

A Sermon.

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“These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is lord of lords, and king of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” – Revelation 17:14.

The book of Revelation contains the history of the sufferings and victories of the Church of Christ from the beginning of the Christian era down to the day of the final judgment. It is divided into three septenaries.

The *first* of these discloses, by the opening of seven seals, the sufferings and victories of the Church under pagan Rome;

the *second* discloses, by the blowing of seven trumpets, the sufferings of the Church under Papal Rome; while

the *third* reveals, by the pouring of seven vials, the slow but sure destruction of Antichrist, or the Papacy, and the victory of the Church of Christ, culminating in the glorious millennium.

Our text embraces the most of the period taken up by the trumpets and vials. Let us, in humble dependence upon the guidance and assistance of the Spirit of truth, endeavour to consider it. There are three things in it to which we desire to direct your attention: –

- I. – The parties who are to make war with the Lamb;
- II. – The Lamb and his followers; and
- III. – The war itself and its results.

I. – We are to consider who the parties are that make war with the Lamb.

In the beginning of this chapter, one of the angels who had the seven vials, said to John, “Come hither: I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” The first object revealed to John was a “great whore.” This title given her is to be considered from a spiritual point of view. The name “whore” is commonly applied in the Old Testament Scriptures to the Church when she revolted from the true God and His worship to idolatry. We find the ten tribes of Israel often addressed under this designation after their revolt with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. The same epithet is used to describe Judah after they set up idolatry. Let this portion of the word suffice here as proof – “Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholiah. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine, . . . with their idols she defiled herself” (Jeremiah 3:4-7). The Lord compares the relation between Himself and His Church with that of a husband and wife. When the Church departs from Him as the object of her love and worship, and from His word as the rule of her faith and conduct in things spiritual and temporal, she falls under the name of “whore.” This appears plainly to be the meaning of these words – “Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts” (Hosea 2:2). Why was it necessary that the angel should show John this great whore? The reason was that, at that time, there was not a church in the world that held more firmly the doctrines, form of worship, form of government, and discipline of the Christian faith than the church referred to did. It was not until five hundred years had passed, after John saw her in vision, that she actually became “the whore.” God alone could have foretold that such an apostate church was

to appear at such a distant date in the future, and also where that apostacy was to be looked for.

Let us look a little into the context for her characteristics. John records it thus: "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness; and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of the abomination and filthiness of her fornication; and upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

(1) She sat upon a scarlet-coloured beast, of which we will have more to say afterwards.

(2) "She had a golden cup in her hand, full of the abominations and filthiness of her fornication." In this cup, which she held in her hand, was the wine of her fornication, which made the inhabitants of the earth drunk. That wine was her superstition, idolatry, and blasphemies, which the inhabitants of the earth believed, and by which she herself became the "great whore," for it is called the wine of her fornication.

(3) She herself "was drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Why is it said that the inhabitants of the earth were drunk with the wine of her fornication, but that she herself was drunk with the blood of the saints? Because they drank, spiritually, her doctrines, superstitions, idolatry, and blasphemies, but she knew that they were not true. This has been the reason why she kept the Word of God out of the hands of the people; for she knew if they were to read the Word of God they would detect the fraud.

(4) "And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." Anything on one's forehead is easily seen. This indicates how apparently the idolatry of Babylon would show itself in this "mother of harlots." So it has been observed that all the idolatry of old Babylon had been resuscitated in this "whore," under Christian names.

(5) "And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." This makes it incontrovertibly plain that Rome is pointed at as the "great whore." For in John's time the city of Rome did reign over the kings of the earth. It was on this account that the angel described her as sitting upon many waters. He explains the meaning of the "many waters" thus: – "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."

Let us sum up the distinguishing marks given of her in this chapter. She made the inhabitants of the earth drunk with the wine of her fornication. She was drunk herself with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. She had on her forehead the Babylonish marks of idolatry. She was "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." This picture is so perfect in all its lineaments that no one, except he would close his eyes, can fail to identify it as the idolatrous Church of Rome.

Let us now consider the beast on which she sat. "And I saw," John writes, "a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." The angel explained the meaning of this beast to John. "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was and is not and yet is. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh he must continue a short space. And the beast that

was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” This beast, let us observe, has seven heads. These seven heads mean two things:

(1) They signify seven hills on which the woman sat.

(2) They signify seven kings: five of these were past, one was in existence when John saw the vision, and the other was to come. These kings are understood, by men of understanding and sound judgment, to mean forms of government. There were five forms of government fallen in Rome before John’s time; it was governed by an emperor then; and the seventh, which was to come and that must continue a short time, meant the form of government the Goths and Vandals set up for about eighty years. The eighth, who was of the seven, was to be a mixture of the first six and the Goths and Vandals, for he is declared to be of the seven. Thus the last species of government set up in Rome was the beast, or antichrist, upon whom the whore sat. This was the temporal power given to the bishop of Rome, or the Pope. We are told that this beast, or temporal power, was to ascend out of the bottomless pit. Now, the Scriptures state emphatically that “the powers that be are ordained of God,” so it is not said of the other seven that they ascended out of the bottomless pit. No; because they were forms of government legitimately set up among men. But this eighth, who was of the seven, was the “scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy,” upon whom the woman sat. One of these names of blasphemy was, “Christ’s vicar on earth.” Let it be noticed that Christ said to Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world.” But the Pope claimed temporal power, contrary to the Word of God. This makes it quite apparent that the Pope’s temporal power was not ordained of God, but had ascended from the bottomless pit. It was contrary to the nature of the kingdom which Jesus Christ set up in the world – that kingdom being entirely spiritual. This shows that it was founded on a lie. This beast was scarlet coloured, and so was the woman that sat on him. The beast was full of names of blasphemy; so was the woman. They represented the same apostacy under two different aspects: the whore represented antichrist as the Church of Rome, and the beast represented antichrist as the temporal power of Rome papal.

Again, we are told that the kings of the earth committed fornication with the great whore. Instead of continuing in the doctrines of the word of God, they forsook them in order to uphold her superstition, idolatry, fables, and blasphemies. These are the ten horns of the beast, or the manner in which his power – that is, the temporal power of the Pope – is to be exercised. “And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet (that is, when John saw the vision); but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”

We can now discern who they are that will make war with the Lamb: –

(1) The great whore that sits upon the beast – that is, Antichrist, under the aspect of the apostate Church of Rome;

(2) the beast upon whom she sat, or the temporal power of the Pope;

(3) the kings of the earth who committed fornication with the great whore, and who gave their power and strength to the beast. These three are included in the pronoun “these” of our text, who are to make war with the Lamb.

II. – Let us now consider the Lamb and His followers.

(1) Let us consider the captain, or the Lamb. He is Lord of lords and King of kings. He has absolute dominion and sovereignty over all creatures. “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. . . . All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity” (Isaiah 40:15-17). Who made Him as mediator, Lord of lords, and King of kings? God the Father. In the second psalm we read of the heathen raging, and the people imagining a vain thing; the kings of the earth and the rulers taking counsel together against the Lord, and against His anointed, so as

to make a combined effort to break the bands asunder, and cast from them the cords with which the Lord bound them. What bands and cords are they so deliberately casting away? “The bands of a man and the cords of love” with which the Lord would draw them to Himself. This is the disposition and conduct of the kings, and rulers, and people of the world yet. The moral and religious bands and cords of the gospel of the Lamb are considered by them unbearable burdens, and therefore they break them asunder, and cast them from them. What other meaning can be taken out of this Sabbath desecration, idolatry, unscriptural forms of worship, fornication, drunkenness, and such like? Clearly the language of their conduct is – “We will not have this man to rule over us.” But the Lord shall have them in derision; for Christ, or the Lamb, is made king by the unchangeable decree of God. He proclaimed this decree long ago – “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill Zion.” The Son reveals the contents of it – “The Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psalm 2:8,9). This is the captain of the Lord’s hosts, against whom the great whore, the beast, and the kings of the earth make war. Will they succeed in overthrowing this decree, and in exacting upon the Lamb? We trow not.

(2) Let us consider the Lamb’s followers. Three characteristics are given of them.

First, “they are called” – that is, they are called effectually by the Spirit of truth. Effectual calling is an effect of God’s electing love, and by it the sinner is changed both as to his state and nature. He is delivered from being dead in trespasses and sins into a life of holiness and righteousness by faith in Christ. He is translated from the kingdom of darkness unto the kingdom of God’s beloved Son. Spiritual light has been shined into his mind, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, and his will, that formerly dragged him to sin, being now renewed, concurs with the demands of God’s holy law and of the gospel, and causes him to hunger and thirst after righteousness. He can say from his heart – “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquettings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:3). There is none among the followers of the Lamb, but such as have been so changed. Such as may follow Him without having been thus called, are not included in our text.

(2) “They are chosen.” At first sight, we thought that this meant their election, and therefore that it should be considered before their calling; but after a little serious consideration, we apprehended that that was not the meaning of it. It means, in our humble opinion, that such as were to suffer for Christ and the gospel, were beforehand chosen of God for that most honourable end. As sure as it was true of Christ Himself, that He was foreordained for this end, as He said – “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:37), so is it true of the chosen referred to in our text.

(3) “They were faithful.” This is the character God gives to Moses, that “he was faithful in all his house as a servant.” The same is given to those in our text. It was a good thing for others that they were faithful, for had they not been so, the gospel had not, humanly speaking, come to us.

III. – Let us consider the war and its results. In this we have the great whore – Antichrist ecclesiastically considered – the beast – Antichrist considered as to its temporal power – the ten kings who gave their power and strength to the beast, making war with the Lamb and His followers. This is the most extraordinary war ever heard of. The Lamb is God, the Son of God. Do you mean to say that they will make war with God? Yes. If you were to see a mighty host of men preparing to fight, and that you were told that they were going to fight against

God, would you not conclude that they were mad? To be sure you would. But, we have noticed already that they were drunk with the wine of the fornication of the woman, and you need not expect drunken men to act very rationally. Indeed, this is true of us as a nation, for we have turned back again to our vomit, and we have begun anew to drink deeply of the wine of the fornication of the great whore. Our king, the members of the cabinet, and a large number of the people of this nation, are drunk with the superstition, idolatry, fables, and blasphemies of the Papacy. How can we explain otherwise the mad and retrograde step taken in sending an envoy to the Pope, and the unconcerned manner in which the most of our fellow countrymen disregard it? But let us beware that the Papacy has not yet ceased to make war with the Lamb, and that such as will assist her, war against God.

But let us look more closely into the words of our text. You see that the war is made with the Lamb. This brings to our mind the declaration of John the Baptist: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). This He did by one offering on Calvary, never to be repeated. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 8:14). How does the Church of Rome act as to this fundamental doctrine? In the Mass, she teaches that her priests offer Christ upon her altars daily as a sacrifice unto God for the sins of the living and the dead. She teaches that by the words of a priest the piece of bread used in the Eucharist is transubstantiated into the very flesh, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ, and that the partaker, whoever he be, is thereby made a partaker of Christ. She has thus substituted a carnal partaking of a bit of bread for faith in Christ's atoning death. She also teaches that her priests have power to forgive sins, and that all who die without making confession to a priest, and without receiving his forgiveness, are lost. It is written, "None can forgive sin but God." This power is given exclusively to Jesus Christ, as it is written, "For him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). To direct a poor sinner to any other for forgiveness of sin is to deceive him for eternity. Dr. Wylie observed that the word "ante" in Latin means "contrary to," but that in Greek "anti" means "to replace one thing by another," or to substitute. This is what the Church of Rome has done. In her every doctrine of the gospel is subverted and a contrary false one put into its place. She has ousted the Lamb as the one Mediator between God and men, and she has substituted the Virgin Mary, saints, the Pope, and her priests in His place. We will not enlarge on these things, as they are so well known to all who take the trouble to read what has been written concerning them. This is the first method used by the Church of Rome to make war with the Lamb. In this kind of warfare she is "the mother of harlots," that is, of every other Church that will imitate her methods or adopt them. There are several of these harlots in England and Scotland now-a-days.

But, let us further consider the great whore, the beast, and the kings of the earth as they make war with the Lamb and His followers. The Lamb has a mystical body, which is the Church, and its members are set forth in our text by the designation "called, and chosen, and faithful." When Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus to bring all that called on the name of Jesus of Nazareth bound to Jerusalem, so that they might be punished, Jesus met him and said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Christ is the head of his body, the Church, and as you feel when you are hurt even in your foot, so does Jesus Christ feel when any of the members of his mystical body is hurt. Is it not written – "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." We have the history of how the great whore, the beast and the kings, persecuted the true Church of Christ. The Church of Rome charged them with being heretics if they dared to disagree with any of her false doctrines, superstition, idolatry, blasphemies, or heathenish rites. These saints appealed to God's word for proof as to the soundness of their faith and practice but the

only arguments used by the Church of Rome to her courts of inquisition, were that the Church taught otherwise, and that, unless they would recant this faith in God's word, they would be condemned as heretics. The doctrines of the Antichrist as to transubstantiation, the mass, infallibility of the Church, indulgences, the worshipping of images, the power of the priests to forgive sins and such like, were disbelieved by the followers of the Lamb. They held and taught that men are saved by faith in Christ crucified set forth in the Gospel, that they have no meritorious works, but are saved entirely on account of Christ's merit, that Christ is the only mediator between God and men, that saints are not to be prayed to, and that God's word is the only rule of faith and practice. For refusing to abandon these doctrines so clearly set forth in the Bible, they were condemned by the ecclesiastical courts of Rome, and handed over to the civil power – that is, to the beast and his ten horns – the kings of the earth. These kings were the instruments by which they were persecuted in the most horrible manner imaginable. We see here where the kings of the earth come in. They gave their power and strength to the beast; and when the great whore condemned them – that is, the apostate Church of Rome – “the beast,” the Pope's temporal power, handed them over to the kings of the earth to be put to death. This was true, not only of individuals, but of many thousands at the same time. The Waldenses and the Albigenses are cases in point as a proof of this. So are the Huguenots of France, who were massacred at the instigation of the Pope by Louis XIV., their own king. Between 60,000 and 100,000 were massacred within the space of three days. Surely the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. This is making war with the Lamb and His followers with a vengeance.

