

- IV. – The words of Paul and Silas, in answer to his question, which proved instrumental in the change from darkness to light; and  
V. – The evidences the jailor gave that his conversion was genuine.

I. – Let us observe *the character of the jailor before his conversion.*

We are told nothing explicitly about him in this respect, but we may safely gather what manner of man he was from his conduct towards Paul and Silas. These messengers of Christ had been brought before the magistrates of Philippi on the ground that they were disturbers of the peace, teaching customs which were not lawful to be received. They had cast out an evil spirit from a poor damsel who was “possessed with a spirit of divination,” and who was employed as a source of unhallowed gain by certain masters. She no longer possessed the spirit to divine, and so her masters, enraged at the loss, laid hold of Paul and Silas, and accused them before the magistrates. “The multitude rose up together against them,” with the result that the magistrates condemned Paul and Silas to be severely beaten, and then to be cast into prison, “charging the jailor to keep them safely.”

The jailor now makes manifest his character. Having received this charge, he not only “thrust them into the inner prison,” but “made their feet fast in the stocks.” He was determined to add pain to safety. He was of one spirit with the magistrates in their opposition to Paul and Silas, and in action towards them, he was, if anything, more cruel and severe. The jailor therefore shows himself to be a Gentile member of Adam’s fallen race – one of those who were “alienated and enemies in their minds by wicked works.” It is almost certain from what is told us afterwards that he had heard to some extent the truth concerning sin and salvation from the lips of Paul and Silas before they were brought before the magistrates, but he plainly did not like it. He hated the men and their message, and when he now has the opportunity, he will make things as bitter for them as he possibly can. The poor jailor just exhibits the same spirit as is in every fallen creature by nature. “The carnal mind is enmity against God,” and enmity against His law and gospel. And many of those, whom the Lord has called by His grace, hated the truth as intensely as he did, before their conversion, though in providence they were not allowed to show their malice in the same way.

Let us behold, then, here a trophy of the free and sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ. The Most High in the riches of His mercy invades the jail of Philippi, one of Satan’s strongest fortresses in the city, and snatches a brand out of the fire – one of the most unlikely men in the whole town to become, as we believe he did, an eminent follower of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”

II. – Let us now proceed to observe *the various steps in providence, which led to this wonderful change in his case.*

1. The first step I observe is *the spiritual exercises of Paul and Silas* in the prison.

We are informed that “at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them.” It is remarkable to notice the elevation of mind and spirit these servants of Christ had, during the midnight hour in the dark prison, with their feet fast in the painful stocks. Here we see, not defeated soldiers of Jesus Christ, though prisoners for His sake, but spiritual victors over all their enemies. His grace was sufficient to sustain them; His strength was made perfect in their weakness. They were more than conquerors through grace; and thus they were enabled, not only to pray, but to sing praises unto God, and that so loudly that the other prisoners heard them.

Now, I fully believe that when Paul and Silas prayed, they not only raised their earnest petitions to the throne of grace in their own spiritual interests, but in the spiritual interests of others, yea, of their very enemies. Filled as they were with the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and remembering His gracious commands, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you and

persecute you,” they would not fail to pray for the man who had despitefully used them in the prison. Every pang of pain, which came from the stocks, would prompt them to pray that the Lord would have mercy upon his soul, and save him from going down to the pit. We are not expressly told this, but personally I feel convinced of the truth of it. Whether their faith rose to the height of being assured of his coming conversion is a different question, but that he, among others, was the subject of their prayers I think cannot be doubted. This is the wonderful way in which the Lord’s servants, when under the reigning influence of the Holy Ghost, recompense their enemies. They overcome evil with good, and seek the soul’s salvation of those who have injured them.

The Lord makes use of His people’s prayers in all ages as links in the chain of His fulfilled purposes. Prayer is one of His ordinances. He moves His children and servants to pray for blessings on themselves and others, and then answers them, to the praise of His glorious grace.

2. The second step I observe in the movement of Providence in the jailor’s case is *the earthquake*.

We are told that “suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.”

In succession to the prayers and praises of Paul and Silas, the Lord suddenly sent a great earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison, opened the doors of the various wards, loosed the bands of all the prisoners, and awoke the jailor out of sleep. He had fallen asleep at the post of duty, and now he had a stern awakening. Possibly Paul and Silas, and the other prisoners, at the first shock of the earthquake thought that it had come to destroy the prison and all its occupants. But they got a pleasant surprise. No injury was done to any one. The earthquake was a benefactor in disguise. It spoke of deliverance from bondage, and entrance into freedom. “The doors were opened, and everyone’s bands were loosed.” It appeared indeed to shadow forth beforehand the spiritual deliverance of the jailor, who, after he got the foundations of his heathen religion shaken to the very bottom, was ushered into the liberty of the glorious gospel of Christ.

The jailor, however, on his first awaking out of sleep, felt great consternation and thought all was gone. He saw the prison doors open, and immediately concluded that the prisoners had escaped. Knowing the Roman law that criminal negligence on his part in regard to the prisoners involved the penalty of death, he was determined, in the rage of despair, to take the law into his own hand, and drew out his sword with the intention of killing himself. We can see plainly here that this man’s soul was thrown into a terrible commotion. Pride, disappointment, despair took hold of him, and in full possession of his natural faculties, he deliberately resolved to commit the awful crime of self-murder, and thus launch his guilty soul into a lost eternity. For the moment, he is standing on the brink of self-destruction and perdition. But the Lord’s purpose of mercy shall stand, and He interposes to the rescue. This leads me to notice:

3. The third preparatory step towards the conversion of the jailor in *the loving admonition addressed him by Paul* who cried, saying, “Do thyself no harm, for we are all here.”

Possibly some sound emitted by the jailor gave Paul to understand what he was about to do to himself – for the prison was in darkness, and nothing could be seen. The Apostle animated by the spirit of love towards the poor deluded and wretched man in such a perilous position, told him that all the prisoners were safe, and warned him not to do himself any harm.

The voice of Paul was here as the voice of a gracious God to the keeper of the prison. He had imagined that the prisoners had escaped, and that he was exposed to the penalty of death, and he was foolishly about to put an end to his life. And here is the very man, whom he had regarded with hatred as the principal evil-doer and disturber of the peace in Philippi, interposing for his help. Such a loving return for the cruelty that he had already shown towards Paul and his companion was to him something surprising in the extreme, utterly beyond anything that he had come into contact with in heathendom, more like the action of God than of man. At that very moment, I believe he was convinced with supernatural effect that the words of the poor damsel were true, "These men are servants of the most high God, who show unto us the way of salvation." He saw in the light of the little truth already known to him that he was about to do himself eternal harm, and that Paul and Silas were messengers sent of God to tell him of his danger. This is the point at which his soul was spiritually awakened to see his need of salvation. Thus I pass to the next general head.

III. – The jailor's *awakening to soul concern* as expressed in action, and in question, "What must I do to be saved?"

No sooner did he see the imminent danger in which he was of being lost eternally, and recognise that Paul and Silas were God's messengers, able and willing to instruct him in the divine way of escape, than he showed an intense anxiety to come into friendly converse with them. The inspired writer tells us that "he called for a light, sprang in, came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Observe his actions. "He called for a light." The prison was dark and his soul was dark. He earnestly sought for light, and got it. He "sprang in." Before this, he would have wished to be as far as possible from Paul and Silas, but now he desires their company. "Came trembling" – trembling with *fear* as a sinner on the brink of eternal destruction, and trembling with *shame* for the way in which he had dishonoured God and despitefully used His servants. "And fell down before Paul and Silas." What a change of attitude! The men whom a few hours before he could have trampled under his feet, he now almost worships – paying them next to divine honours. "And brought them out." His new regard for them was no mere empty sentiment, it showed itself *in* practical kindness. He would fain make reparation for the injury he had done. Realising that they were God's servants, doing His work, and feeling his responsibility to a greater authority than the magistrates of Philippi, he brings them out, be the temporal consequences what they may.

Observe, now, the great question which he put with tremulous respect to Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" If his actions showed a remarkable change of attitude towards these messengers of Christ, his spoken question makes it perfectly clear what was the great concern that agitated his mind. He is deeply anxious to be "saved." Saved from what? Certainly not from any temporal death or punishment. By bringing out Paul and Silas, he proved that he did not care what punishment the magistrates would inflict upon him. It is plain that he desires to be saved from at least two great evils of infinite moment – from sin and its penal consequence, hell. He feels himself trembling under the load of enormous guilt on the brink of perdition; he has heard that these Jewish teachers were proclaiming a way of salvation from these dreadful evils; and so he entertains a hope that even he may yet be saved, if he only knew what to do to attain this great and desirable end. An intense conflict between strong fear and weak hope proceeds in his breast.

He puts the question, "What must I do?" This question may be viewed in two ways.

First, it may be regarded as an expression of the legal principle that is naturally rooted in the human mind since the beginning. God entered into a covenant of works with man in the estate of innocence, the substance of which was, "Do, and thou shalt live." "Obey the law's precepts and thou shalt obtain eternal life for thyself and thy posterity." Man broke this

covenant by disobedience, and rendered himself incapable of ever gaining eternal life by His works again. But though so fallen, he does not see this, and imagines that he can and must do something by way of merit towards his own salvation. This notion continues in his mind, even after he hears that the salvation of the gospel is entirely salvation by grace, until it is broken by the power of the Spirit of God. We might not wonder though the poor jailor who knew so little would be under its influence.

Or *secondly*, the question may be viewed as simply a confession of general ignorance of what was necessary in order to obtain salvation. And certainly there are soul doings or exercises, whereby a sinner under the influence of the Holy Spirit is brought into vital union with Christ, and saved from sin and hell. Salvation is without doubt a free gift from God through Jesus Christ, but the sinner is not made the subject of it apart from certain vital soul exercises. The jailor was therefore in the right way when he came confessing his ignorance to Paul and Silas, and asking them to instruct him as to the way of salvation.

It would be a great mercy, my friends, if we would see many persons with the same question laid upon their consciences and spirits, and seeking the way of peace with intense concern, even though they should be to some extent under the influence of the legal spirit, or showing great ignorance as to the truth. Many of God's most eminent saints were thus to begin with. Luther is an outstanding example. When burdened with an awakened conscience, he thought he should secure God's favour and eternal salvation by His works and penances, and continued thus a long time, until he was spiritually taught otherwise.

IV. – I now proceed to observe the words of truth, spoken by Paul and Silas, which were made instrumental in the jailor's change from darkness to light. "And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

1. Let us notice that they pointed him to Jesus of Nazareth as the one Saviour. These names, Lord Jesus Christ, speak of the Saviour's person and offices. He is the Christ, the promised deliverer and prophet of the Church; He is Jesus, the priest who saves His people from their sins by the sacrifice of Himself; He is Lord, "God over all, blessed for ever," and the King, whom the Father, in connection with the covenant of grace, has set upon His holy hill of Zion, and made governor over the nations. This glorious person is the one Saviour of that which was lost, and they direct the jailor to this Christ alone for the salvation he so much needs.

2. Let us next observe that they instructed him that it was by faith in this Saviour that he would become personally interested in His salvation – not by any works of merit or righteousness that he could do. Saving faith may be defined as a personal, living, soul reliance upon Jesus Christ as the Divine Redeemer and Almighty Saviour.

Paul and Silas say in effect to the jailor that he must look wholly away from himself or any righteousness or strength of his own, and seek to exercise reliance or trust in this wonderful Person, in order to obtain eternal salvation. Renouncing all hope or help in the creature, he must fall in with God's way of salvation by Christ and rest his soul for an endless eternity upon the divinely provided Saviour. The Lord Jesus had borne the sins of many, satisfied justice, and secured deliverance from eternal death, and entrance into eternal life for lost sinners of the human race, and the only way of salvation was to believe upon His name, and upon no other.

Now, it is further clear that their words of instruction are here presented in the form of an exhortation or command. "Believe" is in the imperative mood. Faith is a duty as well as a grace. They taught the jailor and all others that so far from its being presumption for a sinner – any sinner – to receive and rest upon the Lord Jesus for salvation, that all are under an imperative command from God to do so, and that it is sinful to disobey. Paul and Silas showed the jailor that he was entirely welcome to come to Christ, and to rest upon Him for

eternity. Not that they implied that the jailor or any other has ability of himself to exercise saving faith – faith is the gift of God – but rather that this same Saviour was able to bestow a complete salvation upon a lost sinner. They believed that the Lord who sent them to give the command to sinners to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ was able to make the word effectual to produce the faith required, and they had personal experience that He did so in the case of many souls.

