

A Sermon.

By the REV. D. MACFARLANE.

Preached at Dingwall on 8th October, 1916.

“For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” – Hebrews 9:16,17.

The Apostle in this chapter speaks of the necessity of the death of Christ, and in this connection he speaks of the death of animals as sacrifices in the Old Testament dispensation, by which the death of Christ was typified. When Christ came in the fulness of time the types ceased, for there was no more need of these sacrifices, because by His death He satisfied justice, and secured all the blessings of salvation for His people.

In speaking from our text I shall call your attention to the following particulars: –

I. – The Testator;

II. – The Testament, or Will; and

III. – The Legatees, in whose favour the Testament was made.

I. – The Testator: Christ, the Son of God. –

The Apostle here compares Christ to a man who made a will in favour of a certain person or persons. He is therefore called the Testator. The Apostle states that, as among men a testament or will is not of force till after the testator's death, in like manner the goods that Christ bequeathed were not distributed to the legatees without the shedding of blood, and as believers under the Old Testament were made partakers of these blessings, there was, as the Apostle shows, typical blood shed and applied during that dispensation, till Christ came and gave His own blood to be shed. It was not on the ground of the typical blood that was shed that believers in the Old Testament time were saved, but on the ground of Christ's death set forth in the type. They got salvation on credit of what Christ was to do. Christ promised to pay the debt contracted by His people, and the Father gave Him a long credit of four thousand years. We sometimes get food or other things on credit, perhaps for six months or a year, and then a demand is made for payment. We promise to pay when the due time comes, but although we would be honest people, we may not always be able to pay. But the Father knew that His Son was perfectly able to fulfil His promise, as He did when He offered up Himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God. Believers now, under the New Testament dispensation, do not receive salvation on credit, for Christ paid the whole price by His death, and this was one of the good things that was to come (Hebrews 9:11).

II. – The Testament, or Will. –

The testament is now sealed by the blood of Christ, and cannot be altered. A man during his lifetime may change his will, but after his death it cannot be changed by any one. There was a godly minister in Glasgow whose father was a landed proprietor, and made his will in favour of this minister, but at the time of “the Disruption” the son joined the Free Church, and his father was so displeased with him that he made up his mind to disinherit him. But before he could change the will, he died, and his son had the benefit of the will.

Christ having died, His will cannot be changed, although some try to change it. But if any alteration would be made, it was only the testator that had a right to alter it. This will is written out according to law, and is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which may be seen and read by all to whom the Scriptures come. What is in the will? There is in it unsearchable riches – eternal life – in short, all the blessings that we need in order to be saved and to be made truly happy for ever. In particular, justification, adoption, and sanctification are part of the legacy left by Christ to His people. How great are the blessings contained in the will! Men leave to their friends, according to their means. Some

may leave thousands of pounds; others, millions. But the riches that Christ left to His friends are, as already stated, unsearchable and also inexhaustible. Some may leave to their friends much riches, acquired by great labour, but the wealth that Christ left for His friends cost Him His humiliation unto death. He that was rich became poor, that we, who were poor indeed, through His poverty might become rich. Christ's poverty is the only poverty that is meritorious. He made Himself so poor in acquiring the riches for others that He parted with His life. He cried on the Cross, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. Think of what it cost Him when you read of His agony in the garden, and bloody sweat, and His cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

III. – The Legatees. –

Who are they? Till they are effectually called, none knows them but God only. They are spoken of in Scripture as the "elect," or those given by the Father to His Son in the everlasting covenant of grace. The legacy is intended for some of the human race, but not all. Though not all, they are many – even a great multitude "that no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues." That these might be brought in and made partakers of Christ and the benefits of His redemption, the Gospel is to be preached to all indiscriminately, to whom the joyful sound comes. Some may wonder that the Gospel is to be preached to every individual that comes to hear, seeing that it is only some that shall be saved. Our warrant for addressing the universal call of the Gospel to sinners is Christ's precept and example. He commanded the Apostles to "preach the Gospel to every creature," and He Himself called on "all the ends of the earth" to look to Him to be saved. Some speak of another warrant, such as the all-sufficiency of Christ's atonement to meet the lost condition of all sinners, but the warrant I mentioned appears to me to be the proper one. Although none but God only knows who are the legatees before their conversion, yet after their conversion they are made manifest to men as made partakers, to some extent, of the blessings of the will. Among men it is not the man that left the legacy that distributes it to those for whom it is intended, but another person. But as Christ is called "the Wonderful," He is indeed wonderful in this respect, for although He died to secure the blessings of the will, He rose again to hand these blessings to "the heirs of salvation."