But (2) we are told in our text that the Lamb shall overcome them. How did He overcome them, seeing that they put those who followed Him to death in the most inhuman manner imaginable?

(a) We are told that they overcame by their blood. You will observe that their enemies could not make them forsake Christ and the pure doctrines of His word by all their cruelty and persecutions. So, the victory was not on the side of them who put them to death, but on their side who died rather than forsake the faith of the gospel. Our Lord taught His disciples, not to fear them who can kill the body, but have nothing more that they can do; but to fear God who can cast soul and body into hellfire. So when the great whore, and the beast, and the kings of the earth, shed the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus, until the woman was drunk with it, the saints and martyrs overcame them with their blood. They absolutely failed to gain the victory over the saints as to “holding faith and a good conscience.” Faith and a good conscience were the matters at stake.

But (b) they overcame them by the word of their testimony. They could not be restrained by all their threats and persecutions from teaching God's truth to their fellow sinners. They declared the gospel of the grace of God even on scaffolds and bound to stakes in the flames, and condemned the superstition, idolatry, and blasphemous fables of the Papacy, so that it became a proverb that the ashes of the martyrs was the seed of the Church. Some of their most inveterate enemies and persecutors were converted, listening to their dying testimonies for Christ and the gospel. This war continued down through the centuries under the iron yoke of Rome. But no sooner one was killed than another arose to bear witness for the truth. This can be accounted for only by the power of the Holy Spirit, working by His word through weak instruments. We are told that their warfare would be continued for a definite time. That the Lamb and His followers were to endure the persecution of those enemies, and overcome them even in it, we are assured in our text. So, you may now look back on the past history of the Church of Christ, and see this fulfilled. Christ's gospel and worship are in the world in spite of all the enmity and persecution of the great whore, the beast, and the kings of the earth. No one can charge them with too much leniency or mercy in

their efforts to crush the true Church of Christ out of existence. They certainly did their utmost.

But the time given them was twelve hundred and sixty years. That that time has expired, we verily believe. The Scriptures declare with no uncertain sound that the Lamb will take the offensive against the great whore, and the beast, and the kings of the earth who gave their power and strength to the beast. We saw in the second Psalm that Christ, the eternal Son of God, has a rod of iron with which He can break kings and nations that oppose His claims like a potter's vessel. He gave a great blow to Antichrist at the Reformation. The errors, and superstition, and idolatry of the Church of Rome were cast away, and England, Scotland, Geneva, Holland, and Germany in part embraced the faith of the gospel as set forth in the Bible. This was a heavy blow given by the Lamb to the Apostate Church of Rome. The King of Spain sent a powerful fleet to conquer England and Scotland, because they had renounced not only the Church of Rome, but also the temporal power of the Papacy. The Lamb sent a storm that battered all Spain's sea power against the rocky coast of Britain, and He continues till this day to bring Spain low among the nations of the world. But the Lamb took the temporal power from the Pope half a century since. So the great whore has lost the beast on whom she sat, and the beast has lost his ten horns. Garibaldi was the rod used to take the seven-hilled city of Rome and the temporal power from the Papacy. We do not see one word in the book of Revelation indicating that the Roman Apostacy will ever be able to sit upon another beast with heads and horns.

Our context teaches that "the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire." So, the kings of the earth will be used by Christ to destroy the Church of Rome. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His word, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the word of God shall be fulfilled." But when His word shall be fulfilled by their agreeing to give their power (kingdom) to the beast, He will put into their hearts to hate and to utterly destroy her. They have begun, in some small measure, to hate and destroy her. We read that: – "The King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." The Lord uses them as His instruments in carrying out His own purposes in the affairs of men in this world. At the same time they may not have one thought about His authority over them as the King of kings. The King of Italy has stripped her naked; the Government of France has followed suit. So has Portugal, and so have some of the Papal States of South America. The hand of the Lamb should be acknowledged in the actions of these Governments.

What is it that we see accomplished by this most terrible war? Well, if we look at Belgium (one of the most idolatrous and superstitious nations, who continued till now to give her power and strength to the Church of Rome) do you not see that nation broken to pieces like a potter's vessel? Who did this? Germany has been the iron rod, but that rod is in the hand of the "King set upon the holy hill of Zion." This is not what was in the heart of Germany, no more than it was in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to do God's will. Pride and covetousness were the moving cause in the one as well as in the other. There is Austria-Hungary, the next most bigoted Roman Catholic country in Europe. Do you not see that Russia has been taken as an iron rod to break her to pieces? Who has done this? "God has come out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the world for their iniquity." So we see the nations that have been making war with the Lamb, along with the Antichrist until now, being broken to pieces.

But alas! We as a nation, to our shame be it said, are doing our utmost to build up again that which we pulled down at the Reformation. We have forgotten the wormwood and the gall, which our ancestors had to drink, in the slavery of both soul and body by the "great whore, and the beast, and the kings of the earth who gave their power and strength to the

beast.” We do not value our civil and religious liberty; but we may have yet to repent of our folly with bitter tears, when it will be too late. We concede every thing to that apostate Church which her unscrupulous emissaries demand. If the Lord has favour towards us, as He had towards our fathers, He will open the eyes of our King, and our government, and cause them to turn to God’s truth as their guide in the affairs of Church and State. If not, we are in great danger of bringing the Lamb’s wrath and iron rod down upon our own heads as a nation. Two things will have to take place if this judgment is to be averted.

First. – The Government and people of this country must awaken to a realisation of our imminent danger from the spies of the Vatican, viz., the Jesuits. These crafty and bold plotters have got already the public Press of our country under their thumb, have their agents in both houses of Parliament, also about our Throne, and in almost all the Protestant Churches of this nation. The Church of England is honeycombed by them, and so are the Established, and U.F. Churches in Scotland. If the Lord will not open the eyes of the people of this country, we shall have a rude awakening some day.

Secondly. – All that have been destroyed of the Protestant bulwarks, set up at the Second Reformation and at the Revolution Settlement, will have to be restored. The Emancipation Act, the change made in the King’s Royal Declaration, and the many other changes effected, at the instigation of the Jesuits, so as to set up again the temporal power of the Pope, will have to be unmade. If we look only to men, this change in our attitude toward the Church of Rome will appear almost an impossibility, but, if we look to God, “with God all things are possible.” Let us therefore, expose the errors of the Papacy, and declare the whole counsel of God to our fellow countrymen, and lifting our hands and our eyes unto the King of kings, let us commit our case to Him.

[May 1915]

A Sermon.

By the REV. ALEXANDER MACKAY, Oban.

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

This is part of the sermon Christ preached to Nicodemus when he came to Him by night. We are so familiar with this chapter that we are apt to overlook the fact that Nicodemus was a most extraordinary person. He was a man who was conversant with the Scriptures; he was even *ho didaskalos tou Israel*, “the teacher of Israel.” Yet he evidently felt that there was something lacking in his life. He felt, I believe, that he was not right for eternity. If this were not the case, he would never have come to the despised Jesus of Nazareth for instruction, even “by night.” It was not curiosity that sent Nicodemus to Christ, but an apprehension that all was not right with him for the eternity into which he knew he was going. When he came to Christ he showed plainly that he did not regard Christ as the rest of the rulers did; for he says, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him.”

In answer to this, Jesus at once directs Nicodemus to the foundation of a saving work in the heart of man, namely, the new birth. And here we see how absolutely hopeless the case of all men would be, even although familiar with the Scriptures and educated, if it were not for the work of the Spirit of God. Nicodemus is one who knows the Scriptures; he is one who is learned; he is one under soul-concern; he is even being taught by the Lord Jesus Christ; yet he stands before us as one helpless and altogether at a loss to understand the new birth. “How can a man be born when he is old?” is the language of staggered reason. “How can these things be?” is the language of the perplexed soul who realises its need of something greater than human wisdom to understand this mystery of the new birth, which is so essential to be experienced and known. The Lord, first of all, convinced Nicodemus of his need of the Spirit of God, and it would seem as if these were the words which brought conviction home to Nicodemus: “Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things?”

But the Lord Jesus did not leave Nicodemus in the spiritual night in which he was. Jesus leads this poor sinner into the light and liberty of the truth, and in doing so made use of the means which he still makes use of to lead men out of darkness into marvellous light. Jesus directs Nicodemus to the Old Testament Scriptures. “And as Moses,” says Christ, “lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” It would seem as if this were the truth through which Nicodemus was “born again,” for we hear no more of his ignorance. Jesus, in referring Nicodemus to what transpired in the history of Israel in the wilderness, brought before him two things: first, the ruined condition of mankind; and, secondly, the provision of God to remedy that condition. There can be no doubt but this was what Christ brought before Nicodemus, for Christ takes the incident in the history of Israel to illustrate the case of the whole world. In seeking to understand this passage of God’s Word two things are to be noticed.

I. – The lost condition of mankind, as illustrated by the bitten Israelites in the wilderness.

II. – The remedy God provided for perishing sinners, as illustrated by the brazen serpent erected by Moses in the wilderness.

I. – The first thing to be noticed about the bitten Israelites is that this was brought upon them by their own sin. They sinned against God, and God sent fiery serpents among them, whose bite brought death. The poison of the serpent began to take possession of every member of their body, and death was staring them in the face. The same is true of mankind. Men brought death upon themselves through sinning against God. That old serpent, the devil and Satan, gave us such a bite in our first covenant-head that his poison has gone through every member of our body and every faculty of our soul, and death, in its threefold awfulness, is staring Christless sinners in the face, namely, death spiritual, death physical, and death eternal. Death spiritual laid hold of the race in Adam, and death physical and death

eternal claimed every one of the race the moment they lost communion with God. The dying Israelite was hopelessly and helplessly lost, as far as any human remedy was concerned. Cures might be tried, but no cure could be found, and the people were convinced of this.

The human race is undone for ever, as far as any human remedy is concerned, and every one who is taught of God feels convinced of this. The Israelites might have tried various remedies, and some might have clung to these false remedies till it was truly too late to make use of God's remedy, but those who were wise turned away from all other remedies to that which God provided, feeling convinced that God alone could help in their case. So with men. Men may try to save themselves in various ways, but those who *are* saved are convinced of the utter uselessness of any remedy but that remedy which God Himself set up. This was, then, the condition of the bitten Israelites: they were undone, and their lost condition is a fit emblem to bring out the condition of a lost world. But in the case of Israel God showed them mercy, and provided means by which they could be saved. So with mankind. God did not suffer them all to die, but made provision to deliver them from the state into which sin brought them; and that leads us to consider, in the second place, the Gospel provision, of which the brazen serpent was a type.

II. – The first thing we notice in connection with the provision made for the bitten Israelites, is that the provision made for them was made by the Most High. It was God's remedy. So with the Gospel; it is God's provision for a lost world. It is what infinite wisdom provided. The serpent of brass had no poison in it, and yet it represented the fiery serpents by which the Israelites were bitten. Christ had no sin, yet He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. And, as the apostle says, "By man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," so by the God-man life and healing came to lost men. There was only one provision for the whole camp. Moses did not erect a serpent here and there throughout the great camp of Israel, but only one serpent. So with Christ, the one Mediator between God and men. He is the only Mediator, the only Redeemer of God's elect. He is "the Saviour of the world," in this sense that there is no other Saviour.

The serpent of brass was lifted up on a pole in the midst of the camp of Israel; and Christ says of Himself, "even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." There can be no doubt but Christ refers here to His death on the Cross. When Christ expounded the Scriptures to the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, He said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" where we have the necessity of the lifting up of Christ more fully expressed. Why must the Son of Man be lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? It was because He, as the salvation of God to the ends of the earth, had to fulfil His covenant engagements. Death, as we have seen, laid hold of the human race, and before there could be deliverance from death the Son of Man had to die. The law under which mankind came, in their first covenant-head, was broken, but it still demanded what it demanded before it was broken from those who were under it. Yea, it demanded more; for it now demanded that the human race should suffer eternally for disobedience. And what the law demanded from sinful men it also demanded from the "Surety." It demanded from men three things:

- (1) a perfectly holy nature;
- (2) perfect obedience in thoughts, words, and deeds;
- (3) everlasting sufferings, inasmuch as they became lawbreakers.

Christ, the Surety, had to meet all these demands before He could bring life to perishing sinners. Christ came to the law with His holy humanity, and the law said, "I am satisfied with this holy nature." Christ came with His obedience unto death to the law, and the law said, "I am more than satisfied," for "He magnified the law and made it honourable." But Christ had to die, and in His death He had to be lifted up. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all

men unto me,” says Christ. Had Christ to suffer eternally? No; but He had to suffer every drop of suffering which the finite creatures, which He as Surety stood for, would have to suffer for ever and ever. Christ, being a divine person, was capable of enduring the eternal sufferings of finite creatures in time, and so make an end of the sufferings. It would seem as if this were intended by the figure Christ makes use of in referring to His sufferings, for He says, “The cup which my Father hath given me to drink, shall I not drink it?” It would seem as if Christ, in referring to the “cup,” meant that the Father, as the Judge of all, had put every drop which the elect would have to suffer eternally into one cup, and gave this cup to His beloved Son, and His beloved Son, being a divine person, was able to drink every drop that was put into that cup. He took this cup; He drank this cup; He said, “It is finished.” There was a necessity laid upon Him to drink it, because He engaged to draw near as the Surety of the elect and make an atonement for them with His own blood.

But as He was lifted up on the Cross, so He must also be exalted to the Father’s right hand. The Scriptures are clear on this point, that, as Jesus died, the just One in the room of the unjust, and by His death made satisfaction on behalf of sinful men, so He must be exalted. Justice demanded that He should be lifted up on the Cross. Justice now demanded that He should be exalted to the Father’s right hand – “a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel.” And as He was exalted to heaven, so He must also be lifted up in the preached Gospel as God’s wonderful provision for lost sinners.