3. I observe in conclusion on this head that they also held out the hope of salvation to the jailor's house as well as to himself. "Thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Not that they meant that his house would be saved, apart from saving grace given to each member of it, but that the Lord was extending special encouragement to believing parents to seek and expect the salvation of their children. The jailor was encouraged to hope that he might be instrumental by faith in Christ, not only in his own salvation, but in the salvation of his family. "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

V. – The fifth and last general point is *the evidences the jailor gave that his conversion was genuine*. He showed his faith by his works. "Faith worketh by love." "He that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

He took the servants of Christ whom he had previously injured "the same hour of the night and washed their stripes." He would fain heal the wounds that had been unjustly and cruelly made in their bodies. He was baptised, and this implied that he made a deliberate confession of faith in Christ, and of willingness to follow Him through good report and evil report at all costs, loss of position, loss of means, or loss of life. To be baptised nowadays may involve no self-sacrifice whatever, but things were different in the Apostolic age. As he had opened his heart to Christ and His servants, so he also opened his house. He set meat before them. "I was hungry and ye gave me meat." And finally we are told that he "*rejoiced*, believing in God with all his house." There was nothing of an outward kind that was fitted to give him joy. His future prospects as to earthly comfort were dark and unpromising. It was no outward gain of any kind to him to identify himself with the persecuted followers of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. His faith was heaven-born and was taken up with heavenly objects. He rejoiced in the great salvation he had obtained – in the good hope through grace of eternal life. He rejoiced in God his Saviour. This joy of his bore testimony to the divine and heavenly reality of his faith, and the wonderful passage from darkness to light and death to life that had taken place in his history.

Finally, let me press the importance upon you, my hearers, who are still far from God, of concern as to your soul's salvation. Time is short. Eternity is near. If you die out of Christ, there is nothing before you but a fearful looking for of judgment, the worm that dieth not, and the fire that shall not be quenched. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Your only hope is to flee to Christ, the one almighty and all-sufficient Saviour, and in dependence upon His grace, seek to believe upon Him who is able to save unto the uttermost. "None perish that Him trust." May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, constrain and enable sinners to believe upon the Son of God, who is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 4:9).

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## Notes of a Sermon.

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

The Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, says, “Ye have need that one teach you again what be the first principles of the oracles of God”; and, alas, that it should be so, the same thing is true concerning us. We have not yet learned these principles as we ought. We have indeed to go on to perfection, but this in the way of return to our first lessons in order that we may learn them better. No truth, you will say, can be more plain than that contained in our text, and it is most true. No truth is more important to us to rest upon, in order to our reaching the stature of perfect men, in Christ Jesus, than this very truth, that Jehovah is God.

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

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

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

The universal frame of things is neither in quietness nor in agitation finally for its own sake. The universe of created things is not all that exists. Beyond this mighty sphere, beyond the solar system, and beyond the whole planetary systems extending through the void of space; beyond astronomers’ conceptions as well as calculations; beyond these immaterial existences of minds — themselves created — remains the throne of the eternal God. And the whole mighty congeries of created worlds, of created systems, as well as all the affairs of this planet with its one sun, are moving on under the control of that intelligent Mind which gives being to all, and which upholds all, and which directs all, to an end worthy of these mighty effects which are produced; I mean, to the putting forth of a manifestation of His eternal excellency, showing that He is God. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night

showeth knowledge.” And if comeliness and order be diffused through the works of God, it is then that we may trace the operations of Him who maketh peace in His high places; and if agitation and confusion and turmoil prevail in any part of His dominions, it is for the purpose of directing our minds to that glorious high throne from the beginning which is the place of His people’s sanctuary, into which nought of turmoil can penetrate, and against which, though the waves of created agitation toss themselves, they cannot prevail, but like the sea’s waves breaking against the foot of some projecting rock, just dash themselves in vain.

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

“Be still, be still.” Perhaps thou art in great troubles and in deep waters. Raging and commotion will not mend the matter. Thou mayest fret against the framework of society, civil and ecclesiastical. Thou mayest think that an alteration of external things would mend the case, but it will not. Thou mayest think that taking pains will mend the matter, but it will not. Nothing but internal goodness. By all thy painstaking thou canst not reach the evil; it is within. And while all within is evil, nothing external can rectify it. We are then called to the stillness, in the first place, which self-despair and which creature-despair inspire. There is an activity which will be exerted as long as a sinner, feeling consciousness of sin and misery, thinketh that there is ought within or without him to mend it; but when it is made a certainty that there is nought either within or without him to mend the matter, such a discovery is fitted and likely to inspire stillness. He feels despair, not absolute but universal, of all around him or within him. He is “still.” He is shut up from all false hopes, except that which the knowledge of Jehovah being God can inspire. It is of no use then to rage and fret yourself; you can help yourself not one iota. The world may turn any way you please. If you were to

get the scheme of things you desire you would be as bad still. You would be as poor and miserable and blind and naked as before. Therefore, "Be still." Know for certain that we are ruined, absolutely ruined, creatures; that sin has brought, not simple disorganisation, but perdition into our universe, perdition into our souls, perdition into all our services. No alteration of things can mend this. Be still and know that true good is not in the universe. You may say, "Not in the universe as things in the universe are now." It is not in the universe of created things. Might things be as you pleased, no constitution of created nature could give true felicity to an immortal soul. What, then, are you called to do in this stillness? To know that Jehovah is God; to know that the created universe is not all that exists – that there is something else than all that ever was made, than all that rolls through the ages; to know that there is a self-existing King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, who alone hath immortality, dwelling in that light which is unsearchable and full of glory – a God who existed when there was no sun, no moon, no stars, no earth nor ocean, no mountains, nor fountains abounding with water; that there is an eternal God who is above them all – an eternal God who would continue to be, were all things swept away into their original nothingness; a God having self-existence, having infinite perfection; Jehovah, I am that I am; and I am, because I am the God that hath life in Himself.

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

Let us view this in several instances. What art thou agitated with? Be it what it may, "Be still, and know that I am God." And when thou hast known this, thou hast known all thou needest to know. Art thou agitated with this – "I am without God?" Some who reach glory are agitated with it. "I know not for certain if there be a God. Oh, that there were a God! Oh, that there were such a God as the Bible speaks of!" Be still, and know that Jehovah is God. Art thou plagued and tormented with Atheism? Even though thou art so befooled as to say, "There is no God," yet dost thou wish there were? There is the whole Bible heaping proof upon proof and demonstration upon demonstration that there is, and to assure thee that every excellence which created nature can conceive, and every excellence which created nature cannot conceive, reside in Him who is over all, God blessed for ever. Wilt not thou, to whom Atheism of heart is a complaint, be comforted to know that there is a God? Art thou going to weep and break thy soul in secret places as if there were none? Stop, stop before thou yield to this view of nature's wide range! View thy conscience and moral law feeble fragments within. View the Holy Scriptures. View Mount Sinai's perfect moral law. View the Son of God magnifying and making it honourable. View the whole system of God's revelation of



Himself in creation, in providence, and in grace. See him giving the Son of His love, and if thou canst with undazzled eyes behold this, see Him clothing the grass, and behold that it is true that there is a King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God. But if thy complaint is – “I know that there is a God, but things go so contrary to apparent moral right that I cannot comprehend how this should be consistent with the government of an eternal God; and as for me, like Asaph, my steps are nearly gone, and I am grieved because of the prosperity of the ungodly, for they are not plagued as other men, nor tried as others are. Believing that there is a God and seeking to serve Him, I daily and all day am harassed, while I see those who care not for Him rejoicing, God bringing to their hand abundantly; and I say, Can there be knowledge in the Highest?” “Be still, and know that Jehovah is God.” His moral government has a vaster aim than our puny minds can fathom. It takes in a wide system, all particulars of which are ever present to an omniscient intellect, to be finally adjusted in a day which God hath appointed, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He raised His Son from the dead. Then shall it be seen out and out that Christ loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity; that the moral administration of the world is according to His law; that holy cause is even promoted and encouraged; and that the whole might of Godhead is opposed to iniquity.

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

But I must add farther, that were it not for something else which that Book declares, I could scarcely believe the Book which says that. There I find written not only that “God justifieth the ungodly,” but that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I could scarcely believe there was forgiveness with Him that He might be feared (for sin is an infinite evil),

did I not believe that with Him there is plenteous redemption. But be still and know that Jehovah is God – a just God, a Saviour; just while He justifieth the ungodly, else you might think it was a lie and a fancy that He doth so, and a thing the ministers have got hold of to cheat you with. But don't look only at God's forgiving sin, but also at His punishing sin. That is credible. Now, if this is credible, that God should bruise His innocent Son, standing in the law-room of the guilty, then it is credible that God should justify. If He condemned and made His own blessed Son a curse – if the law, which we have violated by the commission of infinite evil and sin against God, hath been made glorious by the Son of God obeying it and enduring its infinite curse – then it is credible. And then, although a sinner, yet, by the grace of His Holy Spirit, I will listen with faith to the word which says, "Be still, and know that I am God" – God that justifieth the ungodly; God that giveth redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

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

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

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

is on high, is mightier than the noise of many waters.” If the mountains shake, and so tumble into the sea, let us say that “it is only a mountain.” No doubt it would crush us, but it is only a mountain; there is a stronger and a greater than the mountain; yea, and if the earth shake and be removed, it is only the world going to pieces. The throne of the eternal God still stands. And then there are the capabilities of rebuilding if God sees good to rebuild; yea, the capabilities, when the heavens and earth are dissolved, and the elements melt away with fervent heat, to rebuild a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

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

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

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

Having laid before you these few imperfect hints, may the Lord guide us in this exercise into calm, tranquil, believing reflections on the perfections of God as they are displayed in all His dealings, and in all His works of Providence, especially as they are unfolded in His

eternal redemption of His Church through the Son of His Love, and in the fulfilment of all these promises of God to His Church, which He hath engaged for to His Messiah as the reward of His obedience. May the Lord grant that in this way we may each be led to experience the blessedness of the man whom God keepeth in perfect peace because His heart is stayed upon Him; and may the Lord teach us all that diligence which is the result of being still, and of knowing that Jehovah is God, the only wise God, to whose name through Christ be all praise!

[December 1915]

## Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. GEORGE MACKAY, D.D., Inverness,  
on 6th June, 1886.

[A friend has sent us some Sermons, or Notes of Sermons, by the late worthy Dr. Mackay of Inverness, who died in 1886. We print the above short discourse this month, which was the last Dr. Mackay preached before his decease. – ED.]

“Pray without ceasing” – 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

There are many exhortations in the chapter which we have just read. I notice, my friends, in the verse under consideration a solemn exhortation given to every man and woman to be engaged in prayer. A praying congregation is a congregation which will prosper; a praying family is a family which will be blessed of God; a praying man is a true Christian. And hence we find again and again impressed upon us in the sacred Scriptures to pray without ceasing. Let the pulse once stop, and it is a sure sign that the man is dead; and hence we must be praying to be united to Christ for the life that will never end. “I give eternal life unto my sheep, and they shall never perish.” Their life is hid with Christ in God, and it continues because it is a spiritual life.

I purpose to make a few observations on the words under consideration: "Pray without ceasing." Now, there are different ways of preaching and teaching. I may mention that it was told to me – not to their credit – that there are some young men in my congregation who are not fond of doctrinal preaching. I do not think that there is an enlightened Christian but has a relish for doctrinal preaching. There cannot be such a thing as an enlightened man or woman but has a relish for doctrinal preaching. Experimental preaching is the dealings of God with the soul, and you must make the doctrinal preaching to bear upon the experimental preaching; for the one is united to the other. By experimental preaching or teaching you feel how the Spirit of God works upon yourself. My friends, there is another form of doctrine of importance, namely, practical doctrine. I put this along with the others. I do not like to hear so much about intellectual preaching: this is the high-toned words which show the ability of the man. Experimental preaching is much to be preferred to such. And, again, there is nothing more edifying than the doctrinal teaching of our Catechisms.

The apostle here says, "Pray without ceasing." And the question I first put is this: "What are we to pray for?" We must know what we are to pray for. It is faith that teacheth savingly. We must pray for forgiveness of sins, for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. We must also pray to be united to Christ. But another question which follows here is this: "What kind of prayer should it be? What prayer is here recommended?" Now, my friends, you will observe this is a most important question. The kind of prayer here recommended is a humble prayer: it must come in the exercise of humility. It is a grand thing to see a humble Christian like the centurion: "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." You will notice, again, that the prayer here recommended is a believing prayer. Hence they who "come to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" There are some, and their prayer is so cold; not like the prayer of Jacob of old – "I will not let thee go until thou bless me." And depend upon it, if there is an earnest request to God, one feels his necessity of it. It is also a prayer in which there is perseverance. You must persevere in prayer. But, my friends, we often forget that we must persevere until God answers our prayer. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me." We must plead His own promise, and follow the example of Him who was sometimes all night in prayer. We should walk in His steps. My friends, we must have a spiritual prayer. There are some who have a string of words, and you will get tired of them. The lips are speaking words, but the heart is far from God. Beware of this stumbling-block. Our prayers sometimes should be short, especially in public. When you go to your closet be as long as you like, and pray as spiritually as you can; but when praying in public, be short, for there perhaps you are not always speaking the desires of them that hear you.

