, and suffered no injury. After the Mutiny was over, his regiment was sent up to a quiet place among the hills. Here he began to reflect upon the passage of Scripture which had come to him so wonderfully before he was engaged in actual conflict, and he observed that two parts of the word had been fulfilled – “Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee.” He had called, and the Lord had delivered. But now he was face to face with the last part, namely, “and thou shalt glorify me,” and when he examined his own heart, he said he did not find one drop of real gratitude or thankfulness to the Most High for all that He had done. This threw him into great concern and perplexity, and one day he went out to a solitary spot with his Bible and a volume of Flavel’s Sermons, to seek deliverance from the wretched condition in which he found himself. There, he bore testimony, these words of Christ came home to his mind with a power which he hoped he would never forget in time or eternity, namely, “Without me ye can do nothing.” He then and there saw that without the grace of Christ he could do nothing in a way of glorifying God, and that at the same time there was grace provided in Christ sufficient to meet all his need. Here he found a door of hope and deliverance for which he felt abundant reason to praise the Most High as long as he lived. The incident, which I have related as accurately as I can remember, from the lips of one of “Havelock’s Veterans,” teaches a variety of lessons bearing upon our text, which many of us would do well to lay to heart. The Lord will be found faithful to His word and promise.

In conclusion, let me enquire: Are we putting Him to the test? Have we ever been in any trouble, temporal or spiritual? Have we called upon the name of the Lord for mercy, pardon, and salvation? Or are we still dead in trespasses and sins, utterly careless and prayerless? Let us take care lest, if we do not trouble ourselves now about the all-important matters of eternity, we may open our eyes in an unexpected manner in never-ending misery. He is still speaking to us from off the mercy-seat. We cannot possibly avoid meeting with at least

temporal troubles, and if we have a spark of wisdom, we shall make these the occasion of obeying the voice of the Lord, when he says: "Call upon me in the day of trouble." It would be well if all amongst us at the present crisis, high and low, were found calling upon the Lord for deliverance, help and victory, while confessing our sins, and seeking forgiveness. "For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." May the Lord bless to us His Word!

[October 1914]

A Sermon.

By the REV. M. MORRISON, Lochinver, Sutherlandshire.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast" – Isaiah 26:20.

In times of national trouble and distress the people of God betook themselves to the Lord, the source whence their deliverance could come. It was He who alone could inspire them with the hope and confidence that made them strong. Thus did Isaiah and the saints of old. At the prospect of fulfilled divine threatenings their attitude was not one of murmuring, but of submission and acquiescence in the righteousness of God therein. They were not slow to acknowledge divine intervention in all the evils and calamities which came upon them, and they justified God in the justice with which these were inflicted. The messages which they delivered from the mouth of the Lord often contained threatenings of divine anger and wrath. They explained the causes of His displeasure, and gave solemn calls to repentance. Sin and idolatry provoked God's holy anger. But He encouraged His own people who were faithful to Him amid all those dangers, to be strong in Himself, while He denounced war against the wicked.

To His people He addresses the words of our text when, in view of a violent storm that was either raging or about to break out, they required His direction and guidance. If this chapter is introduced with a song of triumph, it ends with words indicative of sore and trying providences to the world. Now, in times of storm and wrath, God's people are here exhorted. A terrible war is presently raging, in which we are engaged; but terrible though it is, it is but as a small drop of divine wrath as compared to what that wrath will be to Christless sinners through eternity. Now, in considering this solemn portion of God's Word, I shall, as I may be enabled, deal with it under three heads: –

- I. – The people who are exhorted in the text – "My people."
- II. – The circumstances in view of which they are exhorted – "Divine indignation."
- III. – The exhortation addressed to them.