It was true of the serpent of brass that the cure was free to all. No one had to pay for a look at the brazen serpent. So Jesus is free to “whosoever will,” “without money and without price.” And as the brazen serpent was for the *bitten* Israelites, so Christ is provided for sinners. The freeness of Christ brings to memory a story of a poor Irishman, which may be here related. A gentleman from England was on holiday in Ireland, and one day as he was taking a walk he passed the door of a cottage, outside of which there stood an old man, weeping very bitterly. When the gentleman inquired the cause of his distress, the old man replied that his wife was dead, and that he had no money to give the priest to take her soul out of purgatory. The gentleman reasoned with him, it seems, about the inhumanity of any priest who would not take a person out of purgatory without money; but he at the same time spoke to him of the freeness of Christ, and that, “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” After giving the poor Irishman some money, and a charge that the priest was not to share it, the gentleman went on his way. Next year the gentleman returned to the same locality in Ireland, and passing the same cottage, he thought he would inquire for his old friend. So he went to the door, and a young woman answered his knock. He asked for the old man, and the young woman said that he had died some time before then. The gentleman expressed sorrow, and inquired what was the matter with him before he died. “Ah, sir,” said the young woman, “he was my father, but before he died he was mad.” The gentleman asked her how she knew that he was mad. “Well, sir,” she said, “he was always talking of a man, Moses, who lifted up a serpent in the wilderness, and saying that so must Christ be lifted up, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish. And he said that he believed in Him, and that he would not perish. When we wanted to go for the priest, sir, he would not hear of it, but continued to speak of the man, Moses, and the serpent in the wilderness.” And she concluded by saying, “Ah, sir, he was my father, but he was mad.” Poor Roman Catholic girl! Would to God there was more of the Irishman’s madness seen in the world!

It was further true of the brazen serpent that it was a suitable cure. No bitten Israelite ever looked and died. So with Christ. Christ is suitable, and no one ever looked to Him and died eternally. The Israelites were commanded to look to the serpent. Sinners are commanded to look to Christ.

We notice, in the last place, that it was by looking that Israel was saved in the wilderness. Now, looking did not entail any hard labour. It was a simple thing to look, yet it comprehended obedience to God's command. God said that the Israelite who looked would live, and those who believed did look, and the poison which proved so deadly was counteracted in its effects through the eye which beheld the brazen serpent. So with sinners and Christ, the Gospel provision. It is by looking that the sinner is healed. It is by the eye of faith that the believer in Christ is changed into the same image. It is not, in itself, a hard task to believe; the hardest thing, no doubt, to nature, but still not to grace. There is nothing easier to the eye of faith than to look to Christ. One living look at the Crucified One is enough to save the most abandoned sinner. May any sinner look to Christ? Yes; for He says that "whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Some think that they are too sinful to look to Christ, but He says "whosoever," and that means "any one" of the human race. All are welcome to come, and the Bible begins and ends with an invitation to look to Jesus. God's own people, who have already looked to Him and felt in themselves healing through beholding the Lamb of God – even they at times need to be assured that Christ is a Saviour for any sinner, for they feel themselves to be the chief of sinners. "Whosoever," then, may come; and even although they have come already, they are welcome again – welcome always – to look to God's provision and live. The question for each one is: "Have I looked to Jesus by faith; have I seen His glory as the only begotten of the Father?" Have we realised that, through faith in Him, we have been accepted as righteous in the sight of God, and that we have been delivered from the guilt of sin by the efficacy of His blood, and that by His power the strength of corruption in our hearts has been broken? If we have for ourselves experienced these things, then we may with confidence hope that we "shall never perish."

[July 1915]

A Sermon

By the Late REV. J. KENNEDY, D.D., Dingwall.

Preached at Dingwall, 1st August, 1875.

"It is finished" – John 9:30.

In Matthew 27:50 we read, "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." In Mark 15:37 we read, "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." In Luke 23:46 we read, "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit; and having said this, He gave up the ghost." In John

19:30 we read, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, IT IS FINISHED; and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost."

Comparing all these accounts of His dying, we find them all telling us that, "*He gave up the ghost.*" The first three tell us that, ere He did so, "*He cried with a loud voice.*" Luke and John tell us that, as a sign of His resignation in dying, "*He bowed His head.*" Luke alone gives us His prayer in the act of dying. And John alone tells us what His articulate utterance was when "*He cried with a loud voice.*" It was evidently when "*He cried*" that He said "IT IS FINISHED." These are the words which He uttered "*with a loud voice.*" A comparison of the passages quoted will make this abundantly evident. These words are inserted by John in the very place, in the series of events, which is occupied by the "*loud voice,*" in the accounts given by the others.

In the light of the passages quoted, we see Jesus spending His last hour on the cross to which His blessed body was fastened by the nails which pierced His hands and His feet, till the agony of death was passed. We see Him receiving His last drink, and it was "vinegar," for nothing less bitter can be given to the Surety of the unjust, and this fitly closes His experience of human cruelty. We hear His last cry, and listen to the words which He articulated when that cry was uttered. We hear His last prayer, and though it is addressed to His Father, it arises from the midst of both shame and agony. We can observe His last attitude as "He bowed His head," and appreciate the emblem which it presents of His spirit and of His life. And His last act of obedience followed that token of His meekness, for, having "bowed His head," "He gave up the ghost."

But confining attention to the words – "It is finished" – I propose to consider them –

- I. As an expression of relief.
- II. As an anticipation of satisfying rest.
- III. As a shout of triumph.
- IV. As a "joyful sound" to sinners.

I. – AN EXPRESSION OF RELIEF. –

Who can rightly conceive what a relief to Jesus, in His perfect human nature, it was to have passed through all His appointed sufferings? That human nature, perfectly holy, was in a thoroughly abnormal condition, when with all its purity and sensitiveness it experienced what made "the man Christ Jesus" "a man of sorrows." As the Surety of the unjust, He, when "made flesh," occupied such a relation on the one side to God, and to His people on the other, that sufferings the most intense were utterly unavoidable. He, in His mediatorial position, "must suffer many things." And in the nature in which He suffered, He was assured of His personal relation, as Jehovah the Son, to the Father who sent Him. His human nature was consciously in union with the divine, as subsisting in the same person with the eternal fulness of the Godhead. And He knew that, though it was in this intimate relation to the Godhead, this, instead of being security for utter relief from suffering, only served to make it possible that suffering, such as none other ever endured, would certainly be His experience in the flesh. His eternal Godhead did not fence His human nature against all suffering – it was rather the altar to sustain and sanctify the sacrifice which, in enduring the full infliction of the curse, He was to offer, in His people's behalf, to God. He Himself alone could fully know what it was, in the consciousness of His human nature, to have left all suffering behind.

But left behind, with the exception of His actual experience of death, all His sufferings were, and His cry is, "It is finished." To His human nature, that never had an experience, except that of the consciousness of perfect love, which was not abnormal, what must the relief have been when what interposed between it and the enjoyment of all that was personally due to Him of blessedness was finally removed!

And how much was finished when His course of suffering came to an end!

1. *There was all the pain which His holy soul endured from the nearness of the world's corruption, and from the virulence of the world's hatred.*

In the measure of His holiness was the amount of His pain because of the pollution with which He was surrounded. Just think of Him who was “the High and Lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is holy,” whose place was on the throne of God for ever, in human nature, in the midst of sinful men on the earth, His eyes, His ears, His memory avenues through which there came wave after wave from the ruffled sea of this world's sinfulness and misery to give agony to His soul, perfect in its love because perfect in its holiness. How could He, but as “a man of sorrows,” move amidst the corruption and misery of “a present evil world.” Even if the world were not disposed to persecute Him, even if men did no more than sin in His presence, and by doing so dishonour Him who sent Him, and destroy themselves, He could not, with His perfect love to God and to His neighbour, move in the midst of them without being a sufferer. It was the very love which disposed Him to suffer which made His suffering so intense. He would have suffered less if He had loved less, and yet if He had loved less, He would not have submitted to suffer at all.

But you will say, “was it not love that disposed Him to suffer, and in the measure of His love therefore He would make light of His suffering. True, He “endured the cross, *despising the shame*,” but this contempt, while indicating the triumph of His love, over all that would intercept Him from finishing His work, was no evidence of suffering being light in His experience. And besides all He had to observe, in the conduct of the world around Him, He contemplated the sins which He bore, and though associating these with his loved ones accounts for His having meekly borne the burden of them, when the Lord laid them upon Him, that very association occasioned unspeakable anguish to His soul. “This is the sin of my beloved ones, which I can bear only at the cost of being made a curse for them,” we might suppose Him to say. “This is all I have from them. They, my beloved ones, bring on me all this shame and agony.” O what pain it must have given to Him, to have before His pure mind the dishonour to God, involved in *their* iniquities, and the madness by which, moved by hatred to Him, they had brought upon themselves the fearful curse of which He had so awful an experience.

And He experienced the malignant hostility of the world in direct assaults upon Himself. His having human nature was taken by *men* as an opportunity of expressing their enmity in oppressing and afflicting Him. Their persecution of Him early began, and during all His public ministry, in the face of all His manifestations of His glory in His miracles, and of all His unwearied course of “doing good,” it continued to increase, till at last, when the assaults of the powers of darkness were fiercest, and the outpoured wrath of God was most overwhelming, their enmity knew no restraint, and burst out in cries for His being crucified. They denied His right to be regarded as the Son of God; they disallowed His Messiahship, and charged Him with being an imposter; His miracles they ascribed to aid from hell; in order to His betrayal into the hands of the Romans, they watched all His actions and all His utterances, and when they could “find no fault in Him at all,” they invented charges against Him – they *blasphemed* and *lied* in order that they might *murder* Him. *There* is human nature at its highest in the person of the Son of God, and *here* it is in its low condition, as fallen, in the persons of His crucifiers. Why will men, for there are many such, stand up for the dignity of human nature, as represented by the crucifiers of the Lord of glory, while not caring to discern its dignity as it is represented in the person of Emmanuel? There are who will apologise for His crucifiers, and who care not to be transformed into the likeness of “the man Christ Jesus.”

But all this is now passed. Never again can He in human nature be treated as before. Never shall that flesh in which the Son of God was manifested be nearer to the hands of

sinner than a place in the midst of the throne of God; and expressing His sense of relief, Jesus cries "It is finished."

2. *It expresses His sense of relief from the assaults of the powers of darkness.*

How hidden is the presence, and how mysterious are the operations, on the earth, of the army of spirits from hell! But their presence and activity are realities in the consciousness of all Christ's followers, as surely as they were in His own. Who can conceive what to Him, with His perfect sensitiveness to all that was spiritual, and with His perfect abhorrence of all that was unholy, it was to have hosts of spirits actually assailing Him, to distract Him with all the perturbation which it was in their power to cause. Their very nearness when made felt was agony, and, in the felt weakness of human nature, to be in actual conflict with them was an experience of affliction unspeakably sore. And from the time of the great conflict in the wilderness on to that of the hour of which He said, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness," though we know not what were the instances and the forms of His experiences of temptation by emissaries from hell, we know that at the close, as at the beginning of His public ministry, He knew what it was to bear the assaults of "the power of darkness." But the last battle of the war is over, and He expresses His feeling of relief when He cries "It is finished."

3. *These words express His sense of relief from all He suffered in His experience of the wrath of God.*

Who can enter into the meaning of His own description of His suffering when, speaking to His Father, He says, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death?" Of course He knew why it was that He bore the wrath of God – that it was because to Him were imputed the iniquities of the people for whom He was Surety. O think of Him between His Father and His beloved people having to bear the wrath of Him, as "the Judge of all," of whom He said "I and the Father are one," and tracing all the suffering which the expression of that wrath occasioned to the sins of a people whom He loved from everlasting! But "God over all, and blessed for ever," though He was, there was nothing in all that He was, and enjoyed, that could interpose between Him, as the Surety of the unjust, and the full endurance of the penalty due to the iniquities which He bore; and though He was the Only Begotten and Eternal Son of God, the love of that relationship never for one moment mitigated the expression of judicial wrath bearing on Him as "the Just for the unjust." Neither His own divine supremacy, nor the infinite love of the Father to Him, as His Son, placed any fence between His consciousness, as "the man Christ Jesus," and the full flood of divine anger. Never more certainly was He Jehovah than when enduring the shame and agony of the cross, never more surely the Beloved Son than when the Father's face was hidden from Him, and when from His desolate soul came the wail – the saddest ever uttered on the earth – "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But instead of imagining that what He was personally mitigated what He endured officially, look, in the light of His unchanging glory and blessedness, on His awful suffering, as stripped naked He hung upon the tree, His blessed body enduring excruciating pain, and His soul submerged in the fiery flood of divine wrath, while the hiding of His Father's face made all thick darkness over Him, and pitiless crucifiers compassed Him, and scoffing crowds passed Him by in contempt, staying only to wag their heads and rail on Him as they hastened to their marketing in the city.

How much, in Jesus' experience of divine wrath, must be utterly unknown to us! But of *three* things implied in it we may be quite assured: – He had a perfect appreciation of the awfulness of divine anger; – He was perfectly assured that it bore on Him as the Surety of the unjust; – and He actually came in contact, with the flaming fire of the expression of that wrath, in all the sensitiveness of His perfect holiness. O how terrible to Him it must have

been to be without the light of His Father's face – to him who was so dependent on fellowship with His Father for His joy! But all this is now past, and who can conceive what His sense of relief was when He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished."

II. – THESE WORDS EXPRESS AN ANTICIPATION OF SATISFYING REST. –

Between Him and the actual enjoyment in human nature of the rest awaiting Him in the Father's house, there was yet the act of dying. But His eye looked, as to something very near, to "the joy set before Him." On that very day His soul was to be in paradise, and, in continuation of this, there stretched eternally before His view what awaited Him as "the Lamb who was slain," in the rest, and blessedness, and glory of a place "in the midst of the throne of God." In an anticipation of this as so near, there was present rest to His human soul; and how could He, in all His love, as God, to the nature which He assumed, but be glad that His soul and body were so soon to be raised to a place amidst the glory, and to fellowship in the blessedness, of being for ever "on the right hand of the Majesty on high?" Only there could holy human nature, subsisting in the person of the Son of God, find its normal condition and its satisfying rest, and only there could "the Word" "made flesh" be content to have for ever the nature which made Him a kinsman to His people, and in which for them He glorified the Father on the earth.