I notice that there may be several reasons why God may not answer the prayers of His people at once. Perhaps He may see that you are very formal, and not dealing with Him as spiritually as you might be; and then do you think that God will answer a prayer like that? When you are indifferent, He rebukes you, for you are not praying as you ought. Perhaps He sees that you rest more upon the prayer than upon Himself, for there are many in the world who rest more upon the prayer than upon Himself. There are many, I say, there are many, who have a pope for themselves; they rest upon their prayers. Now, what we mean by the sovereignty of God in answering prayer is, that He takes His own way in answering prayer. He answers some, and does not answer others; just according as he sees best in their circumstances. He answered Paul, and He answered Silas. I am sure that if the three children who were cast into the furnace got their prayer answered before they were cast in, the glory of God would not be so much manifested. I notice, my friends, that God delays the answering of His people's prayers to try them. I have seen beggars at the door, and you could

distinguish between those who were necessitous, and those who were not. We must have ourselves tried as to the love which we have to God. If you truly love God, there is an earnestness which is not easily removed. A child is very impatient. Suppose he was in the garden, and said, "Papa, or mamma, give me some of that fruit." His papa would not give it to him, for the reason that it would not be good for him. We must wait God's time, for He knows what is for our benefit better than we. And hence I see another reason why God delays answering your prayer, and that is: if the delay is long, the sweeter it is when fulfilled. I do not know if you understand this. When God delays the answering of prayer, the fulfilment is sweeter. I hope, my friends, you are attending to the different points. What is the Christian going to do when his prayers are not answered? He is just to persevere. I remember of a woman going to the Rev. Mr. Cook, Reay, and telling him the great temptation that she had, and that she did not find the Bible of any use to her. He did not make a long speech; but what do you think he said? "Oh, woman, you do not find the Bible of any use to you! Put it away from you, and give up your praying." "Oh," she said, "I could never do that." Be persevering in the use of all the means. Why must we pray without ceasing? Our wants are without ceasing. We must therefore be praying without ceasing, and be in the element of prayer. Never cease from prayer until you get within the threshold of heaven. May God bless His own Word!

[December 1915]

## A Sermon.

By the REV. NEIL CAMERON, St. Jude's, Glasgow.

*(Taken down by a Hearer.)*

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" – Matthew 28:18.

Let us consider for a short time, as we may be enabled, a passage of God's Word which you will find in the chapter read – the Gospel according to Matthew, twenty-eighth chapter, and at the eighteenth verse: – "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

We have in the Gospels a history of Christ during the days of His humiliation in the world. We have an account given of His birth and of the place where He was born, and of a considerable number of the things that happened to Him and in which He had a direct hand during thirty-three years in the world. We have also an account given in the Gospels of how

men dealt with Christ. Even His very enemies had to confess that “never man spake like this man,” and they had to confess also that He had done all things well when He made the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. And notwithstanding of all this, they took Him and, by wicked hands, put Him to death and brought Him to the grave. In this chapter it is recorded that He rose from the grave. He rose by His own power from the dead and out of the grave, and we have here interviews which He had, first with the women who followed Him, and afterwards with His apostles, and we have an account given here of His last charge to His disciples and of His ascension into heaven.

In the verses which we have read we shall notice three things in particular: –

I. – The power which Christ declares here is given unto Him: “All power in heaven and in earth.”

II. – The duty which He committed to these men, and that duty they were to attend unto in the world: “Go ye, therefore” – that is, because all power in heaven and in earth is given unto Me – “and teach all nations,” etc. That was their duty.

III. – The promise which He gives: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”, – not only during the apostolic age but until the end of the world.

I. – We shall notice, first, a few things in connection with this power which is given to Christ and of which He speaks here.

The first thing we have to notice concerning this power is that, as He was God – the eternal Son of God – He required no power. He was the glory of the Father, the express image of His person, and He was upholding all things by the word of His power, that is, as God. Even when He appeared in the world in human nature as a “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” “God manifest in the flesh,” the whole universe hung upon His power even at that time.

But we shall notice, in the second place, that when He speaks here of power given or delegated to Him, He speaks of the power that He received as the Mediator between God and guilty men; that is, as He now appeared in the world as the Saviour, the second Man who is the Lord from heaven, and the last Adam. This power was given to Him as the God-man, and He says first here that *all power in heaven* was given to Him.

Now we shall notice, in connection with this, a few things as to what we know from the Scriptures; and we know absolutely nothing, my friends, about these things that are unseen and eternal but as we know them in the Scriptures. Take away the Word of God from men, and you make them just as dark as to eternal and invisible things as the heathen. They may have speculations, but they shall have nothing but mere speculations. But in this Word we know what these things are.

And the first thing we have to notice in connection with “all power in heaven” is this – it belongs unto God not only to create the whole of rational creatures, but it belongs to Him also to provide for His creatures, and this power was given to Christ Jesus, as it was true in the case of Joseph in Egypt, taking that as an illustration. Pharaoh said, “I am Pharaoh,” and in all other things in Egypt, except that Pharaoh was on the throne, Joseph had all power and authority put into his hand. That is an illustration of Christ as the Mediator. The Father gave over to His own Son in human nature all power in heaven to rule. As He says Himself, “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.” The Father, as it were, put all power into the hands of Christ: in heaven in this way, that He should rule over all rational and irrational creatures, and also that He should have the elements of the material universe under His control.

The second thing which we desire to notice in connection with these powers “in heaven,” as it is revealed to us in this Book, is this – God the Father, in the covenant of grace, the covenant of salvation, or the covenant of peace, made over to Christ gifts which were to be bestowed upon men, and one of these gifts, which certainly is in heaven, was the Holy Ghost. God, the third person, was given unto Christ, the Mediator, in order that He might be upon Himself as the spirit of wisdom and of understanding and of knowledge and of might and of the fear of Jehovah in working out salvation for perishing men, but He was given to Him also to apply to lost men the salvation which He purchased for them by His obedience unto death. Consequently, Christ said to His disciples before He left them, “It is expedient for you” – or as the word might be translated – “It is profitable for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you, and when he is come he will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.” This, my friends, is put into the hands of Christ – the Holy Ghost, in all the fulness of His person – and power to apply the redemption which He purchased by His own obedience unto death, to all whom God the Father gave unto Him, before the foundation of the world, to be saved by Him.

But we read of another power in heaven, and that is the power of angels. Angels, my friends, are mighty beings, powerful beings. One angel did not think it too heavy a work for him to be charged with the destruction of the whole Assyrian army in one night. We are told that God sent forth an angel who slew one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians, and when they arose early in the morning, they were all dead men. Was not that power? Well, they are all given to Christ. You read that He said to Peter and to the other Apostles that if He were to pray the Father He would give Him twelve legions of angels. All these principalities and powers and mights and dominions that are in heaven are given to Christ and are all under His command.

The last thing I desire to notice about this first part of the power that was given to Christ is this: – God has given to His own Son power to open the door of heaven to the guiltiest of the children of men. He hath given Him power to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, however lost and guilty and ruined they may be. Christ has all power to forgive sin to the sinner who will return to Him confessing his sins, and the sinner does not need a Virgin Mary or a Saint to come between him and Christ. He invites him to come to Himself directly, as He says, “Come unto *me*, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” and you need not, my friend, be afraid that there is any power in heaven that will stand against you the day you return to God, repenting of your sins. All power in heaven is absolutely in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Mediator and as the Saviour whom God sets forth before perishing men in the gospel.

Now, we shall notice again that Christ not only says that all power in heaven but also that “all power in earth is given unto Him,” but time will not allow us to enter into these things very minutely. We know of powers among men, kings and lords, but Christ, my friends, is King of kings and Lord of lords. You see God the Father gave Christ all power on earth, and the kings of the world are but His vassals, His subjects, as well as the crofters in the Highlands. Christ has no respect of persons, and He will yet show that the soul of the beggar who comes to your door for a piece of bread is just of as much value in His eyes as the soul of a king or an emperor. You would think to-day, if you knew nothing but what you see and hear among men, even when the power of Christ is so manifest, that there was no such power in existence as the power of the Son of God. No. You hear and read about men, the bravery of men. Well, we do not despise bravery – quite the reverse – but we would like, my friends, that we had the least modicum of common sense as a



nation to acknowledge the Son of God, whom God set up as His King upon His holy hill of Sion, and concerning whom He gives a charge to kings as well as to subjects. "Now, therefore," He says, "kings, be wise: be taught, ye judges of the earth." These are visible kings, or as Samuel Rutherford used to call them, "kings of clay," but there is an invisible King, a King who is at the right hand of God in the heavens, and His authority is more stable and real than the authority of visible kings. It is impossible to overturn His throne, for God says, and He speaks about Him as Mediator: – "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," so that all power among men is absolutely in the hands of Christ.

The second thing I desire to notice in connection with the powers upon earth is this. You see, my friends, there are mighty powers working in this world, and Christ reveals that He has full control, absolute control, of men that He may do with them as He sees proper, and He has also absolute control over the irrational creatures and over the elements of this creation, and He revealed this. He revealed, my friends, that He had absolute power in this world over the mightiest power known to us in it, and that is the power of death. He only had to say to the dead daughter of Jairus, "Talitha cumi," that is to say, "Damsel, arise," and she immediately arose. He had only to touch the bier of the young man of Nain, and he sat up immediately. He only had to say to Lazarus, who was stinking in the grave, "Lazarus, come forth," and death could not resist His command for one moment. He pointed out that as the Father hath power to quicken the dead, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will, and He did it. We are not considering as we should the miracles of Christ, or else we would see that His miracles proved that He was God, for who could call the dead back into life again but God? Christ did that. You will notice also that He had power over evil spirits, not only over one or two, but He could command a legion to come out of a man and immediately they did it, and not only was it true that He had power to make them come out of the man but they confessed themselves that He had power to torment them, to send them down to the pit. He has absolute power over the devil and over all his angels, and this is part of the power which is given to Christ. You will notice again that He had power over the elements. When men thought in the storm that they were drowning, the ship being full of water – and these men, remember, were not at all landward men, but fishermen who knew very well what they said when they cried, "Master, we perish" – Christ just arose and rebuked the wind and immediately the wind ceased, and rebuked the waves, and the face of the waters was as smooth in an instant as the face of a mirror, and all who know anything about the sea know that, supposing a storm were to cease, the waves will continue for hours, sometimes for days. But you see Christ by His power, the power He had on earth, could command the storms and they ceased at once; He could command the waves and they obeyed Him immediately, for this was the Creator of both wind and waves. This was the voice that brought them into existence, and He could well command them, for He had power over them all. I desire to notice also that Christ has all power over the irrational creatures, and He could make the most abject of them, such as flies, a terrible scourge to men. You remember how He plagued the Egyptians by frogs, lice, flies, etc. Christ has power even over the lice, although our men in the trenches do not realise it. You may think that uncouth language here, but it is scriptural language. He has power over locusts; He has power over flies; He has power over frogs. "All power on earth is given unto Him."

Now, I desire to notice in the third place before leaving this head, why it was that He made this declaration that He had all power in heaven and all power in earth given unto Him. Well, it was on this account – the disciples knew perfectly well how the world dealt with the Son of God Himself when He appeared among them, and they might really conclude “What is the use of our making an effort to go forth to preach the gospel to men who slew the Prince of Life?” but he shows them here that they had no need to fear. They had no cause of fear from Satan or his angels, from kings or lords, or the elements or anything in the world, and that because all this power was put into His hands. It was true that in the night the children of Israel left Egypt not even a dog barked, and you know perfectly well when a concourse of people is moving in the night on streets or country roads, what a noise the dogs will make, and no wonder! But here you have 600,000 men, who were capable of bearing arms, along with women and children and all their cattle and everything belonging to them, marching through the land, and to show the control which the Son of God has over creatures, there is not a bark in the land of Egypt, and if He should like to order it, there should not be a dog in the world that could bark at any of His people. No man or woman or any of the irrational creatures could do you any harm. We must confess that in thinking over this very text, we have changed our mind exceedingly about how men may deal with their fellow-men in the world, and that we ought in everything to look to Christ, for this power is in His hand and they could do nothing unless He gave them permission to do it. You see that when David had to flee from his own unnatural son, Absalom, and Shimei the Benjamite cursed him and threw earth and stones at him, David said, “God commanded him to curse David.” Shimei was, in his judgment, God’s messenger sent to him, and that in order that he might derive some benefit from this. Well, Christ made this declaration to His disciples, and it is written to this day in order that those who go forth with the gospel might have this before their minds: – “My Master has got all power in heaven, and He has got all power on earth, and nothing can happen to me but as He wills it.” No! and if He wills that you should have bitter cups to drink in the world, what are we? What do we know what is good for ourselves? We like always to get something sweet. Well, sweet things are generally not healthy, but God gives bitter cups to His people in the world in order that they may be more healthy spiritually, and it is not because He has no power to bring kings and lords under control, evil spirits under control, all the elements in the world, and irrational creatures under control. He has nothing to do but to rebuke them, and they shall stop at once. You see, in Egypt, whenever He wanted the locusts to go, they were off before the morning; flies were the same; thunder and lightning the same.