I. – The people who are exhorted – "My people."

God has a people in the world. With an eye to their welfare He controls all events which come to pass, and directs the dispensations of His providence. Usually worldly men are inclined to ignore this, but it does not alter the real fact. The Lord and Saviour says, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Again, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:2). And He is set "far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21). These statements clearly point out to us that Christ, the God-man and Mediator, possesses the reins

of absolute government and dominion over all tribes, tongues, nations, and kingdoms. One particular object of His mediatorial government is that He might give eternal life to as many as were given Him by the Father. In ancient times He had His special people or nation, distinct from the heathen round about, and here we shall notice –

1. The Lord laid claim to this people as His own peculiar property. Them, of all people existing on the face of the earth, He knew and set apart for Himself. All the events of His providence, His conduct of affairs, His wondrous works, and His dealings with the rest of the world, were subservient to the fulfilment of His gracious purposes towards His people. He always asserted an unchallenged right to ancient Israel, as distinguished from the heathen nations. We may consider this right to them as threefold.

(1) In virtue of election and choice. They were a chosen people. This distinction could not be applied to any other people. “For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:6,7). This choice and election of them was entirely sovereign, and was implied in His covenant. It was not due to any desert in them, nor any greatness or glory which they possessed. They were a few despised and insignificant people, but on them the Lord had set His heart. They were set apart and consecrated to the service of the Lord. Therefore He could truly say they were His people.

(2) They were His also in virtue of the favours and privileges bestowed on them. Not only were they chosen by Him, but He deposited His word, laws, statutes, and commandments with them. He instituted His ordinances and true worship among them, and provided them with shepherds, pastors, and leaders, prophets, priests, and kings to feed and guide them. Nothing was withheld from them which was necessary to their temporal, national, and spiritual well-being, or to their preservation as a people for the Lord. Surely He might well look on them as His own people – a people for whom He did such great things; He might well look for their constant loyalty and obedience to Himself. “For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for. And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day” (Deuteronomy 4:7,8). “He also exalted the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the Lord” (Psalm 148:14).

(3) They were the objects of His special care and providence. Many times He saved them from their enemies, delivered them from dangers and troubles, upheld them in temptations, trials, and distresses, and succoured them in wants and miseries. When they forgot His works and wonders, forsook His word, worship, and ordinances to go astray after strange gods – the work of men’s hands – the Lord graciously exhorted and pleaded with them to turn back to Himself. “Return unto me, ye backsliding people, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord.” “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old” (Isaiah 63:9). When He showed hard things unto them, it was on account of their sins. Their own base ingratitude and wicked hearts led them to such excesses oftentimes, that nothing would correct them but sore and smarting experience of the fruits of their own doings. Therefore the Lord permitted many evils to come upon them – death, sword, famine and pestilence, calamities, and captivities of various kinds. And let us observe, friends, that it was after every effort failed to induce them to obey and return, after the most

persuasive pleadings and gracious invitations, promises the most sweet and threatenings the most solemn used to influence them, the Lord, owing to their disregard and disobedience, permitted these judgments to come upon them. He did not afflict them willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

Now, may we not consider our own land as in a somewhat similar situation? We were set apart in a manner at the Reformation for Christ and His service. We have been, until now, much more highly favoured by the Lord than any other people, and what returns have we made to Him? God's word found a place among us in the past, and we rejected idolatry and false worship in Church and State. We have been in the past acknowledged as a strong Protestant people, who prospered as no other people did. Our principles of justice and righteousness and well-ordered laws come nearest to the model, presented by the truth of God, that we find in the world. It is owing to this that we have attained to such a high position of authority and influence in the councils of the nations of the world. All these considerations are truly fit to impress upon us a deep sense of indebtedness and obligations to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Lord has had also a great cloud of witnesses and faithful followers in the land. Their prayers availed much in the past, and they avail much still, and it is not altogether our own arm and might that got for us the victories of the past. When Gideon overcame the Midianites with three hundred, it was not surely his own sword that got him the victory; it was the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. He planted His church and ordinances among us as He has done among no other kindred. In our many and grievous backslidings and declensions, He has been calling us to repent and turn to Himself, our chief glory and honour. May He not, on these considerations, say to us, "Return unto me, ye backsliding people, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord."