But there was rest to Him, in His zeal for the Father's glory, in the results of the work which He finished on the cross. "I have glorified thee on the earth," He says to the Father. O, what rest it was to Him to have this to declare! The glory of Him who sent Him was the great end at which, in all His work, as Surety, He unerringly aimed. He desired, at whatever cost to Himself, to satisfy the justice of Jehovah, as Judge, by rendering a full atonement for sin, to magnify the law of God, as Sovereign, and to make it honourable, and to show forth the glory of the name of Jehovah, as this had never been exhibited before; and, in order to this, He yielded Himself up to be so dealt with by God, that there might come forth through Him, by the rending of His flesh and the shedding of His blood, an infinite manifestation of all divine glory. That this grand result was secured, He perfectly knew, and looking on this, in its vastness and brightness, how satisfying was His rest, as "with a loud voice" He exclaimed "It is finished."

And there was satisfying rest to Him in the result of His work as bearing on the people whom He loved. For them His Surety work was undertaken, for them it was begun, with His eye on each one of them, and His heart as well, He went on suffering while He obeyed, and obeying while He suffered, till the work was finished. He knew that He had endured till He exhausted the curse due to them, that He had done all that was required to secure to them a right to everlasting life, and that nothing was left undone in His fulfilment of the conditions on which He received from the Father the promise that all Israel should be saved in Him with an everlasting salvation. All this secured, He was at rest. O, think at what a cost He earned His Sabbath! And think of the love that never looks back regretfully on all the toil through which this rest was reached. O, who but an enemy would grudge to the Son of Man a Sabbath on the earth, of which He would be Lord, that it might to the end of time be a symbol and memorial of the rest on which He entered when, raised from the dead, He received a demonstration from heaven of the acceptance of His work.

III. – THESE WORDS ARE A SHOUT OF TRIUMPH. –

The very finishing of the work of Christ, viewed apart from its design and results, was a victory. How much and how many interposed between Him and finishing the work which the Father gave Him to do. He could not therefore say "It is finished" without that utterance being the cry of a victor – a shout of triumph. Though Church and State were both against Him, though all classes in the world and all the legions of hell were active in opposing and harassing Him, never for one moment did He falter or stumble in the work. His love

triumphed over every affliction. His faith did not for one moment fail, His meekness remained in perfect calmness, unruffled by any of all the storms of persecution which swept over His consciousness, and perfect in every motive, thought, feeling, word, and action He went on step by step, through all His course of suffering, till He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. Who could thus have triumphed but Himself?

But to some eyes the aspect presented by Jesus, as nailed to the tree, is very unlike that of a conqueror. Have not His enemies succeeded in His betrayal, and in His condemnation? Has He not by His Jewish enemies been delivered to the Gentiles? Have they not ordered His crucifixion? Has He not been actually led forth to “the place of a skull” bearing the cross that was soon to bear Him? Has He not actually been nailed to it? Hours have passed and none has come to save Him, and do not His enemies twit Him with being powerless to save Himself? And is He not just about actually to die? He is alone in the conflict, and the whole result depends on Him. “Of the people there is none with Him,” and if He dies, then surely it would seem as if His cause was defeated, and not victorious. Does it become Him, just before bowing His head and giving up the ghost, to utter a shout of triumph? Yes, verily, nothing ever became Him better than, between His last sip and His last breath, to announce His victory.

Ah, but look at Him hanging on the tree, shewing every sign of being already dead, His last breath having departed just after He had with a loud voice declared that He had won the victory. Yes, I can bear to look on all that proves Him dead, and to think of strong-limbed and stout-hearted Roman soldiers keeping watch around the cross unheeding and unmoved, and of mocking crowds who pass by the crucified, regarding Him as a malefactor who had received “the due reward of his deeds.” But I must think of some things else. I am not to forget the darkened sun, the awful shadow cast over the face of the heavens, the quaking earth, the rending of the veil, the open graves, the risen dead, a still more marked display of the power of God on conscience, in causing even a Roman Centurion to “glorify God, saying, certainly this was a righteous man,” the trophy of victory taken from beside His cross, when amidst His weakness, shame, and agony in the flesh, His power to save prepared a blaspheming thief in a few minutes for “paradise,” and that He could keep, even then, in His grasp the cords of love by which He drew out the hearts of a few trembling mourning women after Him. All these things I remember, and they are no signs of His being defeated. Yea, it is when I place what I have produced out of the record as a counterpoise beside all that unbelief would regard as signs of His defeat, I have both before me, so that I can use them all as proofs that the Beloved has conquered.

Have enemies seemed to make “a show” of Him “openly” on the cross? Does His actual death seem to complete their victory? So let it seem to be to every eye on earth but that of faith. All that seeming of victory on their side was required in order to the reality of victory on His. The *seeming* and the *real* never more widely differed than here. For it was He, and by means of being “crucified in weakness” – by shame, agony, and death on the cross – who made a show of *them*. His victory over His enemies in being “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” secured a resulting victory – a victory which could only be won by dying. His finishing of His work in death was a victory, and secured a victory. For –

1. *“Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”*

He has the power of death only as the executioner of the sentence of death. This “power of death” only death can destroy. The executioner has the power till his work is done. The death which he executes brings his power to an end. He by thoroughly doing his work utterly destroys his power to do it. Here in the case of Christ was One to whom were imputed the iniquities of a people whom only God can number. On him the devil brought his “power of death” to bear, and the more certain I am that his work was thoroughly done, the more persuaded I am that his power has been destroyed, and that the countless multitude have been

redeemed. To assure me of this I need every indication of weakness, every element of shame, every pang of suffering, every token of death that are associated with Christ crucified in the story of the gospel.

2. *He in His death triumphed over sin.*

He made a full end of the guilt, exposing to punishment, of the sins of all the people for whom He died. He made a full and final end of all this. His love could not be satisfied without all this for them. And I require, in order to be sure of this, everything I can find in the gospels which proves that He died in weakness, shame, and agony – all that is evidence of His having been “made a curse.” If sin has brought death on Him, it cannot bring death on His people. The more it seemed to triumph in His death the less possible does it seem to be that it can triumph in theirs. And by enduring an experience of the condemning power of sin, He secured the condemnation to extinction of sin itself in the souls of all for whom He died. “He condemned sin in the flesh” by enduring the death to which sinners are condemned. By dying for sin once He secured the utter and eternal death of sin. There is no longer aught to interpose between divine omnipotence, acting in the interest both of grace and holiness, and that abominable thing which God hateth, and which made loathsome the objects of His love; and its destruction is therefore certain, and is a triumph won by Christ through His being “made sin” and “made a curse.”

3. *And He won a triumph over the world.*

But for His death all the objects of His love would have been left in slavery, under the despotism of “a present evil world.” He would fain have them free, and He well proved how intently His love was set on their emancipation. But having rendered His due to God, in dying for His people, He can now look forward, through death, to the power to save to the uttermost which shall be His when He is at the right hand of the Father, and in full view of the triumph of His power in delivering His people from a present evil world, by drawing them to Himself, and by preserving them till they pass out of it at last, His shout is in joyful anticipation of triumph when He cries with a loud voice, “It is finished.”

4. *And He knows that in the moment when His spirit is gone out of His body, to it death shall be for ever past, and that His death shall be the death of the death of all His people.*

He anticipates therefore a deliverance from death both for Himself, and for all the objects of His love. Death, by its seeming triumph over Him, was death to itself. When He lay under its power, He was preparing for a triumph over it. He triumphed over its terrors in yielding Himself to its stroke, and if He lay dead for a season, it was that His might be an eternal life of triumph over it. The glory of this life, as it shone on His view, through the rending of His flesh, evoked a shout of triumph as He exclaimed with a loud voice, “It is finished.”

5. *He could bear to think of His body being laid in the grave, after His soul had passed into paradise, for such was His view of His victory over the grave, that He could not in the near prospect of it but raise a shout of triumph.*

How much there is in the burial of Christ, as it lies in between His death and His resurrection! It is the demonstration of His death, and it is the occasion of His resurrection. It proves that “He loved unto the end,” and it furnished an opportunity of proving that He is Almighty. For the sealed stone is removed, the grave clothes are laid aside, the bands of death are broken, the tomb of Joseph is empty again, for “the Lord is risen indeed.” And as surely as He rose, so shall all His ransomed ones. His eye passed on from His own resurrection, to its fruit in that of all the bodies of His people, and rested on the glorious prospect of their being, both in soul and body, perfectly like Him and for ever with Him. Can we wonder, then, that love such as His should break forth in a shout of triumph, in view of such a consummation?

IV. – THESE WORDS ARE A “JOYFUL SOUND.” –

The loud voice of the High Priest on Calvary reminds one of the sound of old over the burnt-offerings, when the trumpets were blown by the priests in the Tabernacle, and afterwards in the Temple. And what good news – what “glad tidings of great joy” – do the words “It is finished” convey?

1. These words convey the joyful news that *the great work of redemption is completed*. This work was entrusted to, and undertaken by, Christ alone. There was “of the people” “none with Him.” And as He alone began it, so from His hand alone it received its finish. Emmanuel did it all. Any other hand would mar it. But His hand alone touched it, and He leaves the mark of perfectness on every part of it. All the obedience, though rendered in human nature, was the obedience of Emmanuel; all the suffering, though endured in the flesh, was the suffering of the Person who is Jehovah the Son. Infinitely meritorious therefore is the Surety righteousness of Christ. The Justice of God is infinitely well pleased with His blood, as an atonement for the sins of His people, and a sweet smelling savour shall His sacrifice ever yield unto God. The law has been magnified by the obedience of Him who is its Lord, who for a season obeyed it as a Servant. Christ was persuaded of the acceptance of His atoning work by God. In this assurance He exclaimed “It is finished.” And gloriously God hath declared His acceptance of the work. Each attribute, glorified on the cross, was in the lustre of its manifestation there, at the grave to sanction, and to shine benignly on, resurrection work. Jesus died to the glory of the Father, and “by the glory of the Father” was He raised from the dead. And the High Priest has gone into the holiest with the accepted sacrifice, and the “joyful sound” of “the golden bells” – the good news of the gospel – tells us that He lives and hath power with God. And God calls you to His mercy seat, through the rent veil of Emmanuel’s flesh, to present yourself as a sinner on the blood that made atonement, as a suppliant for a free, and full, and final forgiveness of all your sins. Only Christ, only His blood, only His word – only He, as the way to God, only His blood, as the ground of your pardon and acceptance, only His word, as your warrant for coming as you are, and for expecting that redemption in Christ shall be yours. Such is the glad peal that reaches you in the loud cry from the cross.

2. These words tell you that *the everlasting covenant is sealed, and that, if you come to Christ, you will obtain, on the ground of His finished work, a right to all its blessings*. The New Testament is in His blood and it, with all it contains, shall be yours, if by faith you receive Christ and His blood as freely offered in the gospel – and God Himself as “the God of all grace” shall be yours to dispense to you the provision of the covenant graciously, wisely, and effectively.

3. These words tell you that *you can find in Christ a right to victory over every enemy*. His shout of triumph is an everlasting sound, passing through the gospel trumpet, telling you that His victory shall be yours in Him if you flee to Him for refuge. O what gladness this should bring to the heart of the oppressed, who can bring nothing but unworthiness before God, and who cannot but as feeble cowards face the enemy in the day of battle. Christ tells you that the victory has been won by the great battle in which He, as “the Captain of Salvation,” stood all alone against sin, Satan, the world, death, and the grave. These all are already conquered. You will be a victor at the outset if you come to Jesus, and though there may be a conflict after this, it is with enemies who cannot take away your life, though they may harass and scare you, while He shall secure to you benefit, even from your wounds, and crown all your experience of His grace with the calm of eternal rest, and with the glory, and the gladness of eternal triumph.

APPLICATION.

1. How few there are who will stop to listen to this cry from the cross. It continues still to be uttered “with a loud voice” through the trumpet of the gospel. You cannot contrive how to escape from hearing it. You have already heard it, and your memory preserves it, and you cannot therefore escape from it by refusing your earnest attention, or by ceasing to read your Bible, or by absenting yourself from the house of God. Christ crucified is near, and His cry is kept up. Memory long ago anticipated the discovery of how to preserve sounds, and give them forth again after long intervals, and you cannot at any time escape from yourself. You will carry much of the gospel in your memory even to hell if you enter it at last, and I know nothing that can more augment your misery there than remembered gospel truths. What, then, are you to make of this text? Some of you are so occupied with the things of the world that you grudge a moment of your life to the doctrine of the cross. You go through the wearying wasting toil of your wonted round of business, or toil, or pleasure till your head is dizzied and your heart is stone. You have neither eye nor ear for Christ, because you have no heart for Him, and you pass Him by unheeded, afraid that He may take something from you of what you are so eager to give wholly to the world. Others are averse to look towards the cross, or listen to the voice that tells, from out of its shame and agony, that the work of redemption is finished, because they think they have a righteousness of their own, which makes them independent of that which was wrought out by Jesus. Among those who passed by the cross when Jesus was hanging on it, and acted the part of mockers towards Him, there may have been some hurrying to prepare for temple service, as surely as there were some who were hastening to market. These were equally disposed to pass the glorious sufferer by, and not to see or hear what might wean them from their idol. And besides these, there may have been some, not intent either on marketing or worship, who were so far away from all that was divine and scriptural, through the power of unbelief, that, in the scene on Calvary, there was nothing that would for a moment arrest them in their pursuit of pleasure, and nothing even to cause a conscious feeling of any kind towards Him who was lifted up on the tree. And there are these classes still among the despisers of Christ crucified – the jaded worldlings, the religious toilers, and the frivolous pleasure-seekers. In one thing, at least, all these agree, they care not to see the beauty, or to reach the righteousness, or to taste the love of Christ crucified, by the word of His mouth being applied to them with power. Such are some of you, in whichever of the classes of despisers you may be found. But, thus saith the Lord, “Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish.” And this also He saith, “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at My reproof; behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you, I will make known My words unto you.”