II. – Let us notice a few things under the second head which we mentioned, namely, the duty which Christ laid upon these men, and upon all their successors till the end of the world. He says here their duty is to teach all nations. “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.” It is necessary, my friends, that we should have the authority of the Son of God to go forth into the world to teach perishing men His truth. It is an easy matter for a man to run, but if God did not send the man, where is his authority? Satan can laugh at him and he will only turn out to be his servant, but when He says here, “Go ye, therefore,” this is their commission from His mouth, and men to this day are receiving their commission to go from the mouth of Christ. He said concerning His Apostles, “He that receiveth you receiveth me, and He that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me.” You see there is a very close connection between the sending of Christ by the Father and the sending by Christ of men to teach all nations. I read once about the king of Abyssinia, that he had some British subjects in prison being very badly treated. The governor or consul we had at that time in Egypt appealed to the king of Abyssinia to let these men go, and he did this with instructions from the Foreign Office at home, but the king never let on as much as that he got his letter. Queen Victoria, however, wrote a letter with her own hand to the king of Abyssinia that she was bound to look after her

subjects, and that if he would not let them go, she would have to send an army to deliver these men, and the prison door was opened immediately and they were out. So those whom God sends and to whom He says, "Go ye," He goes with them, and the world and the devil will know that there is a power with them which they can neither resist or overthrow, however much they may hate it. Now, I am only mentioning that as to the commission here, but let us notice, as to their duty. What really was it now that they were to do when they would go forth to teach all nations? What were they to teach them? Was it the speculations of the brains of men who might call themselves learned men? No! but you will notice, although I am not going into this subject, that thousands went out in this country in the name of Christ to teach, not what He commanded them, but what they learned from Germans, what they learned from the enemies of Christ – from men who now show really and truly before the whole world what they are, and they filled this land with lies concerning God's Book, concerning the doctrines of that Word, and they filled the minds of men with heresies. You know very well – such of you as know anything about country life – that whatever may come of the good seed of oats, of barley, of wheat, which you sow in your field, if you sow dockings in it, you may rest assured not one seed of it will die, and that is the way with heresies. Human nature is suitable ground for such doctrines, and they have brought forth such fruit in this land that we cannot see, my friends, how we could benefit by anything without repentance, and it matters little how bountifully God may deal with us in His providence, how He may deal with us as a nation in removing the scourge that is upon us – if we turn not from our sins, our national sins, our individual sins, we are gone, and, as I said already, profanity has gone forth into all the land from the prophets of Jerusalem. If you trace up where all these things took root, you can trace them up to treacherous and profane prophets. "Her prophets are light and treacherous persons," as you will find the prophet Zephaniah had to say in his day. Now, I am only speaking this before I come to say something about the fulfilment by His servants of the command of Christ, when He says: – "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." You see if He left it at that, men might turn round and say, "He has given us a wide field. We may teach what we like. He has laid down no rule." But you find the rule laid down here when He says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It would be a very strong statement should He have said, "all things that I have commanded you," but this is much stronger, "all things whatsoever." Men may say, "This is a small thing; there is no use in the world making a row about this thing," but is it one of the "whatsoever's"? Is it included there? "Well, if it is, I am bound," the servant of Christ says, "to teach that, if Christ commanded it." If men were looking to their Bibles more carefully and seeing what they are bound to teach as servants of Christ, they would see that they are not their own masters, and that they are bound not to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, at the hazard of their eternal damnation and the loss of other men's souls also; they are bound in their infirmity to teach, not the things which will suit the generation in which they live, but whatsoever Christ commanded, let men hear them or let them forbear. That is not their responsibility; but they are bound to teach whatsoever Christ commanded to be taught. It used to be the habit of men in this country who were teaching divinity students the doctrines of the Bible, to set before them models in the way of sermons and lectures, in accordance with which they were to frame their own discourses. And you find that Christ left models in His Word for those whom He sent, in order that they might consider them and see what were the doctrines that He taught, and how He dealt with sinners and also with His people in His preaching. I am under the impression that the man who will study closely the discourses which Christ has given, and also His apostles, and who will endeavour to keep as closely as he can to the example that is set before him, may expect to be as successful in the world as any other.

I desire to point out here that the first thing which we have on record that Christ taught to His hearers is this, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He begins at repentance, and remember, my friends, that everyone whom Christ sends and commissions to go, He makes him first realise in his own soul that there must be repentance and a forsaking of sin, not only in the conduct but in the heart also; and He sends him forth to teach to others not what he learned from his fellows but what he learned by experience from the Spirit of God. You cannot find one servant of Christ – take the prophets, take the apostles, take all the orthodox fathers down from the time of the apostles, who have left anything on record in the way of doctrine; take godly ministers even in the generation that is past, and from among others I would point out the late Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall and Mr. M'Coll of Lochalsh, – who did not call upon his fellow-sinners everywhere to repent, to forsake their evil ways and their thoughts, and to return to the Lord, and that He would have mercy upon them; and they declared with emphasis to all men that except they repented – whatever they might have – they should certainly perish. You have done nothing, friend – you have not begun to learn the alphabet of Christianity – if you have not repented, and so far as the Gospel is concerned, you derived no benefit from it. Supposing you have been taught it, and that even by a Christ-sent messenger, if sin has not begun to prick you at your heart and to cause you to realise your need of coming out of the world – the godless world, the vain world – and to be separate from them, you have derived no benefit. No. For this is the first thing that Christ taught His hearers. John the Baptist taught the same thing. Peter taught the same thing on the day of Pentecost. Paul, all the apostles, and all His servants from that day till now, call upon their fellow-sinners to turn to God from wicked works; and they do it, not at all by their own authority or believing that men are able to cease from sin when they like themselves, but they do it, my friends, by the authority of Christ, who has all power in heaven and in earth. But you say, "I cannot repent." No; that is true. But you know, friend, that Christ is at the right hand of God, a Prince and Saviour, for this very purpose – to give repentance – and He says to you, "Son, give me thine heart." Go with your heart as it is – a desperately wicked heart, which is full of unbelief – and give it to Christ, and He promises to take the heart of stone out of your flesh and to give you a heart of flesh and to put His precepts in your heart and mind. Men have been crying out, "Preach the Gospel; never mind the law." And, indeed, the fruits of their labour show clearly that the hands of Moses were not kept up, or else the Amalekites would not have gained the victory in the valley. But God forbid, my friends, that the day should come upon Scotland in which there would not be men in it who would warn their fellow-sinners of the evil of sin and of their need of forsaking it and of turning to God, and who would assure their fellow-countrymen that God is merciful and that He is gracious, and that He will certainly forgive sin to the sinner who confesses and forsakes his sin; and that, however hard the heart of man is, Christ can take away the hardness, and however impenitent, He can give him repentance – "godly sorrow for sin, not to be repented of." If you feel that you need repentance, go to Christ, ruined as you are, for "he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It is not better men or men in a fitter condition than you that the Son of God came to seek and to save, but just the lost, and He invites you to come to Him – lost and guilty and corrupt – and put the whole work into His hands, and He will begin by giving you repentance, that you may begin to smite, not upon God or your neighbour, but upon your own breast for your sins. But that is not all.

It is a great thing for a poor sinner to hear that God is inviting him to turn from his evil ways and that He will have mercy upon him. That is a very great part of the gospel, great news for guilty men, but, remember that there is more than this, and what is it? It is, that man must be changed as to his nature. How did Christ preach the gospel to Nicodemus? That brings before my mind a letter which I received from a God-fearing man in the 7th Seaforth from the trenches in France, and he said that

there is not one word heard there of the doctrine which Christ, the Son of God, preached to Nicodemus. No! And that is, that man must be born again. It is not, my friends, a patching up of the old man. That is man's religion; that is man's way of salvation, but God's way of salvation is this: – He makes the man a new creature. He creates a clean heart, a right spirit, and it is in this clean heart and right spirit that repentance works, not in the old man, in the old nature. He will never put a finger to that to make it better, but He causes, through His Word and Spirit, such a change in the man, in his heart and mind, as that He Himself calls him "a new creature."

But you notice also that Christ sets before Nicodemus 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 eternal life," and the serpent in the wilderness was God's remedy for perishing men. We are told that none who obeyed God's command and looked to it in order that he might live, died. And such is Christ in the gospel. He is lifted up in the gospel, crucified, as God's remedy for you, a guilty and lost sinner who will certainly die eternally, and that in order that you might look to Him and put all your hope and confidence in Him alone. As sure then as the servants of Christ have to preach repentance towards God, they have to preach faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith is the gift of God. It is the eye which the soul receives to see Christ, and the hand to lay hold on Him and to appropriate Him as its own. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." And faith, you see, is a thing that rests upon warrant, rests upon the promises of God and receives them as absolutely true. Many, many a sinner went to eternity rejoicing in such a promise as this: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy sins, and thy transgressions and iniquities will I remember no more." When the Spirit of God speaks thus to the sinner, He enables the sinner to believe "He means me; that is spoken to me, and I believe it." Now, as they had to preach that all men are lost by nature, on the way to eternal ruin, and have need of turning from their evil ways unto God by repentance, so they have to set Christ before sinners as the one way, the only way to the Father, and that by faith in Him; by receiving Him as their own personal Saviour, turning to Him with their whole heart and soul and mind and closing in with Him as their own Saviour for time and for an endless eternity, they shall be saved.

The third thing I desire to notice in connection with the things they have to teach is this. They have to teach that all who repent and believe in Christ ought to show that they have really undergone this change by their holy walk and conversation in the world. See, if men in the generation that is passing along with ourselves – I am not speaking just now about the generation that are only boys and girls going to school, but the generation that are men and women – if they had not become idiots, they could not believe that men had repented and believed in Christ and yet that these men could bring the vain song into the house of God. It was enough for a madman to think or to believe that such a thing could be done by a man who was born of the Spirit of God, but such is the case. But God says that "holiness becometh His House" and He calls it "a house of prayer unto all people," although men before and men in this generation made it a den of thieves. Now, holiness is to be stamped upon everything, on our walk, on all our practice in the world, on our words, and, if it is not seen, you have no right to conclude that it is a good tree which brings forth bad fruit; but you are not to judge the disconsolate soul by his own low opinion of himself. There was a man in the North who said, when called to speak to "the question," that although speaking of the marks of a saving work in the soul, yet he could give his oath that he had not a spark of grace in his own soul. When Alexander Gair was called after him, he said that he believed there was not

one of the brethren of Joseph who would be more ready than Benjamin to give his oath that Joseph's silver cup was not in his sack, but yet it was found in Benjamin's sack. So if you see by his or her fruit that the fruit is unto holiness, you have good ground to believe that that is a good tree, although the sinner would say, "I am the worst tree." That matters nothing. It is not by the profession of a sinner you are to judge, but by the fruit he or she bears.

Now, I desire to notice this other thing. You see, when He says, "Teaching them all things whatsoever I have commanded you," He brings in not only doctrine – the doctrine of the fall of man, the doctrine of regeneration by the Spirit, the doctrine of repentance towards God, the doctrine of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the doctrine of justification, the doctrine of sanctification which must show itself in the life in the world – but He also sets before men how they are to worship God. Christ said to the woman of Samaria, "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." And He told her that God was a Spirit and "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." There was nothing to be in God's worship but what was done by the "spirit" in man and by the Holy Ghost, and nothing there also but the truth, and they are to keep to this. This is part of the "all things," and it is certainly included in particular in the word, "whatsoever." We are to add nothing to, we are to take nothing from, God's Word. That is not the work which Christ gives at all to such as He sends forth, but to teach men what they find in this book and to give all diligence night and day to study it in order that they may bring forth its doctrines before men. They are to warn sinners that, if they shall go on despising Christ in the gospel and refusing obedience to His commands, it shall not be well with them. No! As you will find in the prophecy of Isaiah: "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him." The Sabbath-breaker, the swearer, such as take the name of God in vain, liars, and such as live an unholy, corrupt life in the world, drunkards; all sinners are to be warned that if they will continue to go on in their ways, it shall not be well with them. You would think in our day that men have gone forth into the world in order to excuse such statements in the Bible, to tell sinners that God will not carry out these threatenings and that wicked men will go to heaven. Oh, my friends, who asked such men to go to apologise for God? Who? Did God ever ask any man to go and make an apology to the wicked because He would punish the wicked? No, never, and He never shall. He commands those whom He sends to tell the wicked unflinchingly that it shall be ill with them, and if they will dare go on in sin that God will make it as hot as the lake of hell to them at last, so that men may not be deceiving themselves in thinking that God is something else than what He is, for, remember, He says that "the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God."

The last thing I desire to notice on this head is that they were to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

When man sinned in Eden, sin separated between him and God. God departed from man's soul then, and that not only from the souls of our first parents but also from all their posterity. It is written that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." God made a covenant of grace and redemption with His own Son, to restore many of our lost race to His favour in which eternal life consists, which covenant Christ sealed with His own blood. The ordinance of baptism was given as an outward seal to believers in Jesus Christ. In baptism, God – the Three Persons – makes Himself over to the believer as his God.

Jehovah gave a free promise to Abraham that He would be his God and the God of his seed, Abraham believed the promise, and God gave him the seal of circumcision as an outward sign of the stability of the promise in order that his faith would be strengthened. This was given not only to himself, but also to his seed. Baptism has come in the place of

circumcision, as the Lord's supper supersedes the passover. The children of believers in God's promise through Christ in the gospel have been baptized, because God still becomes the God of the believer and that of his seed after him. Circumcision of itself did not regenerate the seed of Abraham, neither does baptism regenerate the children of believing parents now. As Paul taught the Jews that they were the children of the promise, so such as are baptized now are also the children of the promise. If such children believe not in Christ, who is the sum and substance of the promise, they shall not be saved. It is only faith in Jesus Christ that saves any sinner. Those who are baptized should lay this to heart. The vows of God are upon them, as they have publicly taken Him to be their covenant God, and if such be lost, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on the last day than for them. But, I must not enlarge.