2. Those, however, who are specially meant by our text are the true people of God in every age – the effectually-called by His grace. They were not all the true people of God who were named Israel, for it is said that, "though Israel should be as the sand on the seashore, yet a remnant only shall be saved." To be a privileged people is not necessarily to be a gracious people. Those who are here exhorted are specially sinners called by the grace of God. Therefore, they belong unto Him by reason of special grace. Of them He takes care in times of distress and storm.

(1) They are a people whom He loved from eternity. As their God, His love to them was infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. The Father loved them, and the Son loved them, and the Holy Spirit loved them. This love was an electing love, a redeeming love, a grace-applying and soul-sanctifying love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but hath everlasting life." "Christ loved the church and gave himself for her." It is for His love to them He stands forth as their Mediator – God-man in one eternal Person. As their Saviour, He is their Prophet, Priest, and King. And His love to them as their Prophet is an enlightening and instructing love; His love to them as their Priest is a justifying, reconciling, and pardoning love; His love to them as their King is a soul-winning, heart-alluring, and sin-destroying love. "We love him because he first loved us." "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). The enmity of men and devils cannot make ineffectual the love of God towards those whom He purposed to save, and this affords much comfort to the tried children of God.

(2) They are a people effectually called in time by God's Word and Spirit. They are forthwith separated from the world in their nature, desires, inclinations, and practices. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). The common call of the Gospel is addressed to all sinners unto whom the Gospel comes, but this call

becomes effectual at God's appointed time to those whom He loved from everlasting. No sooner does God, by the operations of His Spirit and Word, bring a sinner from darkness to light, than Satan, the world, and a deceitful heart make their presence felt, and proceed with redoubled fury to make ceaseless attacks on the delivered captive. This has always been the experience of God's people. If you are truly called by Him you have found this out – that you are tempted, tried, and harrassed by Satan, and are subject to the like outward troubles and calamities with the wicked. The sinner who hears the voice of the Son of God effectually is "called unto his kingdom and glory." "As many as have heard and learned of the Father shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." He exercises great and tender care over His people when His judgments are abroad. O how happy are they whose God is the Lord in times of sore visitations, because to Him they feel they can repair with hope and confidence, and from Him they can derive strength. What a privilege, therefore, is theirs! He wants them to enter into their chambers.

(3) Further, they are a pardoned and justified people. "Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life" (Romans 5:18). As a reconciled God in Christ, He pardons their sins most freely, fully, and completely, and accepts of their persons, and henceforth of their graces, duties, and exercises. God's justification of a sinner, which, as it is an act, is done in an instant, and absolutely perfect and complete, is wholly founded on the meritorious doings, sufferings, and righteousness of the blessed Immanuel. Christ died for them; He paid the price of their redemption. Therefore they are His property – His peculiar property. "Inasmuch as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18,19).

(4) They are a sanctified people. A new nature has been given them; a radical change in all the faculties of the soul has taken place. They are created anew in Christ Jesus. In the new birth they take on them the image of God as their Father and of the Saviour as their elder brother. So that, like as they have borne the image of the earthly, they now bear the image of the heavenly – even of the Lord from heaven. "Be ye holy, even as I am holy." It is unto this holiness and sanctification of heart and life they are destined. To Christ's example and image they must be conformed. They are His peculiar people in the world, whom He dearly bought, and on whom He spent and is spending a great deal of trouble and labour, as it were. A consecrated and sanctified people they must be, for nothing shall enter in that defileth or worketh abomination or maketh a lie. As they are God's workmanship in Christ Jesus, the graces of the Spirit of God are implanted – yea, the Spirit of Christ is put within them. "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Now, the sanctification of the inner man proceeds and advances through the tuition of God's Word and Spirit. It is evidenced in the soul's ever-growing consciousness of his own nothingness and unworthiness – of his ignorance, darkness, helplessness – and of his entire dependence on the resources of grace and glory with God in Christ.

Now, it is to these people He says, "Enter into thy chambers until the storm be overpast."