The names of the legatees are in the will, and when the Spirit quickens them to life they are anxious to know if their names are in the will. At a time of persecution, when public preaching was forbidden, the Lord's people had to gather in some secluded spot among the hills to worship God, and the enemies sent troopers to hunt and punish any that would be seen going to these meetings. There was a godly young woman who went to one of these meetings, and the troopers met her, who, suspecting that she was going to the place of worship, asked her where she was going. She answered: "My elder brother died and left a large legacy to his friends, and the will is to be read to-day, and I am going to see if my name is in the will." As the troopers did not understand what she meant, they allowed her to pass on. Do you come to church when the Gospel is preached, like that woman, anxious to know if your name is in Christ's will?

When Christ distributes the legacy, what does He give? He gives Himself, who is infinitely greater than the other parts of the blessings. He gives faith to receive Him. He gives peace with God and peace of conscience. He gives full and free pardon. He gives joy unspeakable and full of glory. He gives the Holy Spirit to impart all these blessings. In a sentence, He gives grace and glory. When a legacy is left by men it is given in shares to the legatees – more to some than to others. But Christ gives the whole to every believer. Each one has a whole Christ for himself or herself, and a whole heaven also. To use an illustration: every man in the world has benefit of a whole sun, and not part of it merely – a whole sun to warm him and a whole sun to enlighten him. So it shall be in heaven, and although there are

degrees in glory, every one of the redeemed will have to say, "I have a whole heaven." One on earth may say, "I have a whole sun for myself," and another may say, "So have I, too." In like manner it shall be in heaven.

Some men who were very poor and destitute in this world, became very rich by legacies; but Christ's legatees were most poor of all. They were rich when God created them, but they lost all their wealth in a moment by sin, so that they were, spiritually, very poor indeed. But Christ having bequeathed a large legacy to them, they are now richer than can be told in words. This legacy raised them from "the dust and the dunghill, and set them among princes, even the princes of His people." As Christ is theirs, all blessings are theirs.

During their time on earth they are described in Scripture as poor, and often they have reason to say with the Psalmist, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me." They are often poor in their own experience, but not in what they have a right to. This reminds me of a saying of the great Dr. Kennedy. He said, "The vessel of your rights is now as full as it shall be in glory, though the vessel of your case may be quite empty." However, what they have a right to they shall be put in full possession of at the end.

Although the blessings of "the will" cost Christ so much, they are free to sinners, "without money and without price." You cannot have the blessings without Christ Himself. Many would like to have the blessings who are unwilling to receive Christ in the offer of the Gospel. Dr. Duncan, when a professor, was an elder in Dr. Moody Stuart's church, and one Sabbath Dr. Moody Stuart was preaching from the text, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1). The minister was comparing Christ to a merchant who was exhibiting his goods for sale, and inviting those present to buy. When the minister came down from the pulpit, Dr. Duncan said to him, "Do you know what I was thinking when you were preaching?" The minister said, "No; what was it?" Dr. Duncan said, "I was thinking that I would marry the Merchant, and then I would have Himself and His goods." Dr. Duncan knew what he said. If you would have Christ's goods you must marry Him, for you cannot have His goods apart from Himself. It is in union with Christ believers receive all the blessings of salvation. It is by vital union to the vine that the branch receives of the sap of that tree.

In this world it is in the means of grace that Christ gives a share of the blessings of "the will," and the rest He will give in heaven. They will get the whole in right here, and the whole in possession in glory. If you expect, then, to get any of the blessings of "the will," be diligent in the use of these means of grace, in private and in public, for they are the wells of salvation, out of which believers draw water with joy. The more they draw, the more they thirst for further draughts, till they reach the fountain-head in heaven, out of which they shall be drinking throughout all eternity without the sense of pain which accompanies thirst on earth. It is in this sense that it is written that they shall neither thirst nor hunger any more. "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters."

The means of grace on earth are rivers through which the water of life flows from the ocean above. Ah, to get a sight of Christ, so as to partake of the blessings which cost Him so much, in order to face eternity with holy boldness, "not reckoning the sufferings of the present time worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Amen.