III. – Now, let us notice in the third place – and I am only going to make a few remarks as to this last head – the promise which the Lord gives them here of His own presence with them. You cannot see Him. You may have seen some who were as truly sent of Christ as the apostles, and to whom He said, “Go and teach men everywhere my truth.” You could not see Him but you could see them, but He says, “Lo, I am with you,” and “I am with you always,” or, as the word might be translated, from day to day, yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow.

The first thing I desire to notice in this connection is that He is with them by His Spirit. It was the Spirit of Christ that spoke in the prophets, and it is the Spirit of Christ that speaks in His servants still, although they are not inspired. They are only to search diligently into the things that God has given to them in His own inspired word. Well, my friends, He has given His Spirit to go forth with them in order that the word might be made effectual. What was the difference between that sermon which was preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and the discourse – and a marvellous discourse it is indeed – you will find in the seventh chapter of Acts, which was delivered by Stephen before his accusers in Jerusalem? What was the cause that the one party were pricked in their hearts and began to cry out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Well, if you were present there, you would see nothing. You see, my friends, God the Holy Spirit, is invisible, and it was the Holy Spirit who convinced men that day of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It was the Holy Spirit who made use of the words which were spoken to open the eyes of sinners to see God's salvation in Christ crucified, but, in the case of Stephen, the Spirit was not there. Perhaps it was true that God said, “My Spirit shall not strive any more with these men.” I would not give up hope of you with whom God's Spirit is striving through the Word, and making you feel lost on account of sin, and your need of deliverance through the blood of Christ; but you, on the other hand, who can listen year in, year out, to God's messengers declaring His truth and telling the wicked it shall be ill with them, and the effect it has upon you is that you gnash your teeth at the speaker; take care that it may not mean that God has given you over in judgment, for you see that He says here, “Lo, I am with you.”

The second thing I desire to notice is this. He says, here, “Lo, I am with you always,” or from day to day, and they had need of Him, not only to make their message effectual to the salvation of perishing men, but also to protect themselves from day to day, to keep them and to uphold them. You find that He told them that, when they had to go before magistrates and kings and judges for the gospel's sake, they were not to think beforehand what they should say. It is a terrible thing for a man to appear before his enemies who are bent upon his ruin, and bent also upon having some excuse to put the man to death, trying their utmost to see if they can get one word upon which they can base their sentence of death; but He told them not to concern themselves in such trying times as to what they should say, for He would give them the words to answer. There were in this country, more than once, poor, unlearned, servant girls, who confounded the most learned judges in the land, and that by the mouth and

the wisdom which Christ gave them, and He is the same to-day. This is from day to day, for “Christ is the same, yesterday and to-day and for ever,” and we are told in the Scriptures “that they shall never be put to shame who wait upon him.”

May God bless to us anything consistent with His mind!

[January 1916]

## A Sermon.

By the late REV. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, B.A.,  
of Pembroke College, Oxford.

*Preached at Moorfields and Kennington Common in 1739.*

### THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS.

“Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour in which  
the Son of man cometh” – Matthew 25:13.

The Apostle to the Hebrews informs us that “it is appointed unto men once to die;” after that, says he, cometh the judgment. And I think, if any consideration be sufficient to awaken a sleeping drowsy world, it must be this: that there will be a day wherein these heavens shall be wrapt up like a scroll – the elements melt with fervent heat – this earth, and all the things therein, be burnt up and every soul of every nation summoned to appear before the dreadful tribunal of the righteous Judge of quick and dead, to receive rewards or punishments according to the deeds done in their bodies. The great Apostle of the Gentiles, when brought before Felix, could think of no better means to convert that sinful man than to reason of temperance, righteousness, and, more especially, of a judgment to come. The first might, in some measure, affect; but I am persuaded it was the last consideration – I mean that of a judgment to come – that made him tremble. And so bad as the world is grown, yet there are few have their consciences seared with a red-hot iron so as to deny that there will be a reckoning hereafter. The promiscuous dispensations of Providence in this life wherein we see good men afflicted, destitute, tormented, and the wicked permitted triumphantly to ride over their heads, has been always looked upon as an indisputable argument by the generality of mankind that there will be a day in which God will judge the world in righteousness and



administer true judgment unto His people. Some, indeed, are so bold as to deny it whilst they are engaged in the pursuit of the lust of the eye and the pride of life; but follow them to their death-beds, ask them when their souls are ready to launch into eternity what they then think of a judgment to come, and they will tell you they dare not give their consciences the lie any longer. They feel a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation in their hearts.

Since, then, these things are so, does it not highly concern each of us, my brethren, before we come on a bed of sickness seriously to examine how the account stands between God and our souls and how it will fare with us in that day? As for the openly profane, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the adulterer, and such like, there is no doubt what will become of them; without repentance they shall never enter into the kingdom of God and His Christ. No; their damnation slumbereth not; a burning fiery Tophet, kindled by the fury of God's eternal wrath, is prepared for their reception, wherein they must suffer the vengeance of an eternal fire. Nor is there the least doubt of the state of true believers; for though they be despised and rejected of natural men, yet, being born again of God and joint-heirs with Christ, they have the earnest of the promised inheritance in their hearts; they are assured that a new and living way is made open for them by the blood of Jesus Christ, through which an abundant entrance into the kingdom of heaven shall be administered to them at the great day of account. The only question is, What will become of the almost Christian? – one that is content to go, as he thinks, in the easy middle way to heaven without being profane on the one hand, or, as he now falsely imagines, righteous overmuch on the other. Multitudes there are in every congregation, and, consequently, here present, of this stamp. And, what is worst of all, it is easier to convince the most notorious publicans and sinners of their being out of a state of salvation than any of these almost Christians. And, if Jesus Christ may be our Judge, they shall as certainly be rejected and disowned by Him at the last day as though they lived in an open defiance of all His laws.

For what says our Lord in the parable of which my text is a conclusion, and which I intend to make the subject of my present discourse? “Then” (that is, at the day of judgment, which He had been discoursing of in the foregoing chapter, and prosecutes in this) “shall the kingdom of heaven” (that is, the state of Christians in general) “be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.” In which words there is a manifest allusion to a custom prevailing in our Lord's time among the Jews at marriage solemnities, which, being generally in the night, it was customary for the persons of the bride-chamber to go out in procession with many lights to meet the Bridegroom. By the Bridegroom here you are to understand Jesus Christ. The Church – that is, true believers – are His spouse. He is united to them by one Spirit, even in this life; but the solemnizing of these sacred nuptials is reserved till the day of judgment, when He shall come to take them home to Himself, and present them, before men and angels, as His purchase, to His Father, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. By the ten virgins, we are to understand the professors of Christianity in general. All are called virgins, because all are called to be saints. All who name the name of Christ are obliged, by that very profession, to depart from all iniquity. The pure and chaste in heart are the only persons that will be so blessed as to see God. As Christ was born of a virgin's womb, so Christ can dwell in none but virgin souls – souls made pure and holy by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. But what says the Apostle? “All are not Israelites that are of Israel.” All are not true Christians that are called after the name of Christ. “Five of these virgins were wise” – that is, true believers – “and five were foolish” – that is, formal hypocrites, whited sepulchres, mere outside professors. But why are five said to be wise, and the other five foolish? Hear what our Lord says in the following verses: – “They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.” “They that were foolish took their lamps;” that is, the lamps of an outward profession: they would go to church, say over several manuals of prayers, come

perhaps even into a field to hear a sermon, give at collections, and receive the sacrament constantly, nay, oftener than once a month. But then here lay the mistake: they had no oil in their lamps – no principle of grace – no living faith in their hearts; without which, though we should give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burned, it would profit us nothing. In short, they were exact, nay, perhaps, superstitiously bigoted as to the form, but all the while they were strangers to, and, in effect, denied the power of godliness in their hearts. They would go to church, but, at the same time, think it no harm to go to a ball or an assembly, notwithstanding they promised at their baptism to renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. They were so exceeding fearful of being righteous over-much, that they would even persecute those that were truly devout, if they attempted to go a step farther than themselves. In one word, they never effectually felt the powers of the world to come; they thought they might be Christians without anything of inward feelings; and, therefore, notwithstanding their high pretensions, they had only a name to live.

And now, sirs, let me pause a while, and, in the name of that God whom I endeavour to serve in the gospel of His dear Son, give me leave to ask you one question. Whilst I have been drawing, though in miniature, the character of those foolish virgins, have not many of your consciences made the application, and with a small, still, though articulate voice, said, Thou man, thou woman, art one of those foolish virgins, for thy sentiments and practice agree thereto? Do not then stifle, but encourage these convictions, and who knows but that the Lord, who is rich in mercy to all that call upon Him faithfully, may so work upon you, even by this foolishness of preaching, as to make you wise virgins before you return home!

What they were you shall know immediately: “But the wise,” says our Lord (verse 4), “took oil in their vessels with their lamps.” Observe, “the wise” – that is, the true believers had their lamps as well as the foolish virgins; for Christianity does not require us to cast off outward forms; we may use forms and yet not be formal. For instance, it is possible to worship God in a set form of prayer, and yet worship Him in Spirit and in truth; and therefore, brethren, let us not judge one another. The wise virgins had their lamps. Herein then did not lie the difference between them, that the one worshipped with a form, and the other did not: no, as the Pharisee and Publican went up to the temple to pray, so these wise and foolish virgins might go to the same place of worship, and sit under the same minister; but then the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. They kept up the form, but did not rest in it. Their words in prayer were the language of their hearts, and they were no strangers to inward feelings; they had savingly tasted the good word of life, and felt, or had an experimental knowledge of the powers of the world to come; they were not afraid of searching doctrine, nor affronted when ministers told them they by nature deserved to be damned; they were not self-righteous, but willing that Jesus Christ should have all the glory of their salvation: they were convinced that the merits of Jesus Christ were to be apprehended only by faith; but yet they were as careful to maintain good works, as though they were to be justified by them. In short, their obedience flowed from love and gratitude, and was cheerful, constant, uniform, and universal, like unto that obedience which the holy angels pay our Father in heaven.

Here, then, let me exhort you to pause again; and if any of you can faithfully apply these characters to your hearts, give God the glory, and take the comfort to your own souls. You are not false, but true believers. Jesus Christ has been made of God to you wisdom, even that wisdom whereby you shall be made wise unto salvation. God sees a difference between you and foolish virgins, if natural men will not. You need not therefore be uneasy, if a like state of misery and mortality happen to you both; I say, a like state of misery and mortality; for (verse 5) “while the bridegroom tarried,” that is, in the space of time which passeth between our Lord’s ascension, and His coming again to judgment, “they all slumbered and slept.” The wise as well as the foolish died; [The ordinary interpretation of this passage is that both wise and foolish

“slumbered and slept” spiritually – a time of general spiritual drowsiness. ED.] for dust we all are, and to dust we must return. It is no reflection at all upon the divine goodness, that believers, as well as hypocrites, must pass through the valley of the shadow of death; for Christ has taken away the sting out of it, so that we need fear no evil. It is to them a passage to everlasting life. Death is only terrible to those that have no hope, because they live without faith, and therefore without God in the world. Whosoever there are amongst you that have received the first fruits of the Spirit, I am persuaded you are ready to cry out with holy Job, “We would not live here always; we long to be dissolved, that we may be with Jesus Christ; and though worms will destroy our bodies as well as others, yet we are content, being assured that our Redeemer liveth, that He will stand at the latter days upon the earth, and that in our flesh we shall see God.” But it is not so with hypocrites and unbelievers beyond the grave. For what says our Lord?

“And at midnight.” Observe, at midnight, when all was hushed and quiet, and no one dreaming of any such thing, a cry was made; the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God was heard, sounding this general alarm to things in heaven, to things in earth, and to things in the waters under the earth. *Behold*, mark how this awful summons is ushered in with the word *behold*, to engage our attention – “Behold the Bridegroom,” even Jesus Christ, the Desire of nations, the bridegroom of His spouse the Church: because He tarried for a while, to exercise the faith of saints, and give sinners space to repent, scoffers were apt to cry out, “Where is the promise of His coming?” But He is not slack concerning His promise, as these men account slackness; for, “Behold, He that was to come is now come, and will not tarry any longer. He cometh to be glorified with His saints, and to take vengeance on them that know not God, and have not obeyed His gospel.” He cometh, not as a poor despised Galilean; not to be stabled in a stinking manger; not to be despised and rejected of men; not to be blindfolded, spit upon, and buffeted; not to be nailed to an accursed tree; not as the Son of man, but, as He really was, the eternal Son of God. He cometh riding on the wings of the wind, in the glory of the Father and His holy angels, and to be had in everlasting reverence of all that shall be round about Him. “Go ye forth to meet him.” Arise, ye dead, ye foolish as well as wise virgins, arise and come to judgment. Multitudes, no doubt, that hear this awakening cry, would rejoice if “the rocks might fall on them, and the hills cover them from the presence of the Lamb.” What would they give, if, as they lived like beasts, they might now die like them that perish? How would they rejoice, if those same excuses, which they had made on this side eternity, for attending on holy ordinances, would now keep them from appearing before the heavenly Bridegroom? But as Adam, notwithstanding his fig leaves, and the trees of the garden, could not hide himself from God, when arrested with an “Adam, where art thou?” so now the decree has gone forth, and the trump of God has given its last sound; all tongues, people, nations, and languages, both wise and foolish virgins, must come into His presence, and bow beneath His footstool. Even Pontius Pilate, Annas and Caiaphas, even the proud persecuting high priests and Pharisees of this generation, must now appear before Him.