II. – The circumstances in view of which they are exhorted.

There is a storm coming, or a storm raging, and in such outward circumstances the Lord's people need divine comfort and direction. A storm is what everyone naturally avoids, if he can, and when overtaken by it, such is the violence of the raging elements that the traveller's life is in danger. The mariner, whose weather-glass warns him of an impending storm, directs his course towards land, and makes for the nearest harbour as swiftly as he can. The Lord acts in a similar manner towards His people when storms are brewing and coming on the land. He shall make sure that they are preserved. Storms in Scripture are employed figuratively, and

this text obviously contains metaphorical language. They invariably represent divine judgments, and here the words are to be understood in that sense. Application may be made to the state of things in the final judgment, but here we shall content ourselves with considering it under a two-fold aspect – namely, spiritual and temporal judgments.

1. Spiritual judgments are, in God's sovereign dealings, allowed upon a people because of abuse of light, mercies, and privileges. The spiritually dead, whether in Church or State, are not conscious or sensible of these judgments. It is God's people alone who do really groan and sigh as they see the desolation which results from these judgments when they are abroad. And may we not say that spiritual death is thickly and widely prevailing throughout a land that once flourished with the blessed fruits of the gospel? We have grieved and vexed His Holy Spirit, so He hath turned to be our enemy. We desire not to retain the knowledge of God. Something else is substituted for the true knowledge of God among this generation. At what an alarming rate has the healthy and vigorous spirituality of former days declined. Instead, there is grown and growing a coarse materialistic spirit, which shuns any acknowledgment of, and dependence upon, the living and true God. As in the days of Amos, the Lord threatened and inflicted spiritual desolations on Israel for their sins, ingratitude, and apostasy, so we are sharing in this land in like spiritual desolations. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord; and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it" (Amos 8:11,12). Let us now for a short time inquire into some of the causes why the Lord is permitting this storm, this ravaging, destructive storm, which seems to be carrying everything before it to ruin.

(1) We are, as a people and nation, become imbued so much with the spirit of gross and worldly materialism that no time or attention is devoted to anything serious pertaining to the world to come. Man's life seems to consist in what he can accumulate of this world. A mercenary spirit enters into all his activities in his religion as in other things. The god to whom the generality of men bow the knee is the silver and the gold which they can amass. Such a treasure ministers to their lusts, which they seek to gratify to excess. God and the all-important concerns of their souls are left out of all calculation. Is this not one of the procuring causes of our spiritual desolations? People desire to carouse in every form of luxury; to indulge in every form of sport, play, and amusement. What a wicked height we have reached in all these vanities which provoke a Holy God against us to destroy us. We may be sure that in the measure in which all these indulged forms of sport and amusement come in and prevail in the land, will the gospel lose its effect and influence, and the Spirit of God be withdrawn. Before this land was favoured with the truth and pure worship of God, all these sports and plays existed on a universal scale, and the sound preaching of God's Word was the means of breaking their hold on the people and making them turn from these vanities unto the living God.

(2) A contempt of the truth and worship of God. His worship is forsaken and neglected, and His laws are trampled under feet. The perpetual obligations of the moral law are rejected and His authority is opposed and resisted. The day, which He appointed as one day in seven to be holy and sanctified to himself, is privately and openly desecrated in the most shameless fashion. It is the only day on which certain forms of man's wickedness are indulged in to the greatest excess. No wonder, indeed, though the anger of the Lord should burn in fury against the inhabitants of the land for these transgressions. Worldly men do not hesitate to conduct their business on the Lord's day, and place at the disposal of a profane and indifferent public all their steam, railway, and vehicular facilities in the pursuit of their lusts and pleasures to add to their worldly profits. What a precious promise the Lord gives to those who keep His Sabbaths – "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath from doing thy

pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honourable; and shall honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 58:13,14).