[January 1917]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. DUNCAN M'BEATH, Free Church, Ness, Lewis.

[The Rev. D. M'Beath, who died in October, 1891, at the age of about 70 years, was highly esteemed as a faithful preacher of the Gospel. He was for many years a lay missionary, and was so much valued by the people at Ness that, with the consent of the General Assembly, they gave him a call to be their minister, which he accepted. He was then ordained, and laboured there for 13 years. Mr. M'Beath was a native of Fernamore, Applecross, where his father, Mr. John M'Beath, was a catechist. The present "Notes," sent by a friend at Diabaig, Torridon, appear to be from his own manuscript. – ED.]

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" – 1 Timothy 1:15.

The Apostle Paul addressed this Epistle to Timothy whom he calls his own "son in the faith," and who was an excellent young evangelist. Timothy's father was a Greek, and his mother a pious Jewess, as we find in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts, verses one to three. He was carefully educated in the Old Testament Scriptures from his childhood. Afterwards he came under the ministry of the Apostle who had such affection for him, and chose him for an assistant in the work of the ministry. By writing to Timothy on the glorious things pertaining to the Kingdom of Christ, the Apostle left divine directions for the use of the Church and its ministers in all succeeding ages. The Apostle asserts his apostolic office as an inspired servant of Christ, which binds his instructions on the conscience, for they bear the divine authority.

Having given various instructions and warnings for the Church's benefit, the Apostle touches on his favourite theme, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, by which, attended by the effectual power of the Holy Spirit, he himself was turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The preaching of this gospel was intrusted to him by divine revelation and commission, for which he expressed his grateful sense in ascribing all praise and glory to God who qualified, authorised, and strengthened him for this eminent service. And considering what he was previously, he saw unspeakable cause to declare the exceeding, abundant grace of God towards such an obstinate, self-deluding wretch as he was, that in him and by him there might be seen the Lord's all-sufficiency for the salvation of the very worst, or chief of sinners. Such reflections as these led the Apostle to give expression to the language of the text which may be said to be a summary of the Gospel. In the passage before us, we have the substance of the whole Gospel.

- I. – There is a Statement made, namely, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."
- II. – A Commendation of the doctrine contained in the Statement – "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation."
- III. – An instance by which it is illustrated – "of whom I am chief."
- IV. – The application.

I. – The statement made by the Apostle clearly shows:

- (1) the Person by whom this salvation was wrought out;
- (2) the nature of this salvation; and
- (3) the means by which it was executed.

(1) The divine record testifies that the Saviour is God manifested in the flesh. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him" (John 1:1-3). Here we have the clearest testimony to His eternity – His existence before He assumed our nature. This is confirmed by other passages, as, "He is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1: 17). It would be an easy matter to accumulate passages from the Old and New Testaments in confirmation of this doctrine that He is a divine Redeemer. To prove the divinity of our Saviour the Scriptures ascribe to Him the essential attributes of God, such as

omnipotence, omnipresence, and also names and titles that are given to the Father. But we also learn from the divine record that He is truly and properly man. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Those whose minds were enlightened saw this glory in Him who became "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and who was "despised and rejected of men." "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14). It was necessary for the execution of His undertaking as our Redeemer that He should be both God and man in one person. By the personal union of the divine and human natures He was constituted to be a fit Mediator between God and sinful men. "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." He is called Jesus, because He saves His people from their sins, and Christ, because He was anointed with the Spirit unto His mediatorial offices. He was furnished with a complete supply of all power and grace for the discharge of the glorious trust committed to Him.

We have the design of His mission into the world, "to save sinners." This implies the condition in which they were by their apostasy from God by violating the covenant of works. They came under the sentence of a broken law. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." They lost the image of God in which they were created, and an image the very opposite was set up in their heart. Darkness took possession of the mind, rebellion, of the will, and sensuality of the affections. The law of God demanded an obedience which man could not now yield, and the justice of God a punishment which he could neither sustain nor satisfy. He became liable to the miseries of this life and of that which is to come. The good gifts of God designed for his comfort, the privileges and advantages conferred for his benefit, he now made the occasion of departing farther from his bountiful Benefactor, of aggravating his guilt, and destroying his soul. Peace removed from the earth. Men became enemies to their Maker, and to one another. Violence, envy, rage, and oppression overspread the whole world. Eternal truth denounced tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil. All flesh corrupted themselves before Him; they became the slaves of sin, Satan, and the world, and deserving everlasting death. Such was the state of those He came to seek and to save.