For, says our Lord, then – that is, when the cry was made, “Behold the bridegroom cometh” – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the graves were opened, the sea gave up its dead, and all those virgins, both wise and foolish, arose and trimmed their lamps; that is, endeavoured to put themselves in a posture to meet the bridegroom.

But how may we imagine the foolish virgins were surprised, when, notwithstanding their high thoughts, and proud imaginations of their security, they now find themselves wholly naked, and void of that inward holiness and purity of heart, without which no man living, at that day, shall comfortably meet the Lord! I doubt not but many of these foolish virgins, whilst in this world, were clothed in purple and fine linen, fared sumptuously every day, and would disdain to set many of the wise virgins, some of which might be as poor as Lazarus, even with the dogs of their flock. Those were looked upon by them as enthusiasts and

madmen, as persons that were righteous overmuch, and who intended to turn the world upside down; but now death hath opened their eyes, and convinced them, to their eternal sorrow, that he is not a true Christian, who is only one outwardly. Now they find, though alas! too late, that they, and not the wise virgins, had been beside themselves. Now their proud hearts are made to stoop, their lofty looks are brought low; and, as Dives entreated that Lazarus might dip the tip of his finger in water, and be sent to cool his tongue, so these foolish virgins, these formal hypocrites, are obliged to turn beggars to those whom they once despised. "Give us of your oil." O, impart to us a little of that grace and Holy Spirit, for your insisting on which we fools accounted your lives madness, for alas! "our lamps are gone out;" we had only the form of godliness; we were whited sepulchres; we were heart-hypocrites; we contented ourselves with desiring to be good; and, though confident of salvation whilst we lived, yet our hope is entirely gone now; God has taken away our souls. Give us, therefore, O, give us, though we once despised you, give us of your oil, for our lamps of an outward profession are quite gone out.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith the Lord," with this. My brethren in Christ, hear what the foolish say to the wise virgins, and learn in patience to possess your souls. If you are true followers of the lowly Jesus, I am persuaded you have your names cast out, and all manner of evil spoken against you falsely for His name's sake. For no one ever did, or will live godly in Christ Jesus, without suffering persecution; nay, I doubt not but your chief foes are those of your own households. Tell me, do not your carnal relations and friends vex your tender souls, day by day, in bidding you spare yourselves, and take heed lest you go too far? And, as you passed along to come and hear the word of God, have you not heard many a Pharisee cry out, Here comes another troop of His followers? Brethren, be not surprised; Christ's servants were always the world's fools. "You know it hated him before it hated you. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; yet a little while, and behold the bridegroom cometh;" and then shall you hear these formal scoffing Pharisees saying unto you, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." When you are reviled, revile not again; when you suffer, threaten not; but commit your souls into the hands of Him that judgeth righteously; for behold the day cometh, when the children of God shall speak for themselves.

The wise virgins in the parable, no doubt, endured the same cruel mockings as you may do; but, as the lamb before the shearer is dumb, so in this life open they not their mouth: but now we find they can give their enemies an answer: "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." These words are not to be understood as though they were spoken in an insulting manner, for true charity teaches us to use the worst of sinners, and our most bitter enemies, with the meekness and gentleness of Christ. Though Dives was in hell, yet Abraham does not say, "Thou villain," but only, "Son; remember." And I am persuaded, had it been in the power of these wise virgins, they would have dealt with the foolish virgins (as God knows I would willingly deal with my most inveterate enemies): not only give them of their oil, but also exalt them to the right hand of God. It was not, then, for want of love, but for fear of wanting a sufficiency for themselves, that made them return this answer, "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you." For they that have most grace have none to spare. None but the self-righteous, foolish virgins think they are good enough. Those who are truly wise, are always more distrustful of themselves, pressing forward to the things that are before, and think it well if, after they have done all, being yet but unprofitable servants, they can make their calling and election sure. "Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." These words, indeed, seem to be spoken with a kind of triumph, though certainly in the most compassionate manner; "Go ye to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Unhappy virgins! you accounted our lives folly, whilst with you in the body. How often have you condemned us for our zeal in running to hear the Word, and looked upon

us as enthusiasts for talking about, and affirming, that we must be led by the Spirit, and walk by the Spirit, and hear the Spirit of God witnessing with our spirits that we are his children? But now you would be glad to be partakers of this privilege; it is not ours to give; you have been sleeping, when you should have been striving to enter in at the strait gate, “and now go to them that sell (if you can), and buy for yourselves.”

And what say you to this, ye foolish formal professors? (for I doubt not but curiosity, and the desire of novelty, hath brought many such to this despised place, to hear a sermon). Can you hear this reply to the foolish virgins, and yet not tremble? Why, yet a little while, and thus it shall be said to you. Rejoice and bolster yourselves up in your duties and forms; endeavour to cover your nakedness with the fig leaves of an outward profession, and a legal righteousness, and despise the true servants of Christ as much as you please; yet know, that all your hopes will fail you, when God brings you into judgment. For not he who commends himself is justified, but whom the Lord commendeth.

But to return. We do not hear any reply the foolish virgins make; no, their consciences condemned them; they are struck dumb, and are now filled with anxious thoughts how they shall buy oil, that they may lift up their heads before the Bridegroom.

“But whilst they go to buy” – that is, whilst they are thinking what they shall do – the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, the Head, the King, the Husband of his spouse the Church, cometh attended with thousands, and twenty times ten thousands of saints and angels, publicly to count up His jewels; and they are ready, the wise virgins, who have oil in their lamps, and are sealed by His Spirit to the day of redemption; these having on the wedding garment of righteousness, the covering of His holy Spirit, go in with Him to the marriage. But who can express the transports that these wise virgins feel, while they are thus admitted in a holy triumph into the presence and full enjoyment of Him whom their souls hungered and thirsted after? No doubt they had tasted of His love, and, by faith, had often fed on Him in their hearts, when sitting down to commemorate His last supper here on earth. But how full may we think their hearts and tongues are of His praises, now they are sitting down together to eat bread in His heavenly kingdom? And what is still an addition to their happiness, the door is now shut that so they may enjoy the ever-blessed God, and the company of angels and the spirits of just men made perfect without interruption. I say without interruption; for in this life their eyes often gushed out with water because men kept not God’s law, and they could never come to appear before the Lord or to hear His Word, but Satan and his servants and children would come also to disturb them. But now the door is shut. Now there is a perfect communion of saints which they in vain longed for in this lower world. Now tares no longer grow up with the wheat: Not one single hypocrite or unbeliever can screen himself amongst them. Now “the wicked cease from troubling;” now their weary souls enjoy an everlasting rest.

Once more, O believers, let me exhort you in patience to possess your souls. God, if He has freely justified you by faith in His Son and given you His Spirit, has sealed you to be His, and has secured you as surely as He secured Noah when He locked him in the ark. For a little while, ‘tis true, though heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and neither men nor devils can pluck you out of your heavenly Father’s hands, yet you must be tossed about with manifold temptations. But lift up your heads, the day of your perfect and complete redemption draweth nigh. Behold, the bridegroom cometh to take you to himself; the door shall be shut, and you shall be for ever with the Lord.

But I even tremble to tell you, O nominal Christians! that the door will be shut; I mean the door of mercy, never to be opened to give you admission, though you should continue knocking to all eternity. For thus speaks our Lord (verse 11): “Afterwards,” that is, after those that were ready had gone in, and the door was shut, after these foolish virgins had, to their sorrow, found that no oil was to be bought, no grace to be procured, “came also the other

virgins,” and as Esau, after Jacob had got the blessing, cried with an exceeding bitter cry, “Bless me, even me also, O my Father,” so they come saying, “Lord, Lord, open unto us.”

Observe the importunity of these foolish virgins, implied in these words, “Lord, Lord.” Whilst in the body, I suppose, they only read, but did not pray over their prayers. If you would tell them they should pray without ceasing, they should pray with their hearts, and feel the want of what they prayed for, they would answer, they could not tell what you meant by inward feelings; that God did not require us to be always on our knees; but if a man did justly, and loved mercy, and did as the church-forms required him, it was as much as the Lord required at his hands.

I fear, sirs, too many amongst us are of this mind; nay, I fear there are many so profanely polite, and void of the love of God, as to think it too great a piece of self-denial to rise early to offer up a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. If any such, by the good providence of God, are brought hither this morning, I beseech you consider your ways, and remember, if you are not awakened out of your spiritual lethargy, and live a life of prayer here, you shall in vain cry out with the foolish virgins, “Lord, Lord, open unto us,” hereafter.

Observe, further, the impudence, as well as importunity, of those other virgins. “Lord, Lord,” say they, as though they were intimately acquainted with the holy Jesus. Like numbers amongst us, who, because they go to church, repeat their creeds, and perhaps receive the sacrament, think they have a right to call Jesus their Saviour, and dare call God their Father when they put up the Lord’s Prayer. But Jesus is not your Saviour; the devil, not God, is your father, unless your hearts are purified by faith, and you are born again from above. It is not the being baptized by water only, but by the Holy Ghost also, that must purify and perfect your fallen nature. And it will do you no service at the great day, to say unto Christ, “Lord, my name is in the register of such or such a parish,” unless the laws and image of Christ are written and stamped upon your hearts. I am persuaded the foolish virgins could say this, and more. But what answer did the blessed Jesus make? He answered and said (verse 12): “Verily, I say unto you” – He puts the word “verily,” to assure them He was in earnest – “I say unto you,” I who am truth itself, I whom you have owned in words, but in works denied, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” These words must not be understood literally; for whatever Arians and Socinians may vainly say to the contrary, yet we affirm that Jesus Christ is God, God blessed for ever, and therefore knoweth all things. He saw Nathaniel when under the fig tree. He sees, and is now looking down from heaven, His dwelling-place, upon us, to see how we behave in these fields. Brethren, I know nothing of the thoughts and intents of your hearts in coming hither, but Jesus Christ does. He knows who come like new-born babes, desirous to be fed with the sincere milk of the Word; and He knows who come to hear what the babbler says, and to run away with part of a broken sentence, that they may have whereof they may ridicule or accuse Him. This expression then, “I know you not,” must not be understood literally. No; it only denies a knowledge of approbation; as though Christ had said, “You call me Lord, Lord, but ye have not done the things that I have said: you desire Me to open the door, but how can you come in hither, not having on a wedding-garment? Alas! you are naked as you came into the world. Where is My outward righteousness imputed to you? Where is My inherent righteousness wrought in you? Where is My divine image stamped upon your souls? How dare you call Me Lord, Lord, when you have not received the Holy Ghost, whereby I seal all that are truly mine? Verily I know you not. Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

And now, “he that hath ears to hear let him hear,” what manner of persons these were whom Jesus Christ dismissed with this answer.

Remember, I entreat you, remember, they are not sent away for being fornicators, swearers, Sabbath-breakers, or prodigals; no, in all probability, as I observed before, they

were, touching the outward observances of the moral law, blameless; they were zealous maintainers of the form of religion; and if they did no good, yet no one could say they did any one any harm. That for which they were condemned, and eternally banished from the presence of the Lord (for so much is implied in that sentence, "I know you not"), was this: they had no oil in their lamps, no principle of eternal life, or true and living faith, and love of God in their hearts. But, alas! if persons may go to church, receive the sacraments, lead honest moral lives, and yet be sent to hell at the last day, as they certainly will if they advance no farther, where wilt thou, O drunkard? where wilt thou, O swearer? where wilt thou, O Sabbath-breaker? where wilt thou that deniest divine revelation, and even the form of godliness – where wilt thou and such-like sinners appear?

I know very well where you must appear, even before the dreadful tribunal of Jesus Christ. For, however you may, like Felix, continually put off your convictions, yet you, as well as others, must arise after death, and appear in judgment. You will then find to your eternal sorrow, what I just hinted at in the beginning of this discourse, viz., that your damnation slumbereth not. Sin has blinded your hearts, and hardened your foreheads now. But yet a little while and our Lord will avenge Him of His adversaries. Already, by faith, I see the heavens opened, and the holy Jesus coming, with His face brighter than ten thousand suns, and darting fury upon you from His eyes. I see you rising from your graves, trembling and astonished, and crying out, Who can abide this day of His coming? And now, what inference shall I draw from what has been delivered? Our Lord, in the words of the text, hath drawn one for me: "Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

"Watch" – that is, be upon your guard, and keep your graces in continual exercise; for as, when we are commanded to watch unto prayer, it signifies that we should continue instant in that duty; so, when we are required to watch in general, it means, that we should put on the whole armour of God, and live every day as though it was our last.

And O that the Lord may now enable me to lift up my voice like a trumpet! For had I a thousand tongues, or could I speak so loud that the whole world might hear me, I could not sound a more useful alarm than that which is contained in the words of the text. Watch, therefore, my brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, watch – be upon your guard. "Awake, ye that sleep in the dust; for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Perhaps to-day, perhaps this next midnight, the cry may be made. For in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the trump is to sound. However, supposing the final day of judgment to all may yet be a great way off, yet to us it is certainly near at hand. For what is our life? It is but a vapour – it is but a span long; so soon it passeth away, and we are gone. Blessed be God, we are all here well; but who, out of this great multitude, dare say, I shall go home to my house in safety? Who knows but, whilst I am speaking, God may commission his ministering spirits immediately to call some of you off by a sudden stroke, to give an account with what attention, and to what intent, you have heard this sermon? And it is chiefly for this reason that God has hid the day of our death from us. For, since I know not but I may die to-morrow, why, O my soul (may each of us say) wilt thou not watch to-day? Since I know not but I may die the next moment, why wilt thou not prepare for dying this?