(3) Unsound doctrine and preaching have brought this spiritual leanness upon us. Pulpits, schools, and colleges have been for a long time the great nurseries for the training of men’s minds in all the wild and soul-destroying errors which have gained so wide a currency in the present day. What a spiritual judgment is this on a guilty people! “For the time will come,” says the apostle, “when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4:3,4). And as the Lord’s witnesses are being removed quickly one by one, and others not raised up in their stead, we are becoming spiritually desolate, and this indicates a time of storm. Another mark of the Lord’s anger is the amount of unbelief and atheism which abounds. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” The crowning sin is the sin of unbelief; for Christ and the Gospel are rejected, and “how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” To be outside and exposed to the violence of these storms, and not betake ourselves to our chambers, will bring ruin upon a professing people.

2. Temporal judgments sent on a people are also an expression of the divine displeasure. When Israel would not hear and obey the voice of the Lord, but persisted in their evil ways, walked after the imagination of their own hearts, and followed after the ways of the heathen and worshipped their false gods, the Lord visited them with sore and severe judgments. He sent sword, famine, and pestilence on the people, and made them an easy prey to their enemies. In our own day the sword is unsheathed, and we are engaged in a terrible conflict on the plains of Europe, the equal of which has not been known hitherto. Our land is being drained of its brave and vigorous manhood to oppose the mighty and bloody hordes of the German military system, which is a great curse to our common civilisation. What distress and suffering this dreadful war is bringing to thousands of our homes! “Is there an evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?” A vast number of our dear fellow-countrymen are laid silent in the dust, and we fear before the storm is overpast the number will swell enormously. Is there not a most solemn voice speaking to us in these terrible events? Does it not indicate that the hand of the Lord is stretched out, letting fearful drops of His anger fall on the nations of the earth? We readily acknowledge that our country was forced into this war for the vindication of honourable international pledges and treaties, and to maintain the rights of independent States, which it was bound on its honour to do. And we have no doubt but our own ultimate security and independence was at stake. But that circumstances should so arise in which we had to take up the sword, is fraught with significance. Let us then for a moment consider some of the reasons on account of which the Lord, in righteous judgment, may have sent this storm.

(1) Germany prided herself in her culture and prosperity. This culture was like the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up in his kingdom. To it the whole world was directed to bow. It was a god that they should worship – a shrine at which they should pay their votive offerings. How very successful, alas! has this would-be culture been in the theological seminaries of the world. It has permeated the theological teaching of Great Britain to an alarming extent. The professor and the students in the college, the minister in the pulpit, and the people in the pew have become intoxicated with the new wine of German theology. It will have none of its followers to believe in the divinity of Christ, in the atonement He made for sin, and in the necessary work of regeneration by the Holy Ghost. The whole Word of God is

explained away, and is become meaningless in the estimation of this high system of theological culture. On the other hand, it calls on them to glorify man's nature and his divine capabilities. This is their gospel, which is yet no gospel. How very guilty are Scotland and England of imbibing this lifeless religion! No wonder though the divine forbearance is exhausted. But when this storm is raging, the command of God to His people is; "Come, enter into thy chambers."

(2) A second reason is the countenance we are giving to "the man of sin." Those in authority are giving their strength to "the beast," and Popery is making great progress in our land. The emissaries of this pernicious system have been taking advantage of Protestant weakness and apathy to further the interests of the Roman Catholic religion by legislation and otherwise. The idolatrous religion of Rome has a fascinating attraction for many in high and low places. By their subtle intriguing they were successful in repealing the Protestant Declaration. This gave a great impetus to their activities in their sinister work, and they will never pause until a Roman Catholic government is set up in Ireland. Let it be further observed that our country has been in constant turmoil and disruption from within ever since the repeal of that Declaration. Strike after strike, riot after riot, the spirit of mutiny and rebellion against masters and constituted authority have been remarkably in evidence. The Lord will avenge the quarrel of His covenant. We have sadly betrayed our trust. "Thus saith the Lord, what iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity and are become vain" (Jeremiah 2:8).

III. – The exhortation addressed to them, "Come, enter into thy chambers, shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself for a little moment until the indignation be overpast." Let us consider to what chambers does the Lord invite His people in the times of His indignation. Chambers always presupposes a house. The Scriptures represent God Himself as a house. "Be thou my strong rock for an house of defence to save me" (Psalm 31:2).