2. Each one of you all must either receive the words of Christ in the text as true, and act accordingly, or reject them, as if they were untrue, and act accordingly. From this alternative there is no escape. You must first regard what He speaks about as important ere you will care to believe that what He says regarding it is true. He must be to you the only resort left to you as a sinner. His name must be to you the only one “under heaven” whereby you can be saved. Persuaded that you have been a transgressor from the womb, that the curse of the broken law rests on you, and that power to treasure up “wrath against the day of wrath” is the only power that is at work within you, how could you fail to be shut out from all hope apart from Christ and His redeeming work, and to you what, in importance, could compare with your being assured that His work was finished, and, because finished by Him, was sufficient as a ground of acceptance with God for the very chief of sinners. If assured of this, then you would seek to lay all your own righteousness aside, that you might come naked, in excuseless guilt, to be clothed with “the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

But if you do not thus receive, you must reject the words of Christ. If you do not believe what He saith, then you make Him a liar. And you do so whatever form your rejection may assume. *You* do so who say that you require no righteousness either to be wrought by yourself or as wrought by another. O, think of the earnestness of Christ about that as to which you are so indifferent. You reproach Him for regarding a justifying righteousness as something to finish which He would bear shame, and agony, and death. You mock His suffering, and you dispense with His work, and you treat His words with the contempt which is due to a lie. And *you* reject His words as if they were untrue, who are still trying to “establish” your own tottering righteousness. You refuse to listen to Him when He tells you that the work in which you are foolishly engaged, has already been finished by Him, and so well finished that nothing besides is required as a foundation of peace with God. *You* too reject His words, who are persuaded that apart from Christ crucified there is no hope for you, but refuse to cast yourselves in faith as sinners on Him and on His finished work. You cannot refuse to trust on that righteousness, which He finished, all your eternal interests, without saying that He has left His work, which is your only resource, unfinished. O, Friend, have done with casting dishonour on Him, and doing harm to yourself, by refusing to yield to His call when He says “Come unto me all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

3. Let all whose eye is on Christ crucified, as the one object of their faith, more habitually remember, more heartily cherish, and seek more powerfully to be affected by, the words of Christ in the text. Friends, you need to be more under the power of these words, that there may be more mortifying of your pride of heart. It is this cry of Christ’s from the cross that, applied by the Spirit, who can renew as well as impress, will prove to be the death yet of your legal spirit. If you are a friend of the Crucified One, you will be enemies to all that would spoil Him of His glory. And you need to remember these words, when you find no other resource apart from His finished work, to which you can repair. Friends, if these words are true, why should you be afraid? Stand on the work which Emmanuel finished. What besides can you desire as a ground on which to ask the blessing of acceptance with God, on which to claim an interest in all the fulness of the covenant of grace, and from which to rise, on the wings of desire and hope, towards the brightness of an eternal triumph over every enemy, and of the full enjoyment of God Himself forever. And you need to be more habitually under the power of these words, in order to a deeper sense of what you owe to Him who uttered them on the cross, that your love may become more fervent, your heart more contrite, your prayers more trustful, your songs more hearty, your service more self-denying, and yourselves more Christ-like.

[August 1915]

A Sermon.

By the late REV. ALEXANDER FRASER, D.D.,
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Preached at Tain on 27th August, 1800.

[This Sermon was preached before the Northern Missionary Society of 1800, at their first meeting, and as now republished, forms an appropriate sequel to the interesting articles on this valuable Society, recently appearing in our columns from the pen of the Rev. J. R. Mackay, M.A., Inverness. Dr. Fraser of Kirkhill was well-known as an eminent servant of Christ. – ED.]

“The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand” – Isaiah 32:8.

The design of the prophet, from the beginning of the chapter to the verse I have read, is to describe the nature of the Messiah’s kingdom; the advantages of His government; the character of His faithful subjects, contrasted with that of His opponents. As to the nature of His kingdom, he says, “Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.” The Messiah is termed, by way of eminence, the righteous One; not merely because He is righteous in Himself, but because He invests the subjects of His government with His own righteousness. Hence Jeremiah says concerning Him, “This is the name by which he shall be called, The Lord *our* righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6). And the reason of giving Him that name the Apostle illustrates: “God made him to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

All who have an interest in Him, He hath made “kings to God and his Father” (Revelation 1:6; 5:10), enabling them, by His grace, to reign over their irregular passions here, as an

earnest of their being honoured to sit with Him on His throne hereafter. And when any of His faithful followers are entrusted with an office, having authority over others, they discharge the duties of that office conscientiously, knowing that “He who ruleth among men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord.”

The advantages of the Messiah’s government the prophet next describes: “And a man shall be an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” It were too much to expect all these advantages from a mere man. But the prophet had previously shewed that the Messiah, though a child born, should be the mighty God (Isaiah 9:6); that His name, expressive of His nature, should be Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14). It was by assuming the nature of man, that He was qualified to bear the sins of men, and so prove an all-sufficient Saviour to His people.

His people in the present state, like travellers in the sandy desert, are exposed to several dangers, which would extinguish their life, did they not find in Him preservation. As travellers in the desert were sometimes overtaken by the hot wind, which suddenly suffocated them, unless they found a place to hide them from its influence; so the followers of the Messiah in this world are overtaken by temptations, which would suddenly extinguish the spiritual life, if they did not find in Him resources and protection. He deals with each of them, as formerly with Peter, when he said, “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31,32). He fulfils to them that promise, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (2 Corinthians 10:13). As travellers in the desert were exposed to a whirlwind, which raised huge masses of sand, turned them violently round, then, letting them fall, overwhelmed them with destruction; so the followers of the Messiah are “by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Ephesians 2:3). They are originally under the sentence and the awe of eternal destruction. But they find in the Messiah a covert from the tempest. For “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). They can say with confidence, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died” (Romans 8:34). As travellers in the desert were subject to thirst, which, if not allayed, ended in death; so the followers of the Messiah are in this world subject to infirmities, proceeding from the depravity of their nature, which would end in spiritual death, did they not receive from Him, “in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell,” supplies of grace, which, like rivers of water in a dry place, afford them perpetual preservation and refreshment. As travellers in the desert were exposed to excessive heat, so that sometimes their life was extinguished by a sudden stroke of the sun, and at other times their strength was gradually exhausted, and they fainted by the way; so the followers of the Messiah, in the present state, are exposed to calamities, which are apt suddenly to overwhelm them, or gradually to wear out their strength and patience. But, as the shadow of a great rock afforded the traveller a cool and safe protection from the heat; so the Messiah, by the views which He gives them of His providence, and by the consolations of His blessed Spirit, renews the strength, and confirms the patience of His people, until they depart in safety from the weary land in which they now sojourn.

The prophet proceeds to delineate the character of the Messiah’s subjects. “And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim; and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.” It would appear from this description, that they are naturally wretched, like the blind, the deaf, the rash, the stammerers. But by submitting to the Messiah they are made happy, in consequence of a thorough change produced on them. Though formerly ignorant and unconscious of spiritual objects, as persons born blind are of light and colours, now they see with conviction the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the glory of the Saviour, the

certainty of a world to come, the reality of eternal rewards and irrevocable punishments. In a word, all the objects of the spiritual world present themselves with conviction to their understandings; just as the objects of the natural world rush on the eyes of a person who was born blind, when his sight is restored.

Though formerly incapable of distinguishing the voice of God, as the deaf are unable to hear sounds, yet now they hear the voice of the Redeemer in His word, and they can distinguish it from that of a stranger. Yea, they comply with His call. When they hear Him say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), their souls answer in sincerity, "Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God" (Jeremiah 3:22). "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). Though formerly they rashly made choice of this world as their portion, through ignorance of a better, they are now enabled deliberately to make choice of God in Christ as their portion, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none on earth whom I desire besides Thee." Though formerly unqualified to celebrate the Redeemer's praises, or to talk to others with propriety of His conduct towards them, now, in consequence of the views they have received, and the choice they have made, their tongues are eloquent in His praise.

The knowledge bestowed on the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, as it leads them to rectify what is amiss in themselves, so it enables them to detect what is wrong in others. They do not mistake specious vice for virtue. The men of the world estimate a person by the outward advantages and natural endowments which he possesses, such as birth, fortune, affability; who, on account of his irreligious sentiments and immoral conduct, is notwithstanding entitled to no esteem. The men of the world reckon persons bountiful, who squander their wealth with a profuse hand, while they are in reality churls, because their apparent bountifulness proceeds from selfish motives, a desire to gratify their inordinate desires, or to flatter their personal vanity. But with the people of the Messiah, "the vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor shall the churl be said to be bountiful."

In regard the advantages of the Messiah's government are so many, and the change produced by it on the sentiments and manners of mankind so great, some would be ready to conclude that He and His government would experience no opposition from the world; to guard against a misapprehension of this nature, the prophet proceeds to state the certainty of an opposition to the Messiah, together with the character of His opponents: "For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and He will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail." I apprehend, that the prophet has more immediately in His view, the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews, at the period in which our Saviour appeared in the world. Every part of this description is applicable to them; as we learn from the account given of them in the New Testament. They were vile persons, that is, according to the Scripture idiom, irreligious persons, in rejecting the Messiah; they spake villainy, in avowing openly, that they did reject Him; their heart wrought iniquity, by contriving schemes to tarnish His character, and to compass His death; they practised hypocrisy, by pretending a great respect for the ordinances of religion; they uttered error against the Lord, by blaspheming Him who is Jehovah. And after His ascension, they endeavoured to deprive His people of the provision made for their spiritual wants, by prohibiting the Apostles to teach the doctrine of the resurrection, or to preach in the name of Jesus: thus endeavouring to make empty the soul of the hungry, and to cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. Again, these men are properly called churls, because they opposed the Messiah, from a principle of covetousness. This appears from the high-priest's counsel to the sanhedrim, "If we let him alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation" (John 11:48). They could not deny His miracles, and were even convinced that they were evidences of a

divine mission; but they stifled their conviction, and resolved to cut Him off, for fear of the temporal losses they might sustain, if the nation should believe on Him.

As the principle on which they were to reject the Messiah is laid before us, so likewise the means by which they would oppose Him and His followers are accurately described. "The instruments also of the churl are evil. He deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words even when the needy speaketh right." And these means are of two kinds secret calumnies and open prosecutions: the first is termed "lying words," the last "pronouncing judgment;" for so the expression may be literally translated from the original. And, that both these means were used by the rulers of the Jews against Christ and His followers, the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles clearly shew. The character here given of the first adversaries of the Messiah and His followers is exceedingly applicable to persons, in every period of the Church, who had a form of godliness, while they were strangers to the power of it. Influenced by covetousness, actuated by malignity, clothed with hypocrisy, they have persecuted such as had the genuine spirit of Christianity; sometimes tarnishing their character by secret calumnies; at other times stripping them of their privileges by open persecutions.

In regard the opposition to the Messiah was to be so violent, according to the prophet's representation, some might imagine that His kingdom would never be established in the world; to remove that misapprehension the prophet observes, "But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall He stand." By the "liberal" the prophet means the faithful followers of the Messiah as a collective body. They are liberal because self-love is removed, and the love of God is implanted in their hearts as the predominant principle. This enlarges the heart and opens the hands. By "liberal things" he understands the scheme of redemption published by the Gospel the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world. "The liberal *deviseth* liberal things;" that is, they that are taught by the Messiah contrive to give a knowledge of the scheme of redemption published by the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it, and in consequence of the knowledge communicated by the Gospel the kingdom of the Messiah shall be established. "By liberal things He shall stand."

The words thus understood appear to me suitable to the design of our meeting when we are about to form a society for sending the Gospel to the heathen and other unenlightened nations.

I propose in farther discoursing –

First. – To illustrate this proposition, that the scheme of redemption published by the Gospel is the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world.

Secondly. – To point out the obligations laid on those who view it in that light to send the knowledge of it to such as are ignorant of it.

Thirdly. – To endeavour to remove some of the objections that may occur to a candid mind against sending missionaries to the heathen and other unenlightened nations.

First. – That the scheme of redemption published by the Gospel is the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world, we may infer –

1. From the Contriver of it. It is not the contrivance of men or of angels, but of God. Concerning it, the prophet says, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Who instructed him and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge and shewed him the way of understanding?" (Isaiah 11:13,14). Certainly no other being directed Him. Put the case then, that a legislator, endowed with the wisdom of Solomon, possessing like Him "largeness of heart, as the sand that is by the sea shore," should apply His mind to the contrivance of a scheme for promoting the happiness of

His fellowmen – would you not expect a liberal scheme? But surely that scheme must be infinitely more liberal, which is the contrivance of unerring wisdom, set to work by boundless love, for the purpose of manifesting infinite mercy. Accordingly, superior beings, who are better qualified than we are to judge of the schemes and works of God, are anxious to pry into the scheme of redemption: “Angels desire to look into these things” (1 Peter 1:12). Those morning stars, when they beheld the world arise from nothing, and saw innumerable beings called into existence, to partake of their Maker’s boundless liberality, celebrated His glory in a hymn of praise. But when they turned their attention to the scheme of redemption, and beheld myriads of beings raised from the greatest misery to life and immortality, by means so stupendous, struck with astonishment, they mused His praise in solemn silence. Hence the cherubims under the law were represented upon the ark with bended heads and outstretched wings as if lost in amazement, while they beheld the mercy-seat which typified the Saviour. And, indeed, the more carefully they examine the scheme of redemption, the more clearly they discern the wisdom which contrived it; for “now unto principalities and powers, is made known the manifold wisdom of God, through the church” (Ephesians 3:10).

2. The liberality of the scheme of redemption is obvious from the Administrator of it. In order to make a well-contrived scheme, productive of the advantages for which it is calculated, much depends on the person by whom it is administered. Such a person ought to have a right to administer: He should be possessed of wisdom, to direct Him; of power, to carry the plans of His wisdom into execution; of mercy and compassion, to interest Him in those for whose relief the scheme is contrived. Now, all these qualifications unite, in the highest degree, in our Lord and Saviour. He has a right to administer, in consequence of the Father’s appointment, who says, “It is a light thing, that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). And He hath also a right to administer, in regard He hath fulfilled, by His obedience, the condition on which the blessings of the scheme were to be dispensed. So the prophet intimates, “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death” (Isaiah 53:10,12).