You know, my brethren, some such instances have lately been given us. And what angel or spirit hath assured us that some of you shall not be the next? "Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

May such reflections as these, my brethren, crowd in upon my mind. At present, blessed be the Lord, who delights to magnify His strength in a poor worm's weakness, I am at a stand not so much about what I shall say, as what I shall leave unsaid. My belly, like Elihu's, is, as it were, full of new wine; out of the abundance of my heart my mouth speaketh. The seeing so great a multitude standing before me – a sense of the infinite majesty of that God in whose

name I preach, and before whom I, as well as you, must appear to give an account – and the uncertainty there is whether I shall live another day to speak to you any more; these considerations, I say, especially the presence of God, which I now feel in my soul, furnish me with so much matter that I scarce know how to begin, and where to end, my application. However, by the divine assistance, I will address myself more particularly to three sorts of persons.

And, *first*, I would remind you that are notoriously ungodly in the land, of what our Lord says in the text. For, though I have said that your damnation slumbereth not whilst you continue in an impenitent state, yet that was only to set you upon your watch to convince you of your danger and excite you to cry out, What shall we do to be saved? I appeal to all that hear me whether I have said, the door of mercy shall be shut against you if you believe in Jesus Christ. No; if you are the chief of sinners; if you are the murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers; if you are the dung and offscouring of all things – yet if you believe on Jesus Christ and continue to cry unto Him with the faith of the penitent thief, “Lord, remember us, now thou art in thy kingdom,” I will pawn my eternal salvation upon it if He does not shortly translate you to His heavenly paradise. Wonder not at my speaking with so much assurance, for I know “this is a faithful and true saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save all believing sinners;” nay, so great is His love that I am persuaded, were it necessary, He would come again into the world and die a second time for them on the cross. But, blessed be God, when our Lord bowed down His head and gave up the ghost, our redemption was finished. It is not our sins, but our want of a lively faith in His blood, that will prove our condemnation. If you draw near to Him now by faith, though you are the worst of sinners, yet He will not say unto you, “Verily, I know you not.” No; a door of mercy shall be opened to you. Look then, look by an eye of faith to that God-Man whom you have pierced. Behold Him bleeding, panting, dying upon the cross with arms stretched out ready to embrace you all! Hark, how He groans! See how all nature is in an agony! The rocks rend, the graves open, the sun withdraws its light, ashamed, as it were, to see the Saviour suffer! And all this to proclaim man’s great redemption! Nay, the Holy Jesus, in the most bitter agonies and pangs of death, prays for His very murderers: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” What, then, if you have crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame, yet do not despair – only believe, and even this shall be forgiven you. You have read, at least you have heard, no doubt, how three thousand were converted at St. Peter’s preaching one single sermon after our Lord’s ascension into heaven; and many of the crucifiers of the Lord of glory undoubtedly were amongst them. And why should you despair? for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The Holy Ghost shall be sent down on you as well as on them if you do but believe. For Christ ascended up on high to receive this gift even for the vilest of men, for His greatest enemies. Come, then, all ye that are weary and heavy laden with a sense of your sins, lay hold on Christ by faith and He shall give you rest. For salvation is the free gift of God to all them that believe. And though you may think this too good news to be true, yet I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not; this is the gospel, this is the glad tidings which we are commissioned to preach to every creature. Be not faithless, then, but believing. Let not the devil lead you captive at his will any longer; for all the wages he gives his servants is death, death often in this life, death always, everlasting death in the next. But now the free gift of God is eternal life to all that believe in Jesus Christ. Pharisees are, and will be offended at my coming here and offering you salvation on such cheap terms. But the more they bid me hold my peace the more will I cry out and proclaim to sinners that Jesus, the Son of David as He was man, but David’s Lord as he was God, will have mercy upon all that by a living faith truly turn to him. If to preach this is to be vile, I pray God I may be more vile. If they will not let me preach Christ crucified and offer salvation to poor sinners in a church, I will preach Him in the lanes,



streets, highways, and hedges; and nothing pleases me better than to think I am now in one of the devil's strongest holds. Surely the Lord has not sent me and all you hither for nothing; no, blessed be God, "the fields are white, ready unto harvest," and many souls, I hope, will be gathered into His heavenly garner. It is true it is the midnight of the Church, especially the poor Church of England; but God has lately sent forth His servants to cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." I beseech you, O sinners, hearken unto the voice; let me espouse you now by faith to my dear Master, and henceforward watch and pray that you may be ready to go forth to meet Him.

*Secondly.* – I would apply myself to those amongst you that are not openly profane, but, by depending on a formal round of duties, deceive your own souls, and are still as the foolish virgins. But I must speak to your conviction before I can speak to your comfort. My brethren, do not deceive your own souls. You have heard how far the foolish virgins went, and yet were answered with a "Verily, I know you not." The reason is, because none but such as have a living faith in Jesus Christ, and are truly born again from above, can possibly enter into the kingdom of heaven. You may, perhaps, live honestly, and outwardly, moral lives; but if you depend on that morality or join your works with your faith in order to justify you before God, you have no lot or share in Christ's redemption. For what is this but to deny the Lord that has bought you? What is this but making yourselves your own Saviours, taking the crown from Jesus Christ and putting it on your own heads? The crime of the devil some have supposed consisted in this, that he would not bow to the name of Jesus when He came into the world as man, when the Father commanded all the angels to worship Him. And what do you less? You will not own and submit to His righteousness. And though you pretend to worship Him with your lips, yet your hearts are far from Him. Besides, you in effect deny the operations of His blessed Spirit, you mistake common for effectual grace. You hope to be saved because you have good desires. What is this, but to give God His word and all His saints the lie? A Jew, a Turk, has equally as good grounds whereon to build His hopes of salvation. Great need, therefore, have I to cry out to you, O foolish virgins, watch; beg of God to convince you of your self-righteousness and the secret unbelief of your hearts or otherwise, whensoever the cry shall be made, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh;" you will find yourselves utterly unprepared to go forth to meet Him. You may cry, "Lord, Lord," but the answer will be, "Verily, I know you not."

*Thirdly.* – I would speak a word or two by way of exhortation to those who are wise virgins, and are well assured that they have on a wedding-garment.

That there are many such amongst you, who, by grace, have renounced your own righteousness, and know assuredly that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is imputed to you, I make no doubt. God has His secret ones in the worst of times; and I am persuaded He has not let so loud a gospel cry be made amongst His people for nothing. No, I am confident the Holy Ghost has been given to some on the preaching of faith; nay, has powerfully fallen upon many whilst they have been hearing the Word. You are now then no longer foolish, but wise virgins; notwithstanding I beseech you also, suffer the word of exhortation; for wise virgins are too apt whilst the Bridegroom tarries to slumber and sleep: watch, therefore, my dear brethren, watch and pray at this time especially, for perhaps a time of suffering is at hand. The ark of the Lord begins already to be driven into the wilderness. Be ye therefore upon the watch, and still persevere in following your Lord even without the camp bearing His reproach. The cry that has been lately made has awakened the devil and his servants – they begin to rage horribly; and well they may, for I hope their kingdom is in danger. Watch, therefore, my brethren; for if we are not always upon our guard a time of trial may overtake us unawares, and instead of owning, we may be tempted, like Peter, to deny, our Master. Set death and eternity often before you. Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, and consider how little a while it will be ere He comes to judgment and then our reproach

shall be wiped away; the accusers of us and our brethren shall be cast down, and the door being shut, we all shall continue for ever in heaven with our dear Lord Jesus. Amen! and Amen!

*Lastly.* – What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. High and low, rich and poor, young and old, one with another, of whatever sect or denomination, for I regard not that, I beseech you by the mercies of that Jesus whom I am now preaching, be upon your guard. Flee, flee to Jesus Christ, that heavenly Bridegroom; behold, He desires to take you to Himself. Miserable, poor, blind and naked, as you are, yet He is willing to clothe you with His everlasting righteousness and make you partakers of that glory which He enjoyed with the Father before the world was. O, do not turn a deaf ear to me; do not reject the message on account of the meanness of the messenger. I am a child, a youth of uncircumcised lips, but the Lord has chosen me that the glory might be all His own. Had He sent to invite you by a learned rabbi, you might have been tempted to think the man had done something. But now God has sent a child that cannot speak, that the excellency of the power may be seen to be not of man but of God. Let letter-learned Pharisees, then, despise my youth: I care not how vile I appear in the sight of such men, I glory in it; and I am persuaded if any of you should be set upon your watch by this preaching, you will have no reason to repent that God sent a child to cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!” O! my brethren, the thought of being instrumental in bringing some of you to glory fills me with fresh zeal. Once more, therefore, I entreat you, “Watch, watch and pray;” for the Lord Jesus will receive all that call upon Him, yea, all that call upon Him faithfully. Let that cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,” be continually sounding in your ears; and begin now to live, as though you were assured this was the night in which you were to be summoned to go forth to meet Him. I could say more, but the other business and duties of the day oblige me to stop. May the Lord give you all an hearing ear and an obedient heart, and so closely unite you to Himself by one Spirit, that, when He shall come in terrible majesty to judge mankind, you may be found having on a wedding-garment and ready to go in with Him to the marriage.

Grant this, O Father, for Thy dear Son’s sake, Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen! and Amen!

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# A S e r m o n .

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“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” – John 3:3.

There are set forth in this chapter – and more especially in this first portion of it, dealing with Nicodemus – many of the outstanding truths of the Christian faith. What we are continually exposed to, regarding such a field of divine truth, is the danger of growing weary of meditating therein, or of hearing of it with any degree of frequency. The successive truths as to the new birth, the kingdom (the mystery, yet reality of it), the death of Christ, and the love of the Father antecedent to that death and manifested in virtue of that death, all seem so unquestionable, so generally accepted, as to be beyond the shadow of a doubt. So, to a great extent, we hasten to agree that these superlative truths should receive due attention, and forthwith allow and encourage the mind to wander to and in fields congenial to our sadly disordered and diseased frames.

If the Spirit of truth be our guide and enable us in our time of need to receive the wisdom which is pure and peaceable, the word before us will renew its youth in interest and freshness, and be unto us as a path loved by reason of association, wherein we may walk and talk with our hearts, and come to know what is said of wisdom: “Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”

Let us note at the outset that, though we shall have especially before our minds this testimony of our Lord regarding the kingdom and admission to the presence of the King, we shall not restrict our remarks to this verse as such; but, as necessary, endeavour to bring the substance of the record regarding the Saviour and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, to bear on this central truth – a truth which continues to be proclaimed wherever the Gospel is preached, and in all times of the Church’s history till He come.

In endeavouring, then, to handle this portion of the Word, we may deal conveniently with these main aspects of the subject: –

1. The necessity of being born again;
2. What it means to be born again; and
3. The result of a soul being born again: that soul sees the kingdom of God.

1. It is very evident that in our hearing about being born again and the necessity of it, we are not to take the language of the Teacher come from God literally, any more than we are to look upon Him as a door or gate when He says, “I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture.” Nicodemus apparently did not understand our Lord, and so – most probably in unfeigned astonishment – proceeded to

inquire into the meaning of these words from a literal point of view. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nevertheless, though one can be born into this world only once and have only one such birthday, there is another kind of birth into another world or state of being, and we must have our real, actual, heavenly birth into it, and birthday connected with it, be it known or unknown to the soul at the time – and that must take place while we are in this world – otherwise "that which is born of the flesh" will in principle remain "flesh," not only in the world that now is, but also in that which is to come. Why, the soul may ask, must one be born again? Why this unspeakably necessary change, so utterly beyond the power of a created being that it requires the exceeding greatness of the gracious power of God to perform it, and so to Him will belong the glory of it forever? Why, but that we are "born of the flesh." And so we inquire briefly what this word "flesh" means for us. A twofold use of the word will suffice for our present purpose.

First, it has a *good* meaning; and,

secondly, it is used in a *bad* sense, or to convey a meaning of an evil nature.

As to its *good* meaning, a passage or two may be found in this gospel to serve as an example. There are the well-known portions: "And the Word was made flesh." "And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." As used thus, the word obviously refers to the coming of the Lord into humanity and to the work of redemption in its full extent, which He undertook to accomplish. In this He was sinless, yet sin-laden. The word, therefore, when employed as above concerning Christ, involves complete freedom from impurity and pollution. He took upon Him our nature, and made manifest to all ages that it is possible to have a body of flesh and blood or flesh and bones, and yet to be untainted with evil.