(1) There are chambers in this house into which we are invited, called chambers of defence, in order to be safe and secure in the most stormy times. God in Christ proves to be a strong refuge to His people in the worst of times. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous flee into it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10). Thus the name of the Lord is a chamber of defence from assaults of the devil and the world in stormy times. In the Lord Jehovah have we righteousness and strength, and they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." What more could be a source of strength of refuge to the righteous? In this chamber one feels safe from the world and the evil one when they seek to take advantage of God's indignation abroad. It is by faith and repentance they enter into these chambers. As we might consider that Christ Himself is a chamber of defence to His people, so He is the way to them, and He is the door through which they enter in. "I am the way." "I am the door." "In my Father's house are many mansions." All the perfections of God are a defence to His people, into which they can flee to be safe. They are round about the Church as the mountains were round about Jerusalem (Psalm 125:2). He is a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in their midst. When they are bowed down with a sense of divine indignation against themselves, as against the land, they feel that it is their wisdom to look to Him again and betake themselves to His chambers of defence. For to be outside these chambers and exposed to the judgments, which are the expression of His indignation, is to be in danger. And when we feel we cannot come, nor able to take one step ourselves because of hardness and death, let us look unto Himself; for the Church thus confessed, "The king hath brought me into his chambers" (Song 1:4). There is no condition in which the righteous can be but the Lord exhorts and invites him to Himself; nay, any sinner in any way burdened with a sense of God's wrath upon himself or others, is repeatedly urged to flee into these chambers of defence. "Come unto me, all ye that

labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Christ in all His offices and relations is chambers of defence to His people, to sinners who come to Him. He is chambers of defence in His sufferings, death, sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension, in all of which He gives a view of Himself to the believer. Surely, then, these are chambers of defence to a poor sinner in every state and condition in which he may find himself. Christ is the “man who shall be an hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”

(2) The next chambers of which we shall speak are chambers of distinction. If we come to Christ, we are not to think we can be like the world, which lieth in wickedness. Godless sinners, who are invited by the common call of the gospel, imagine they can come sometime before their death, when they hope to repent and reform. Those who are taught of God have realised the folly and hollowness of such hopes. With the world, it is a matter of coming to Christ in their own vain imaginings, on their own terms and overtures. Some imagine they can be saved with their sins, and not from their sins; with the world, and not distinct from the world. Now, this is the way with unregenerate men, because they know not God, the nature of a Holy God, and their own wicked hearts. But those who are taught from heaven know the necessity of separating from the world in conduct, life, an practice from without, and in nature, desires, and inclinations from within. It is out of the world the Lord calls His people; it is out of themselves, and out of the service of the flesh and Satan, that the Lord calls and brings His people to Himself. “Come out from among them and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17). They are brought out of all false security and carnal ease – out from false worship and false gods, out from the idolatry of nominal professors and heathen worship, and they come to Christ the Saviour, Redeemer, Prophet, Priest, and King of His Church. “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and so partake of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). We can only serve one master. If God be God, let us serve Him, and if it be Baal, let us serve him, and as we cannot serve two masters, we must renounce the one and cleave to the other. So these are chambers of distinction to which you must come in times of divine indignation. We must show that God hath set us apart for Himself, to show forth His praise. The Apostle says – “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2). Our actions also show where we are, and the wicked take particular notice of professors. The evil actions of religious professors have always been held up by the world with a view to bring discredit upon the Christian religion. They take advantage of these actions to pour ridicule and contempt on Christ, His truth, and His people. If all religious professors acted conformably to the truth of God, and after the example of Christ and His true people, the world would have no semblance of reason to ridicule the Christian profession. Thus, we must come into our chambers of distinction, and take God’s word as our rule of life and conduct.