The wisdom of this Administrator is infinite. “In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). And His power is irresistible, for He is the “Almighty” (Revelation i. 8). They who believe in Him know with certainty that He is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God for their salvation.” He is infinitely merciful as God; and as man He is possessed of a distinguished sensibility of heart. This sensibility was excited by every miserable object which occurred in the days of His flesh. And as His heart was powerfully affected, so His hand was readily extended for their relief. At one time, He saw the people “as sheep having no shepherd, and he was moved with compassion toward them, and he began to teach them many things” (Matthew 6:34). At another time, when the people were long fasting in a desert place, and in danger of fainting by the way, He had compassion on them, and wrought a miracle to procure them food (Matthew 15:32). When He saw the sisters of Lazarus deeply affected with grief for the death of their brother, He entered into their feelings. “Jesus groaned in spirit, and was troubled;” yea, He mingled His tears with theirs, “Jesus wept” (John 11:33,35). Nor was the sensibility of His heart excited by the distress of His friends alone, but by that of His enemies likewise. When He looked on Jerusalem, a little before His death, and reflected on the unbelief of its inhabitants, and the impending judgments of God, He wept over it, saying, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luke 19:41,42).

Again, this sensibility of heart was increased and confirmed by a personal acquaintance with those distresses to which any of the human race are liable. He not only felt hunger and thirst, weariness and pain; but He experienced poverty and contempt, desertion of friends, and the persecution of enemies. He was attacked by the temptations of Satan, and tasted of the wrath of God. In a word, He was made subject to all the miseries of life, and to all the agonies of death, “being tempted in all points, like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15); and in that “he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18). We may therefore conclude that the blessings of the scheme of redemption shall be liberally dispensed, seeing they are at the disposal of so wise, so powerful, so compassionate an Administrator.

3. The superior liberality of the scheme of redemption appears from the condition of those who are the objects of it. Genuine liberality consists in making the miserable happy; now, the objects of the scheme of redemption are the miserable. So our Saviour intimates: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 14:18,19). Here He informs us that the persons to whom He dispenses the blessings of the scheme of redemption are – the poor, the broken in heart, the captives, the blind, the bruised, those that were commonly relieved in the jubilee year, as insolvent debtors, slaves, persons who had forfeited their inheritance.

If that is allowed to be a liberal scheme which proposes relief to persons labouring under these temporal calamities, how much greater is the liberality of the scheme which offers deliverance from spiritual miseries that are of infinitely greater magnitude? But the objects of the scheme of redemption are, those who are poor, because deprived of God’s favour; those who are broken in heart, because under a sentence of condemnation by His righteous law; those who are led captives by Satan at His will; those who are blind, because ignorant of their misery and their remedy; those who are bruised by means of the depravity of their own nature; those who are insolvent debtors, because chargeable with the guilt of sin; those who are slaves to their own lusts; those who have forfeited every claim of right to the inheritance of eternal life. If that scheme is allowed to be liberal which offers relief to persons labouring under *one* of the calamities mentioned, that scheme must be acknowledged to be yet more liberal which offers deliverance to persons labouring under *all* these calamities. But such is the scheme of redemption. Every individual object of it is subject to all these spiritual miseries. So our Saviour intimates, in the case of Laodicea, “Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). That scheme, therefore, which holds out deliverance from such an accumulated load of miseries, must be superior in liberality. If the scheme is allowed to be liberal, which offers relief from distress, in one manner, notwithstanding other methods might be found equally conducive to the same end, it will be acknowledged that the scheme has superior liberality, which offers the only possible way of deliverance from miseries that are otherwise irremediable. But such is the scheme of redemption. In it Christ is revealed as the only Redeemer; He is offered as the only Saviour from sin, and all the miseries consequent upon it. For “there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Did we range from pole to pole, could we search the extensive universe, we would find no remedy for the miseries brought upon us by sin, but in Him alone. There is no wealth to the poor, but in His unsearchable riches; no liberty to the captive, but in His triumph over the host of darkness; no healing to the wounded conscience, but by the application of His blood; no sight to the blind, but through the influences of His Spirit; no comfort to the mourner, but by communion through Him with the God of all consolation; no discharge of the debt of sin,

but in consequence of His payment as surety; no freedom to the slave, except the Son shall make him free; no right to the eternal inheritance, but in consequence of His purchase.

If the scheme is allowed to be liberal, which offers its advantages to a few only, that scheme must be allowed to be yet more liberal, which offers its advantages to a great many; but in this respect likewise, the scheme of redemption is of all others the most liberal, because the benefits of it are offered to all mankind. The blessings of it are not confined to one nation or to one age; they are equally interesting to all nations and to all generations. The Administrator of it proclaims, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22). "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1). "Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). He commanded those whom He commissioned to publish the glad tidings of salvation, to "teach all nations," to "preach the Gospel to every creature." The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the despot and the slave, the civilized and the barbarous, are equally offered the blessings of redemption, and shall partake of them alike, unless they are excluded by rejecting them; for as to an interest in these, there is no difference of "Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

4. The superior liberality of the scheme of redemption is evident from the effects of it. The most liberal schemes of human invention effect only an alteration of the miseries which they cannot remove, but the scheme of redemption effectually removes misery. The name of Howard will live in the annals of history, and be celebrated for liberality; because he devoted his time and talents to alleviate the miseries of prisoners, whom he could not set at liberty. But the scheme of redemption is able to "bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house" (Isaiah 42:7). Liberality has contrived asylums for the blind, in which they are taught to work, and enjoy society, thus alleviating the evil which it cannot remedy; but the scheme of redemption bestows the recovery of their sight on the blind. Various plans have been contrived by liberality, which may dry up the tears of the disconsolate, but cannot heal the broken heart: but the scheme of redemption "binds up the broken in heart" (Isaiah 61:1); "turns weeping into joy, and mourning to dancing;" enables men "to put off their sackcloth, and girdeth them with gladness" (Psalm 25:11).

The greatest advantage of the best scheme contrived by human liberality is, to bestow a temporary relief – to confer a transient happiness; but the advantage of the scheme of redemption is, that it confers eternal happiness. What avails it, that liberality sets the prisoner free, and restores him to the society of his family and friends? In a little time death follows, arrests him again, separates him for ever from those who are dear to him, and confines him in the prison of the grave. What avails it, that liberality restores the insolvent debtor to the possession of his inheritance? The inexorable messenger of God's law ejects him afresh; for, in defiance of every effort of human liberality, "it remaineth but a little, when they that rejoice shall be as though they rejoiced not, because the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:30,31). But O how superior is the liberality of the scheme of redemption? By it this unrelenting tyrant is vanquished, his captives are admitted to perfect liberty, and are invested with eternal happiness. The gladness communicated by the light of God's countenance here, is to them an earnest of that fulness of joy, which they shall receive in His more immediate presence hereafter. The drops of consolation which they taste now, are foretastes of the draughts they shall drink out of the rivers of pleasure, that are at God's right hand, and flow for ever.

We may therefore conclude that the scheme of redemption published by the Gospel, on account of the Contriver, the Administrator, the Objects, and the Effects of it, is the most liberal plan for promoting the happiness of mankind ever made known to the world.

II. – I shall endeavour now to point out the obligations, laid on those who view it in this light, to send the knowledge of it to such as are ignorant of it.

1. That this is a duty incumbent on all ministers of the Gospel, is evident from our Saviour's express command, "Go ye, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19,20). Perhaps it will be said that the command is addressed to the Apostles whose commission extended over all the earth, but not to the ordinary teachers of Christianity whose ministry is confined to a particular district. To remove the objection, consider the motive by which the command is enforced, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Did not our Saviour know that the Apostles would not remain on earth to the end of the world? Surely. But He knew that some persons would exercise the office of teachers in every period until He should come again, and He encourages all those teachers to perform the duties of their office by the promise of His gracious presence to direct and support them. Now, the command to teach all nations must be addressed to the same persons to whom the motive is applicable; consequently to all ministers of the Gospel at present as well as to those who preceded them, and shall follow after them in the same office. To suppose the command addressed to persons of one age, and the motive applicable to those of another, in fact destroys the whole force of the argument. Still it may be objected, that ordinary ministers are commanded "to take heed to the ministry each hath received" (Colossians 4:17); "to feed the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers" (Acts 20:28); consequently, not to teach all nations. Doubtless it is incumbent on every pastor to discharge the duties he owes to his particular flock; but so far as attention to them is consistent with the general command of teaching all nations, that command is obligatory on every faithful minister of Christ.

2. It is a duty incumbent on all true Christians to send the knowledge of the Gospel to the unenlightened nations of the world, as appears from our Saviour's direction, "When ye pray, say, Thy kingdom come" (Matthew 6:11). The direction is given, without controversy, to all true Christians. All are enjoined to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God: Now we must pray, according to the Apostle's injunction, "with understanding" (1 Corinthians 14:15); consequently, we must offer up the petition in that sense in which our Saviour understood it. And the sense in which He understood it is obvious from the prophecies concerning it. These intimate that the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the Messiah which is the same, shall extend over all nations. "Ask of me (saith the Father), and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8). "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth; yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him. Men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed" (Psalm 71:8,11,17). We are therefore bound to pray that the kingdom of Christ may extend over all nations. Again, we must pray with integrity; and integrity requires that we use every lawful mean in our power for attaining the object of the petition we offer. But the great mean which God hath appointed for extending the kingdom of Christ is the preaching of the Gospel. "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14.) We are bound, therefore, to send missionaries to preach the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it. And, indeed, if we neglect to use means, our negligence will evince that our prayers are not sincere. Put the case, that a person offers up that petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." Suppose, at the same time, he folds up his hands in his bosom, and will not occupy himself in any lawful employment to earn a subsistence; fancying, however, that he is abundantly devout, and that God will grant His request without any exertion on His part to attain it: would not every rational Christian tell such a man, If you pray for your daily bread, work for it; expect an answer to your petition by the blessing of God on your honest industry; if you look for it otherwise, you are under the influence of a spirit of delusion. In like manner, I say to all Christians, if ye pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, use the means in your power for

extending it. Give the aid of your counsels and of your money to send missionaries to the heathen, then, otherwise, your prayers are not sincere. You are under the influence of the spirit of error rather than the Spirit of truth.

3. The love of Christ should induce Christians to send the knowledge of the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it. A sense of the obligations they are laid under, by His love to them, must lead them to devote themselves to His service. So the Apostle argues: "The love of Christ constraineth us; for we thus judge; that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that we who live, should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but to him who died for us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Now, if the love of Christ constrains Christians to devote their whole lives to His service, it must constrain them to dedicate a part of their time, and of their substance, to advance His kingdom in the world.

4. Sending the Gospel to the unenlightened nations promotes the glory of God. Now, Christians are commanded to "do all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Any measure which is obviously conducive to that end, they are bound to adopt. But God Himself expressly declares, that sending the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it, is for His glory. When He promises the Messiah as a light to the Gentiles, He declares His reason to be, "I am the Lord, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8). While, therefore, there is a nation on earth practising idolatry, it is incumbent on Christians to send the light of the Gospel to every such nation, that they may not bestow on any other the glory due to the Deity alone. Again, God promises, "I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles" (Isaiah 66:19). Blessed God! doest Thou esteem it Thy glory, that missionaries should make known Thy fame to those nations that are yet strangers to Thee, and shall we not endeavour, with heart and hand, in a reliance on Thy promised aid, to perform that service?

5. Love to their fellow creatures should induce Christians to send the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it. We are assured, on the highest authority, that the second great commandment of the law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:39). This command is enforced and rendered more binding on Christians by the love of Christ to them. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34). By the force of these combined principles, the primitive Christians parted with all their substance for the benefit of others, and were contented to take their own share in common with them (Acts 2:44,45) Ought not the same principles to induce you to give a pittance of your substance for the purpose of bestowing on others the greatest of all benefits – the means of eternal salvation. It is universally allowed that love to our fellow creatures lays us under obligations, in many instances, to bestow our substance for their benefit. But a little attention must convince us, that in no instance is that love so conspicuously manifested, as when we can contribute to send the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it. If you had a remedy for restoring sight to the blind, would you not reckon yourself obliged, by the love of your neighbour, to communicate and apply it to persons labouring under that great calamity? But how much greater is the calamity of spiritual blindness! and how much more important is the Gospel, which offers the only effectual relief! Did you see your fellow creature detained in bondage by his enemies, would you not reckon it incumbent on you, to contribute for his ransom so as to procure him liberty? But the unenlightened nations are held in a more grievous bondage by the enemy of their salvation. They are under the influence of strong prejudices and violent passions, inconsistent both with their temporal and eternal happiness. Reflect seriously on the dark places of the earth which are full of the habitations of cruelty. Besides the slavery, and the sale of the human race,

which are a reproach to countries professedly Christians, the murder of innocent children is there established by custom; human sacrifices are performed as acts of devotion; and cannibals devour one another to gratify their revenge [See the accounts published by the London Missionary Society of Otaheite and the Marquesas]. Does not love to your neighbour imperiously command you to send those unhappy beings the Gospel to emancipate them from the slavery of Satan, and to bring them into the liberty of the children of God? Are ye not, as Christians, bound in charity to deal your bread to the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to give lodging to the stranger? But how much greater is that charity in itself, how much more beneficial in its effects, which provides the bread of life for them who are ready to perish; which gives drink to the thirsty from the wells of salvation; which clothes the naked with the Redeemer's righteousness; and which brings those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, to be fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God! (Ephesians 2:12,19.)

6. Christians are bound in justice to send the Gospel to the heathen. Our fathers were heathens, and we, their posterity, had continued to be so had not Christians sent the Gospel to our land. Now that we are Christians, it is incumbent on us to return the obligation received, by sending the Gospel to those who are heathens; at any rate to give of our substance for that important end. The argument of the Apostle concerning the contribution sent by the people of Achaia to the poor saints at Jerusalem will apply here: "It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duties is also to minister unto them in carnal things" (Romans 15:27).