Prior to examining the word in its opposite meaning, we may here remark that it is very frequently used in what may be called a relative or non-moral sense. This is especially common in the Old Testament. Adam said of Eve, when the Lord brought her to him, "This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Many such instances might be given. The main meaning in such cases is what in general and naturally belongs to rational being. But the meaning which falls to be most closely attended to in the present connection is of course that pertaining to moral evil, to sin, as involving the penalty of death, and that "filthiness of the flesh (literally) and spirit" which invariably is its accompaniment. That "flesh" should be employed to mean what is sinful, polluted in body and depraved in the sphere of spirit, is not surprising. It is plain that when lust first conceived and brought forth sin, the members of the body very effectually became instruments for evil of the perverse will and besotted mind. The lower passions and appetites obtained dominion. Moral purity – native love of holiness – ceased on the entrance of sin, and the whole man now minded "the things of the flesh." Self-satisfaction became the leading motive in action, the leading end in existence – even in matters otherwise quite lawful, not to mention what is forbidden. And so, having become "sold under sin," we desire independence of God, and were the depraved nature permitted, we should deprive Him of His eternal independence. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

This, then, is what is true concerning all mankind since "sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Adam, the first father and representative of the race, "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image," and ever since – with the exception of the last Adam, the Lord from heaven – "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." Now, to be a sinful creature, as Nicodemus was, until "washed with the washing of regeneration," involves two things.

The first is, that the Christless person is under the curse of his Maker, the Judge of all. This is, verily, sad truth. Who can understand it in its unsearchable depths – what it implies

for a soul to be *separated* from the God of holiness and love? “Who knows the power of thy wrath?” Yet we are plainly told that the soul under the sway of sin – unholy, unhealthy, and continuing disobedient to Him to whom all rational creatures, by necessity of nature, owe loving obedience – will inevitably be *outside* of His gracious kingdom, and so be an object of that holy displeasure which for ever is “the wrath to come.” For the soul continuing alienated from the life of God in Christ, is yet God’s prisoner – a prisoner of divine, unchangeable law. And a prisoner is one who is not allowed to go free until the law is satisfied as to his innocence, or until the penalty of his misdeeds has been paid. The way whereby we, as his prisoners, may go free is amply set before us in this portion of the Word, and the time may be nigh – even at our doors – when for us the Gospel will cease to be proclaimed any more. “But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

The second truth is, that the sinner is not only worthy of death, but that, in his moral nature, he is directly contrary to the nature of God. It is true that he is a rational being, and continues to be so – accountable to the Creator. Sin does not deprive man of his rational faculties, but rather perverts him in the God-honouring use of them. Without enlarging on our want of will to take any spiritual interest in His ways and works and house and kingdom, and our depravity in general, we may rather here seek to know that while sin reigns in our mortal bodies we remain unhealthy in soul and body. The slave of sin is moribund, that is, full of death. The Psalmist recorded what is true, whether we are conscious of that or not. “There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger: neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.”

Is not, then, a change necessary – one so great as to require new life, a new beginning, an entrance into a state of freedom which we do not, as “sold under sin,” enjoy, and in addition a nature like that of God? Otherwise we shall die in our sins – Christ-less, faith-less, hope-less, life-less.

2. So we proceed to inquire, in brief, what is implied in being born again. To be born after a natural manner means that a being different from all others is brought into the world. New life is there, and a new beginning. There is need of care and cherishing. So it is in a spiritual way. There is new life, and also – as the Lord tells Nicodemus – a mystery connected with the work of the Holy Spirit therein; just as there is mystery in the blowing of the wind, which “goeth toward the south, and turneth about toward the north; it whirlleth about continually.” We do not see it nor grasp it, yet we do not deny its presence and power. The new life is real and spiritual, as its issue, in a life and conversation becoming the Gospel, duly shows. But there is something in addition to the work of the Spirit of Christ in the soul in regenerating and bringing into the kingdom of God, which must previously be, otherwise there is no salvation. This is that specific work of the Redeemer Himself which He alone could perform, for all the ransomed are indebted to Him for redemption. It is to this work which the Father gave the Son to do that attention may first of all be directed.

In considering what the Father gave the Son to do, and what the Son undertook to perform, we shall here confine our remarks to two essential things: first, that this Saviour is the Son of God; and secondly, that He is a Priest in order to His being a Prophet and King over the holy hill of Zion.

First: that He was, is, and ever shall be the Beloved Son of the Father, is a truth we do not render thanks to God for as we ought. We have much reason of heart-grief to think how little we wonder and are amazed at the divine love, that it should please the Father to set apart the Son, the Ancient of Days, to be the Rock of Salvation as well as the Rock that begat all things that exist. If we gradually realise how little we at most know – even though there be

reason to conclude that one may have saving knowledge – of this theme of praise and thanksgiving to the taught of the Lord, it is surely becoming to seek earnestly an increasing knowledge of the glorious object of salvation, of Him who is God, with whom there is fulness of grace and truth; the Saviour, born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord, who “became what he was not, but never ceased to be what he eternally is.” May the eyes of our understanding be opened to view the abounding excellence of the Mediator of the better Covenant, for were we engrossed more in all that He is in Himself, and in what He became and accomplished in order that sinners might eventually be with Him where He is and behold His glory, how changed we all should be! What manner of persons we should then be in all holy conversation and godliness! May He grant us hearts to know Him, that we, too, may be permitted to sit at His feet and, in spirit and in truth, drink in that doctrine that drops as the rain and that speech that distils as the dew!

Secondly, let us observe that Christ, the Son of God and the Lord over all, blessed for evermore, became a Priest in order to His being a Prophet and King in a gracious way. If God has a kingdom of grace, mercy, and peace, and the Son rules over this kingdom, wearing a crown that shall flourish for ever, it is because He, the Son of Man, was lifted up, “even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.” It is because He was “given” as a surety, a sacrificial victim, a Lamb to take away the sin of the world. Hence the work of the Lord Jesus in offering Himself without spot to God, comes previous in order to His being a King, to subdue and hold sway, and to His being a Prophet, to bless His people with bread and advance them for evermore.

There is much that merits attention in meditating on such a subject as the Priesthood of our Lord. Such an Epistle as that to the Hebrews is taken up avowedly with it. Meantime, let us keep in view some of its main features. Foremost among these is that our Lord was the *called one* and the consecrated of the Father, to do this foundation work of salvation. To that end He received the Holy Spirit not by measure. In the human nature the Son-servant acted on behalf of all for whom the Father, in His sovereign authority, delegated Him to act as surety, as near kinsman, as the heaven-chosen and heaven-qualified propitiation. This is a truth evidently set forth in the Word of Truth. Secret things belong unto the Most High, and while this is rightly so we are called upon to wait patiently on Him alone, and to use the means as means which are set before us in His Word for our salvation. Let us also bear in mind that Christ, the Priest of the Most High God, offered the sacrifice of sacrifices only *once*. His obedience began with His being made flesh, and embraced His pouring out His soul unto death in bearing sin away by enduring the penalty due thereto. It was an obedience unto death, and included His being buried and coming under the power of death for a time, to the end that He might abolish death and bring life and incorruptibility to light through the Gospel. By one offering He hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified, and has become the author of eternal salvation unto all who believe on Him. For if any soul receive not Christ as Saviour from the guilt, stain, and being of sin, it is not due to the lack of merit or worth in His infinitely meritorious work – He being a person of infinite dignity – but rather because that soul will not come unto Him to have life. He offers Himself – whole and undivided – to every sinner to whom the tidings of great joy come. May He enable us to receive Him, that we may be made whole!

Such, then, are some of the outstanding truths concerning this foundation work of the Son of God, who “shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and shall be a Priest upon his throne.”

What is it, then, to be born again, in view of the Lord of Glory being lifted up on Calvary’s Cross, and dying without the gate, in the place of the unclean? To be born again is to come as a guilty creature and morally unclean unto the Lord Jesus Christ, for salvation from death and for cleansing from all unrighteousness. It is to come in order to be made

whole by Him, that we may love, serve, and obey Him who is the good Master, and able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. This coming is performed in the exercise of that faith whereby we appropriate to ourselves or receive Him as all our salvation and all our desire; whereby we rest upon Him wholly, finally, restfully, for salvation as He is offered to us in the revealed will. In believing in the Lord Jesus, a change occurs in a moment. The sinner, hitherto a prisoner of God, is now for ever free, and is accounted righteous with the righteousness of Christ. The sinner now stands upon Christ's merits, and knows no other stand. The Judge will remember his sins and iniquities no more. May our entreaty be that many be washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, that many, in view of such a gracious provision, may be espoused unto such a Bridegroom; that this man and that man there may be born in Zion, and be enrolled among those who say, "I am the Lord's;" and surname themselves by the name of Israel.

But not only is the soul in virtue of union to the Head of the Church brought into an estate of freedom, but he comes to be a partaker of the nature of the first-born among many brethren. Now Christ is the alone fountain of His people's holiness as well as the source of their righteousness. He puts a new heart and a right spirit within them, gives them an heart of flesh. They become lovers of God and of moral purity and of His truth, and are taught by Him in many wonderful ways what sin is and what its dire effects are. They grow in the loathing of sin and its false pleasures as they grow in their knowledge of Himself, their physician and source of health. Thus they are endowed with new life and begin to live unto God. This life is holy life and deathless life. No person, no power, no thing opposed to God and His kingdom can reach such life to cause irretrievable harm. Death hath over this rich life no power. And just as there is progress in natural life and need of daily sustenance, so there is progress in the spiritual sphere and daily need of the bread of life and of an appetite for it, and of being guided and preserved in all our goings, and that by the keeper of Israel, who slumbers not nor sleeps. As an instance of such development and fruit-bearing unto holiness, the case of Nicodemus himself may be cited. He is found on the death of our Lord with Joseph of Arimathea wrapping the body of the Saviour in the bundle of myrrh and aloes and laying the body in the new tomb in the garden. He was in this honoured in being permitted to do what he could. His work was a labour of love and all like-minded will likewise be heirs of the kingdom that fadeth not away.

There is a truth that might again be adverted to and emphasised before passing on to the closing part of our subject. It is that while a soul, willingly and consciously, believes savingly in Christ and becomes a debtor to the grace of God for salvation, yet it is God by His Spirit, all unconsciously to the soul and most mysteriously, who prepares the heart to receive Christ. The heart of man is in His hand "as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will." By His almighty gracious power He disposes the man to seek and empowers him to lay hold upon Christ. To receive the Son is to receive the Father, for "he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."

No one of himself desires to forsake sin with its delusions and service. May we learn this and be diligent in the use of the appointed means, waiting for and expecting, for the Mediator's sake, deliverance right early, if we have no reason to conclude that we possess it now. "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."

3. With these remarks on the unalterable change which takes effect when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to a sinful creature, and that person closes in with Him, saying, "I am thine: save thou me," let us note the issue of this new creation. "Verily, verily," says our text, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." A man is born again by the reception of Christ through the Spirit as his all-in-all. As Prophet, Christ lives for ever to show the soul the path of life which in His capacity as Priest He opened up when He obtained the new and living way into the holiest of all with His own blood which cleanses from all sin.

And as King He leads sinners into that way and guides them therein, bringing them at last to the full enjoyment of the kingdom that cannot be moved. This part of the subject leads to a large sphere. A few chief truths regarding the kingdom may here be noted.

First, this kingdom of Christ is especially a gracious and immovable one. God is in Christ “reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” He rules over the chosen and causes all things here below to work for His glory and their good. It is also an immovable kingdom, and yet in certain aspects of it, transitory in as far as limited by the conditions that now exist. The world and the fashion thereof pass away, and when His kingdom in this world reaches the bounds which in God’s secret will are appointed to it, it will cease to exist in its present form. His children enjoy now the earnest of the abiding inheritance, but when He comes without sin unto salvation, the gospel will cease to be proclaimed and the sacramental bread and wine eaten and drunk in the courts of His house. Yet in its main features, this kingdom is immovable. For as “the Lord shall reign for evermore,” so also

“His kingdom hath none end at all;  
It doth through ages all remain.”

Secondly, in this world there is no personal perfection, though souls are brought into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. We see in our day British prisoners freed from an enemy country, but, sad to say, coming home broken down in health. They are free from imprisonment, yet sorely require restoration to health. So with the soul in the day of mercy. It is freed as a bird out of the snare, yet it is to a great extent in ill-health spiritually, and has repeated occasion to lament, “O wretched man that I am!” but yet the renewed man can, in gratitude and good hope, add, “I thank God.” The believer is being restored to health, is dying unto sin, is learning of the greatness of the great salvation, and in the day of Christ, will be without spot or blemish or any such thing.

And in conclusion, let it be a word of encouragement to know that, whereas an earthly monarch cannot be expected to know more than a few of his subjects in a personal way, not to mention their needs and frailties and goodwill toward him, this King, eternal, immortal, invisible, having our nature in union with His glorious person – and the otherwise bridgeless gulf between creator and creature so spanned – knows each one of His own. “I know them, and they follow me.” Not one of them will be outside of the kingdom in the day when He makes up His jewels. He took knowledge of them helpless, godless, wilful, dead. He knows them when quickening them that they may call upon Him. He knows them in their frailty, despondency, and mourning their felt distance from the kingdom of God. He knows them in their repentance, love, and new obedience, for they are indebted to Himself for all heavenly growth. And in the great day when the good work begun among men in Eden will be brought to completion, He will confess them before the Father and before the holy angels, “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me.”

May we be among them in that day, and now obtain repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. “None perish that Him trust.” Amen.

[April 1916]