(3) In this house there are also chambers of devotion to which we must flee in times of indignation. We should constantly make use of the means of grace in public and in private. “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.” “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst.” A duty in which we should be always engaged is prayer. These are chambers to which we should come and enter. “Enter thou into thy closet and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret and seeth in secret” (Matthew 6:6). Truly this is a duty on all the people of God in these times of trouble. We should bear the cause of our nation before the throne of grace – pray earnestly in public and in private that the Lord would give wisdom and grace to those in authority, so that they might at least humble themselves outwardly and acknowledge the hand of the Lord upon them. How desirable it is that the King should even signify his mind to this effect, that there should be a day of national humiliation and confession held throughout the land! Alas! we

see no signs of such God-acknowledging disposition in high quarters. But our duty is to pray for kings and those in authority and for all men. Especially should we bear the case of our poor soldiers and sailors at the throne of grace, and seek that the Lord should give them, when face to face with death and suffering in all the horrible forms invented by the evil genius of man, to look to Him who is able to save from natural, spiritual, and eternal death. And may the Lord in His infinite mercy grant them the spirit of prayer and repentance. For it is a fearful thing to die a Christless sinner, because it is a falling into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire against iniquity.

Let us shut our doors about us and hide ourselves for a little moment, “until the indignation be overpast.” Let us seek to be alone with God, and have the doors shut through which Satan, the world, and a deceitful heart rush in upon us, for there is no secret, gracious exercise in which the people of God are engaged but Satan seeks to harass them. May the Lord give us grace and wisdom thus to live and die, and may He bless to us His word! Amen.
[November 1914]

Brief Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. FINLAY COOK, Reay.

[This is one of the last discourses Mr. Cook preached – he died in 1858 – and it was delivered on the Monday of a Communion.]

“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple” – Psalm 27:4.

We should all desire and seek to have a dwelling in this house. There are many lessons given us in God’s Word, and we have all many precious calls to wait on the Lord – privileges that are denied to many of our fellow-men. We have all many precious encouragements to wait on the Lord, but I fear they will be to the condemnation of many – yes, the savour of death to many, but the savour of life to His own people. Those who are satisfied with the outward means of grace apart from Christ, “the god of this world” has blinded their eyes, but you whose eyes have been opened are not so satisfied. You were once, like others, under the power of “the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience” – you were running in the broad way that leads to destruction – but the Lord has opened your eyes and shown you your danger. He has arrested you as He did Saul of Tarsus. “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” And He has made you cry, “Lord, what shall I do to be saved?” He has showed you that “the wages of sin is death,” but that “the gift of God is eternal life.” You had formerly the letter of the Word merely, and were satisfied, but He has now made it truly precious to your souls. O, what do you want? “I want Jesus; if I am saved I shall be content.”

I have just thought on this passage to-day for you who are “in the way,” and who desire to behold the beauty of the Lord. You are leaving the ordinance and going out into the world. May you be enabled to take His Word with you!

There are several houses in which God dwells. We have “the house of the Lord” here. The Church of God on earth is the temple of the Holy One. “Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool, saith the Lord. Where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest? . . . But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:1,2). In the renewed man then, I say, the Lord has a house. He that is of a poor and contrite spirit and trembleth at His reproofs – here His tabernacle is. I will now endeavour to say something that may be profitable to you – something that, with the Lord’s blessing, may stick to you.

This house was built on a rock. The wise man digs deep, and lays his foundation on a rock. The rains came, the winds blew, and beat upon this house, and it fell not, because it was built on a rock. But the foolish man built his house on the sand; the rains came, the wind blew, and beat on that house, and it fell, because it was built on the sand. This ought to be a question with you and me, if our foundation is on the rock. The Christian may have many crosses and trials; many hard winds may blow upon him; but he is safe, because his house is on the rock; his foundation is Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ Himself is the chief corner stone, and all His people are lively stones in the building. They are all new creatures who are in this house, all hewn out of the rock of fallen nature. He took the hammer of His word and broke every stone and neatly prepared it for the spiritual house. He prepared some stones for the doors, others for the windows, and others still for the walls, all looking to Christ Himself as the chief corner stone, and remembering the rock whence they were hewn and the hole of the pit whence they were taken.