7. Self-interest should induce Christians to send the Gospel to the heathen, that they may obtain the accomplishment of that promise, "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Proverbs 11:25). A concern for the salvation of the heathen may excite in us a more serious concern for our own salvation, and so may occasion a revival of real religion in our land. If we are anxious to communicate light to them that sit in darkness, we have reason to expect an increased measure of Gospel light to ourselves; for we are assured that, in the latter days, together with an extensive diffusion, there shall be a superior degree of knowledge of divine things. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days" (Isaiah 30:26). "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

If we are desirous to extend the consolations of religion to those who are strangers to them, we have reason to hope that our own souls shall partake of them more abundantly. If we are willing to reach the bread of life to those who are ready to perish, we may be assured that the bountiful Father of the family will increase the provision of His household to all His children, and that "we shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house" (Psalm 36:8). Christian brethren, when we solicit your prayers, your counsels, your pecuniary aid, for sending the Gospel to the heathen, "we desire not merely a gift to them, but we desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Philippians 4:7).

III. – I proceed now to remove some of the objections that may occur to a candid mind against sending missionaries to the heathen and other unenlightened nations.

There are some who object to the measure of sending missionaries to the heathen who are not candid in the objections they offer. The real cause of their opposition is that they are strangers to the power of the Gospel and therefore ignorant of its real value, and so, calculating like commercial men from their own views, they reckon it a worthless commodity unfit for exportation. As to such, let us pray that they may experience the power of the Gospel and know its inestimable value to their own souls, for then we are sure that their objections against sending it to the heathen will vanish.

There are some who oppose the measure from a direct and deliberate enmity to the Gospel. They feel it a restraint on their irregular passions, and they would wish to extinguish it at home. They are outrageous at the thought of sending it abroad to restrain the liberty of those who live as free as nature dictates. Let us not be surprised at the opposition of such men. As there have always been, so there are still vile persons who speak villainy; who in heart work iniquity and utter error against the Lord. But as no human reasonings can rectify their errors, let us fervently pray that the Spirit of truth may lead them into all truth, and may effectually teach them their obligation to defend and promote the measure which they now so deliberately persecute.

But it must be allowed that there are others who have experienced the power of the Gospel, and who know its value; who, instead of feeling enmity against it, are really desirous of its success; and who, notwithstanding, are averse to the measure of sending missionaries to the heathen.

1. Their first and great objection arises from the improbability of success. It will readily occur to them that the Society has no funds and no qualified missionaries. Could they find the missionaries, they have not the language of the nations to whom they are sent. Even if they had their language, the ignorance and savage rudeness of those nations, together with the passions, prejudices, and peculiar customs flowing from the savage character, form insurmountable barriers against every attempt of our Society to communicate to them a knowledge of the refined truths of the Gospel. In answer to this objection let me caution you, my Christian brethren, against indulging the disposition of the slothful man who creates difficulties and dangers in his own imagination, saying, "There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets" (Proverbs 26:13). Let me remind you, that to teach the nations is God's command; to undertake the work is our duty; to render it effectual, He hath promised His presence. Are there difficulties which Almighty power cannot remove? Is there any work which His presence cannot accomplish? If the duty and the promise are clear, let us make the attempt, leaving the success in His hand who hath circumstances and events at His disposal.

But on the supposition that our endeavours shall not convert the heathen, they may, notwithstanding, introduce some degree of civilization among them, and a knowledge of the general truths of religion as preparative to their future conversion. Though we may not turn the forest into a fruitful field, yet we may grub out briars and thorns and sow those seeds which in due time shall bring forth fruit abundantly. As the day of small privileges is not to be despised, so neither is the day of small attempts to be neglected. It is certain that the writings of Wickliff secretly operated on the minds of men for a century and a half, and at the end of that period had their influence, together with other causes, in bringing about the glorious Reformation.

Though God in His mysterious providence should see it meet to deny any good to the heathen from our scheme of sending them missionaries, I doubt not that He will approve the design in us just as He approved David's intention of building the temple, though He did not permit him to perform the work, saying, "Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well, that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings 8:18). Whatever, therefore, may be the success of our scheme, the end we propose is liberal, the temporal loss we can sustain by the attempt is trifling, and gain to our souls is certain by procuring the approbation of our God.

2. Another objection will perhaps occur to a candid mind against the measure of sending missionaries to the heathen at present. It is that the time for the conversion of the heathen is not yet come, and that any attempts on our part are improper before the period which God hath appointed for it. In answer to this objection let me caution you to beware of incurring the reproof which God gives by the prophet Haggai to persons who offered a similar objection against building the temple. These people said, "The time is not come, the

time that the Lord's house should be built." But God said by the prophet, "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Haggai 1:2,4) intimating that if they were equally desirous to build the house of God as they were to build houses for accommodating themselves or for gratifying their vanity, they would not reckon it unseasonable to begin the work.

Again, however distant the period may be in which the kingdom of Christ shall be fully established in the world, in regard there shall be a gradual progress by the ordinary means towards that establishment; it is high time to begin to use the means by sending the Gospel to the unenlightened nations. As the tenderness of the branches and the swelling of the bud in trees indicate the approach of summer, so there are circumstances in our time which indicate that the establishment of Christ's kingdom is near, and that the period is come in which Christians ought to use means for the advancement of it.

First. – There is in our times an ardent desire to penetrate into unknown countries from which results a knowledge of the several unenlightened nations of the earth superior to what was attained in former times, while the increase of commerce and of skill in navigation facilitates the intercourse betwixt us and them. This knowledge is designed by the sovereign Ruler to prepare the way for the heralds of the Gospel in the latter days; hence it is given as a sign of the near approach of the Messiah's kingdom, "Many (says Daniel), shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (Daniel 12:4). If, therefore, we see the sign and know its meaning, we should join issue with the designs of Providence by sending missionaries to the unenlightened nations.

Secondly. – There is in our days a spirit of association for generous purposes beyond what appeared in former times. Innumerable are the societies formed within this island for the purposes of bestowing on their fellow creatures an alleviation of, or a deliverance from the various calamities incident to human life. If a person forms a scheme which is apparently generous and practicable, he will immediately find many who will cheerfully give their aid to carry it into execution. Is not this a loud call to all who know the superior liberality of the scheme of redemption, who know it to be the only and the effectual remedy of all the miseries brought into the world by sin? Is it not to such persons, I say, a loud call to associate together for the purpose of sending the knowledge of this remedy to those who stand most in need of it?

Thirdly. – In our times societies have been already formed for the express purpose of sending missionaries to the heathen, not only in various parts of our island, but likewise in Holland, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Switzerland, in several parts of America, and at the Cape of Good Hope. Are you not, as Christians, under equal obligations with them to advance the Redeemer's kingdom and to promote the interests of your fellowmen? You are, in many respects, under greater obligations at present. Some of the countries mentioned above are ravaged by the sword, others are desolated by the pestilence, and in others, enormous exactions deprive the inhabitants of their wealth and substance as an overflowing flood sweeps away the fruits of the earth; whereas you hear the din of war at a distance and the pestilence cometh not nigh your dwelling, while your persons and property are effectually secured by a just and mild government. You ought, therefore, as persons not only made liberal by the grace of God in common with other Christians, but likewise as persons dealt with liberally by His providence beyond your fellow Christians, – you ought, I say, to devise liberal things by sending the Gospel to those who are ignorant of it.

[September 1915]

A Sermon.

By the late REV. ALEXANDER STEWART, D.D., Minister at
Moulin, Dingwall, and Edinburgh successively.

[The name of Dr. Stewart is well known to those acquainted with the history of the Church of Scotland as that of a highly-honoured minister of the Gospel and a distinguished Gaelic scholar. His ministry was much blessed of the Lord. He was the father of the eminent Rev. Alexander Stewart, Cromarty. Dr. Stewart died on 27th May, 1821, in the 57th year of his age. He was a member of the Northern Missionary Society. His biographer says that his published sermons consist of written preparations, "unequal to his spoken discourses in liveliness and force." At the same time, we believe that the Christian reader will find a sweet relish of divine truth in perusing the present discourse. – ED.]

"Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow" – 2 Samuel 23:5.

David, from his earlier days, to the close of his long and varied life, was visited with many and painful afflictions. Like Him whom in spirit he called Lord, though descended of David after the flesh, he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. But sanctified affliction produces godly sorrow, and godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation. Of this, David was a most conspicuous and instructive example. From his youth, he was taught to know and worship the Lord God of Israel. After he was taken from the sheep-fold, and brought to feed Jacob, and rule over Israel, new temptations beset him; iniquities, according to his own sorrowful confession, did at times prevail against him, and his falls were grievous. But the Lord had chosen him for a servant, therefore He did not leave him to perish in his sin. This sweet Psalmist of Israel was reclaimed from the error of his way; and after wiping off his penitential tears, he again tuned his sacred harp to the praises of his own great Shepherd, who had restored his soul, and had led him anew in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. From the manifold mercies of God to his soul, experienced through the whole course of his diversified life, David possessed an assured confidence that the Lord had established His covenant with him, that the God of Jacob was his everlasting portion, that He would never fail him nor forsake him, and that He would build up his throne and establish his seed to many generations. Notwithstanding this assurance, many of his troubles still remained, impaired his comfort, and broke the peace of his family. His children had in many things grieved his heart; his enemies perpetually harassed him; and, especially, in his own soul he did not find his desires and expectations accomplished, nor spiritual grace growing up to that maturity which formed a most valuable part of the promise in the covenant of his salvation.

Here we have an example of a case common to those who have been led through mercy to lay hold on the covenant of life, established through the Son of David, the great Mediator. A believer has apprehended and laid hold of this covenant; he knows it is all his salvation, he feels it is all his desire, yet he has to mourn his shortcomings and the disappointment of his hopes in some of those points which he believes to be most infallibly secured by that very covenant. This is a case that calls for tender treatment; and while we would humbly endeavour to state the believer's views of the covenant and his experience in connection with those views, let us earnestly implore the presence and blessing of Him whose commission to His servants is still the same as ever, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

I. – We shall state the believer's views of the covenant. Having searched the Scriptures which testify of Christ, and having been led by the Spirit to the knowledge and love of the truth, the believer perceives that the covenant of his salvation is indeed an "everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

He sees *the perfections of God illustriously displayed*.

His *justice* is satisfied by the perfect obedience and sufferings of His own Son in the human nature, who thus paid the full penalty of man's transgression and wrought out a complete righteousness adequate to the demands of the perfect law of God. His *mercy* is gloriously manifested in freely bestowing a full pardon and even conferring the highest honours on sinners, rebels, outcasts, who deserved nothing but to be consigned to "the blackness of darkness" forever. His *sovereignty* is maintained in "doing what he will with his own;" in choosing, according to the unerring counsel of His will, the objects of His special favour; and dispensing to these such measures of His grace and His bounty as appear good in His sight whose dominion is over all, and who "giveth not account of any of his matters." His *truth* is vindicated in fulfilling His unchangeable word that the wages of sin is death, that, without due expiation, He will not clear the guilty, that nothing unclean shall enter into the holy Jerusalem above, that though heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled; all which is completely accomplished in the meritorious work of the great Redeemer and in the sanctifying operations of the Divine Spirit on the soul of a penitent sinner. Thus the honour of the divine government is secured and all the intelligent world is made to know and acknowledge that the righteous Jehovah loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. The believer, contemplating the wonders of redeeming love, admires and glories in that covenant by which mercy and truth thus meet and shine forth together.

He sees *the salvation of the penitent sinner fully secured*. Abundant provision is made for the sinner's deliverance from the penalty of the law, seeing Christ hath redeemed him from the curse of the law "by being made a curse for him" (Galatians 3:13). Abundant provision is made for the sanctification of his depraved nature "by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost shed on him abundantly through Jesus Christ his Saviour." Strength, wisdom, and courage, together with "the whole armour of God," are supplied to bear him through his spiritual warfare; light to guide him in his pilgrimage, consolation and support in time of trouble. Nor is temporal safety and provision wanting; "his place of defence is the munition of rocks; bread also is given him; his water shall be sure." He sees the Lord at once a sun and a shield to his people; "Christ made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." And he foresees the final complete glorification of his soul and body in that bright world where there shall be no more sin nor curse, no more night, no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain; where the ransomed of the Lord shall live and reign with him for ever and ever.

The believer sees *the subordinate provisions of the covenant well ordered in all things*. The Bible, the deed or instrument which contains the covenant, is preserved entire, is published abroad to the world, is translated, or translating into all languages and disseminated

through all lands so that people of all nations and kindreds and languages may hear in their own tongues the wonderful works of God. Messengers are selected and appointed, are equipped and sent forth, to make known the precious contents of the Bible, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Particular ordinances are appointed as seals or conveyances of the blessings of the covenant and administered in the churches to those who lawfully claim the benefit of them. Various dispensations of Providence, some of a prosperous, some of an adverse nature, directed by the Author of the covenant, serve to display the wisdom of its constitution, the suitableness and certainty of its promises, and the abundance of its resources. He sees these things further confirmed by the experience of those on the one hand who have embraced the covenant, and on the other of those who have rejected it. While he sees Christ crucified become a stumbling-block to the unbelieving Jews and foolishness to the philosophic Greeks, yet he sees that to them who are called both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23,24).

The believer sees *the stability and perpetuity of the covenant insured* by the immutable character of the parties engaged. The Father has promised to the Son that “the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;” “that he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” The Son undertakes and performs “I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; those whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.” The Holy Spirit also undertakes and carries on His work in the hearts of those whom Jesus has ransomed till He has sanctified them wholly and presented them without spot or blemish. None of these parties can fail; the word of Him who cannot lie is passed. As if this were of itself insufficient to satisfy men slow of heart to believe He hath added His oath; and because He could swear by no greater He hath sworn by Himself, that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, His word and His oath, the blessings of the unchangeable covenant might be confirmed for ever to believers. Mercies thus unalterably secured may well be called “the sure mercies of David.” They cannot be exhausted; the source from which they flow cannot fail; they are like the pure river of the water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and flowing for ever and ever.

The Lord takes pleasure in repeating in His own person the assurance of the endless continuance of His loving-kindness toward His chosen: “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (Isaiah 54:10).

Having thus stated the views which the believer is taught to form and habitually to entertain of the covenant of his salvation, we shall now enquire –

II. – What is his experience in connection with those views? While the believer’s faith is lively and his views of the provisions and blessings of the covenant are clear, he rejoices in them as “all his salvation and all his desire.” He knows there is salvation in none else; that in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of the mountains; that in the Lord alone is the salvation of Israel (Jeremiah 3:23). He does not wish for it in any other way than this which is so honourable to God and so secure to the sinner. His chief desire is to become a full partaker of this salvation and to glorify God by a life and conversation becoming this glorious scheme of redemption. But here he has at times to mourn a sore disappointment. The Lord does not always grant him his heart’s desire in the manner and season and measure that he expected. He desires to be spiritually-minded, to be raised above the world, to have his affections set on things above, to be wholly resigned to his Lord’s will and able to say in all things, “Not my will, but thine be done,” to have his whole temper and spirit conformed to the pattern of his Master’s spirit, seeking to have the same mind which was in Christ, and to learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart. In endeavouring to attain this blessed temper, he does not trust to his own powers; if he did, his failure would be no

wonder; but he has respect to the covenant and looks to its promises: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me” (Jeremiah 32:40). Notwithstanding this, he often finds reason to complain that “iniquities prevail against him;” that backwardness to duty, discontent with his portion, or with something in his lot, impatience of temper, worldliness of spirit, distrust in providence are often working in his heart; though to will be present with him, yet how to perform that which is good he finds not; though he delights in the law of God after the inward man, yet he finds a law, that when he would do good, evil is present with him (Romans 6:18), etc. While the everlasting covenant is all his salvation and his desire, his confidence and delight, still a body of sin, a body of death is his burden and his grief.

The believer desires to be fitted for his divine Master’s service; to be more fervent in spirit, more active, and more successful in any work in which he is employed; to be more fruitful in every good word and work; and thus to glorify God in his body and spirit. In his hopes of attaining to fruitfulness he does not depend on his own exertions as if they alone were sufficient though he knows they are required, but he looks to the provisions of the covenant and thence draws his encouragement to labour and exertion. “I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. From me is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:5), etc. “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” But neither doth this grow with him according to his desires and his hopes; he still finds, to his grief and mortification, daily cause to accuse himself of sloth and barrenness, to lament his leanness and unprofitableness; that after all his flattering hopes of making a fair and fruitful show and accomplishing a great deal, he is little else than an unprofitable servant, an unfruitful cumberer of the ground.

The believer having tasted that the Lord is gracious and experienced the sweetness of communion with Him, desires to have constant fellowship with his heavenly Father and with his Son Jesus Christ; to be daily beholding the beauty of the Lord and drawing water out of the wells of salvation, and so to have a continual joy and peace in believing. And in this point also, he has respect to the covenant; he remembers the words of his Lord: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24). But here, too, he is often sorely disappointed. Temptations arise and his faith is clouded – his prayers are hindered – his communion with God is disturbed or interrupted, his hopes are overcast, his joy is changed into sorrow and mourning.

He desires to see his own house and the household of faith flourishing. With respect to his children he can call God to witness that He has no higher wish, no greater joy, than to see that his children walk in the truth; and whatever be their lot in the world, that they may have their portion with God’s people. So also for his brethren in Christ, his heart’s desire and prayer is, that their souls may prosper, that their light may shine, that the interests of Christ’s kingdom may be advanced, and that the children of Zion may be joyful in their King. In breathing out these desires he takes encouragement from the promises of the covenant, “Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion, and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life; yea, thou shalt see thy children’s children, and peace upon Israel” (Psalm 128:4,5,6). In this case, too, he has to mourn at times the disappointment of his fair expectations. A darling Benjamin is forced away from his father’s embraces, a favourite Joseph is, perhaps, torn by a wild beast, an accomplished Absalom becomes an undutiful rebellious son, and a Hophni or Phinehas, though well educated and in the priest’s office, become abandoned to vice and almost break their father’s heart. “His house is not so with God” as he wished and hoped, and this is a cause of sore lamentation. Neither does he see the church of Christ prospering in his land and

in his day. Lukewarmness prevails, the love of many waxes cold, the godly man faileth and is taken away from the evil to come, the godly pastor who fed the Lord's little flock in the wilderness is called home and the babes and sucklings are prematurely weaned from the breast. When the pillars of the church, the champions of the faith are removed, irreligion and profanity become bold, and the pious remnant seek for shelter in private retirements; they enter into their chambers and shut the doors about them; they hide themselves for a moment until the indignation be overpast (Isaiah 26:20). The zealous believer sees with grief and indignation the cross of Christ despised and the enemies of the cross lifting their heads with daring confidence. Alas! he cries, "is the Lord's hand shortened that it cannot save or his ear heavy that it cannot hear?" When his enemies rage and make a noise even in the house of the Lord (Lamentations 2:7), where is the Lord God of Elijah? where is the promise of his coming? "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy soul loathed Zion. We look for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble" (Jeremiah 14:19).

Thus does the believer often complain and mourn that his desire is not yet fulfilled, that "the Lord maketh it not to grow." Instead of advancing he suspects himself to be losing ground. He is reaching forth, indeed, to the things which are before; but the more he reaches and lifts his eyes he only sees the greater length before him and finds that perfection is the farther off. He is almost ready to faint and give over "because of the way." For a moment he is tempted to doubt the sufficiency and stability of the covenant, but his faith is strengthened and he dares not doubt. He is ready, however, to doubt his own interest in the covenant and to think that his iniquities have separated between him and his God, and that his sins have hid the Lord's face from him that he will not hear (Isaiah 59:2). This hangs heavy on his soul and makes him go mournfully from day to day.

Let us endeavour to address to a mourner in this situation –

1. A word of encouragement. The case calls for encouragement and comfort. Although a believer should be left for a time under sorrow and discouragement, yet it is not the will of their heavenly Father that one of these little ones should perish. His command to his ministering messengers concerning such is still, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people."

Consider the promises applicable to your own particular situation.

You complain of carnality, backwardness, coldness of affection, besetting and indwelling sins defiling your soul, hindering or corrupting your duties, marring your comforts and still drawing your heart from God, or hiding from you the light of His countenance. But the Lord assures you that in time all that you complain of shall be purged away: "I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin" (Isaiah 1:25). "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36:25). Paul complained as you do now: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" But he found comfort at hand, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:24,25).

You complain of unfruitfulness; that your own graces do not grow; that you are not profitable to others; that, instead of glorifying God with your body and spirit, you rather dishonour Him by a barren profession and a useless life; that you are cumbering the ground and only fit to be cut down and cast forth as a withered branch. But O! thou self-accusing mourner, hear the word of the Lord: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" "I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out" (Isaiah 44:3; Zephaniah 3:19). "They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine," for "from me is thy fruit found" (Hosea 14:7,8).

You complain of want of communion with God; that you have lost the cheering fellowship you once enjoyed with Him in His ordinances; you "go forward, but He is not there, and backward, but you cannot perceive Him." You fear that the Lord hath cast you off; that His mercy is gone for ever; that even His promise doth fail for evermore. But hearken, O

thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and what doth He say? “For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; 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 54:6,7,11). “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water” (Isaiah 41:17,18).

You complain of the want of grace and piety in your family or in the church; and you ask with painful longing, when will salvation come to your house? “Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?” (Psalm 85:6). But you may still take to yourself and plead the promise made to the church of old, “I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 44:3,4; 54:13). Behold, and read; hear, and understand; ask, and plead, and be not faithless but believing; and thou shalt yet see the glory of God!

Consider your own past experience.

Recollect how it fared at times with your bodily health when you said with Hezekiah, “I shall go to the gates of the grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years.” Notwithstanding your apprehensions the Lord stretched out His hand and healed you and bade you live, so that you cried out with the same pious king, “What will I say? He hath both spoken unto me and Himself hath done it.” Doth God take care for the body? Doth He take care for the beast of the field which He hath made? And will He not much more care for the soul which He hath redeemed? Will He not heal your spiritual diseases and relieve your pains and make you to sing with the king of Judah, “Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isaiah 38:10,15,17).

Recollect how it fared with your soul when at times your spirit was overwhelmed within you and the water had gone over your soul. Yet then did the Lord visit you. He heard your cry; he brought you up out of a horrible pit out of the miry clay; he set your feet upon a rock and established your goings (Psalm 40:2). Even then when your soul fainted within you, you remembered the Lord, and your prayer came in unto him into his holy temple (Jonah 2:7).

You complain that whereas in former times you had falls and also recoveries, yet now you find little change, but a constant languor and deadness of spirit, even “a perpetual backsliding.” Then your complaint is the same that David uttered long ago, “The enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead; therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me, my heart within me is desolate” (Psalm 143:3,4). But, with David, do you also remember the days of old? Who formerly raised you up and recovered you? Who restored your soul? None else than your gracious Shepherd whose charge you still are. “If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10). As sure as Jesus died and now lives, so surely they who have died with Christ unto sin shall live with Him also. Lazarus was once delivered from the power of death, yet a second time he sunk into the grave. Is it for that reason the less likely that he whom Jesus thus honoured shall have part at last in the resurrection of the just?

Formerly, your heavenly Teacher gave you shorter lessons, now He gives you heavier and longer tasks. He tries your strength, and makes you feel your own weakness that your strength may be in God. For two tedious years Joseph pined in prison, and concluded that his friend, the chief butler, would never remember him more. But his God had not forgotten him, and even then his highest exaltation was near at hand. Even in his confinement Joseph had

one support, that the Lord showed him mercy and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. If the Lord has still given you favour in the sight of some of His own servants and people, esteem it as showing you mercy and as a token for good. Your deliverance from trouble is fast approaching. If your wilderness grow more dreary as you advance, yet you are always drawing nearer its confines, nearer to the water of Jordan. If the river become deeper as you wade through, yet you are assuredly approaching the further bank, the boundary of Canaan, the fields of your rest. The days of your mourning will soon be ended, for “your complete salvation is nearer than when ye first believed;” nearer, by many steps, than it was on the happy “day of your espousals,” when nothing but the voice of gladness and singing was heard in your tabernacle.

2. Suffer me to add a word of admonition. Remember you are yet in the body. You bear about with you a body of sin and of death of which you cannot be wholly freed in this world. While you cannot suppose that you are already perfect and need not expect to become so here yet press on toward perfection. Let not your discouragements hinder your exertions. Let not weeping hinder working. Still sow, though in tears. In due time you shall reap and bring your sheaves rejoicing home. Bear up under your present burdens. You will soon cast off that “vile body,” and it will incumber you no longer. “Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart. Wait, I say, on the Lord” (Psalm 27:14). Remember you are yet in the wilderness. Do not expect that here you can feed daily on the grapes of Eshcol. A rich cluster may at a time be brought to your hand, but it is not the native growth of this barren soil. You may find some “bitter herbs” mixed with your sweetest portion, but they are of a salutary purifying virtue. Bless God for your daily manna, the word, and prayer, and daily ordinary duties, comforts, and opportunities. Use these diligently and thankfully when richer cordials are not given. They will be as honeycomb, sweet to the soul and health to the bones (Proverbs 16:24). Remember you are yet in the midst of the enemies, your warfare is not yet accomplished. Your enemies may have been put to flight, but they are not yet banished from the land. Do not expect the conqueror’s crown while you are but in the heat of the conflict. The time is not yet fully come for putting off your armour, but be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you whithersoever you go (Joshua 1:9). Even now, the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, skilfully and tenderly conducting the process until He shall have purged away thy dross and taken away all thy tin. Jesus, the ever-living Mediator, is even now praying, nay, He hath already prayed and obtained His request that your faith fail not till the combat be ended, till the victory over the “last enemy” be complete, till the crown of life be obtained, till you come to Zion with singing and everlasting joy upon your head, till you obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away.

As to such as desire not the salvation promised in the everlasting covenant, we cannot conclude without addressing to you this affectionate counsel, “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.” “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Amen.

[October 1915]

A Sermon.

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

The Conversion of the Philippian Jailor – Acts 16:23-34.

This chapter of the Acts contains an account of the first fruits of the Apostolic preaching of the Gospel on the continent of Europe. Not that the truth concerning Jesus Christ had not reached any part of this continent before this date. For we read in the second chapter of the Acts, where the day of Pentecost is described, that there were present on that day “strangers of Rome” who came under the influence of the Holy Ghost, and heard the truth as proclaimed by the Apostle Peter. Doubtless, these strangers returned to Rome, one of the principal cities of Europe, and carried the truth of the Gospel with them. Still, we have no record of any public authoritative preaching of the Gospel on the European continent, until we come to the narrative before us. Paul, accompanied by Silas, had set out on his second missionary journey, and had visited various parts of Asia Minor, where he had previously laboured, “confirming the Churches.” It was the intention of these servants of Christ to break new ground in the interior of Asia, but as they tarried at Troas on the western coast, “A vision appeared to Paul in the night. There stood a man of Macedonia who prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us.” This vision, which was evidently of the Lord, led them to cross the Aegean Sea to the Macedonian province of Greece. Here they were divinely guided to the city of Philippi, where was a Roman colony.

The inspired writer gives details in this chapter of two outstanding conversions which took place in Philippi, those of Lydia, a native of Thyatira, and the jailor. Other conversions there manifestly were. The members of the households of these persons were brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and, no doubt, other men and women besides to whom there is no direct allusion. We read in the closing verse of the chapter that Paul and Silas “went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.” Lydia’s house was probably the place where the brethren gathered for fellowship and worship. It is apparent that the Lord’s dealings with Lydia differed somewhat from His dealings with the jailor. He dealt gently with Lydia when He opened her heart to attend unto the things which were spoken of Paul, but He gave a sharp awakening to the jailor. He dealt with him by terrible things in righteousness. Nothing less than an earthquake was sent to arouse him out of the sleep of death. The Lord is sovereign, and in His dispensations towards His people, He acts variously in some particulars, though in the main things He is the same. Lydia and the jailor were both brought as sinners to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as the divine Saviour, “able to save unto the uttermost,” and their faith was similar in its fruits. Both made a public confession of Christ at all costs, and were baptised in His name, and both exhibited the same warm, intense, self-sacrificing love to Christ’s servants and people.

It is our purpose on the present occasion, in dependence upon the Spirit of truth, to consider the interesting account given us of the jailor’s conversion, and in doing so, let us observe: –

- I. – The character of the jailor prior to his conversion;
- II. – The various steps in providence which led to this wonderful change in his case;

III. – His awakening to soul concern, as expressed in action, and in question, “What must I do to be saved?”