(2) The nature of this Salvation.

It is salvation from the guilt of sin. Guilt binds the transgressor of the law to eternal punishment. Divine justice demands the infliction of this merited punishment on the sinner, or the Surety. This, as already said, could neither be sustained nor satisfied by man. But satisfaction having been made by the Surety, God is just in pardoning sin, in removing the guilt of it, and in dissolving the obligation upon the sinner to eternal punishment. It is, again, salvation from the corruption of sin, unto the renewal of the divine image by the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Moreover, it is also salvation from the punishment due to sin. He that believeth in Him shall not come into condemnation. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

(3) The means by which this salvation was accomplished.

The source from which it proceeded was the free, sovereign, boundless grace of God; the medium or means is the mediation of Jesus, the Son of God; the effectual application of it is effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit – this is His office and work in the economy of salvation.

Further, on this point, Jesus Christ by His incarnation, and perfect sinless obedience to the divine law, sustaining their deserved punishment, wrought out a righteousness of infinite merit, by which the law is magnified and made honourable. Thus, Jesus, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person, assumed our nature, undertook our cause, bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and suffered the due

punishment. Thus, the truth of God was indicated, justice satisfied, all the divine perfections glorified, and the salvation of sinners meritoriously procured. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He is set forth to be the propitiation "through faith in his blood." He endured the temptations of Satan, the scorn, rage, and malice of men, and above all, the wrath of God, "the curse of the law." "For it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (Isaiah 53:10). He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. Now, He is exalted at the right hand of God that by His prevalent intercession the salvation wrought out may be applied to all those given Him by the Father. He constantly executes His mediatorial offices, prophet, priest and king, in relation to His people.

II. – Next, let us consider briefly the commendation of the grand gospel statement by the Apostle. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance."

"A faithful saying." After the apostacy of man in the garden of Eden, God, in the riches of His grace and mercy, revealed for the first time His purpose to save from sin by the incarnation, death, and triumph of His own Son. The first promise was that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. In every succeeding age, this was confirmed by promises, types, and predictions. The Lord gave His oath that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us (Hebrews 6:17,18). In fulfilment of the promise Christ appeared in the fulness of the time. Witnesses were chosen to bear testimony to the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promise. John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, bore testimony. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Christ's personal teaching, miracles, resurrection and ascension, testified to the truth of this "faithful saying." The Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, by the rich effusion of His grace, also bore testimony. The Apostles, as faithful witnesses, by their preaching, inspired writings, holy lives, and suffering deaths, confirmed the truth stated in the text by the most convincing and overwhelming evidence. Was there such accumulated evidence adduced in support of any statement made in the world, to be compared for a moment to this?

But we have yet to bring forward another evidence which is of great importance, namely, the experience of those to whom this salvation was effectually applied. Multitudes of those saved have borne testimony to the faithfulness of this glorious message. Finally, on this point, God gave testimony to the word of His grace by many "signs and wonders," wrought by the hands of the Apostles. They bore testimony by words and works to Jesus Christ as the divine Saviour, and said, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:39-43).

The saying is not only faithful, but "worthy of all acceptance." This is not the estimate the world forms of this glorious message, and consequently the cold reception which the Gospel has met with in all ages. But there are others who have been convinced that they are poor, guilty, unworthy, sinful creatures, and it is hard to persuade them that such sinners as they can be saved. It is therefore stated that the saying is worthy of *all* acceptance, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Of whatever rank, class, or degree they may be, He is able to save those to the uttermost who come to God by Him. To such as have a sense of their unworthiness and demerit and the greatness of their sins, this is recommended to them as a faithful saying. There are many who, from a mistaken notion of their own goodness or good deeds, or a mistaken dependence on something of their own, undervalue this faithful saying. To them also the Apostle says it is worthy of all acceptance.

III. – His own case was a sufficient illustration of the truth of the statement. A greater proof and a more encouraging instance of this faithful saying can scarcely be imagined. He

was “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious,” but he obtained mercy. If he, who exceeded all others in malignant blasphemy of Christ, and persecution of His members, obtained mercy, may not the chief of sinners look to God for mercy on the ground of Christ’s merit? This affords the greatest encouragement to the vilest of sinners to plead for mercy and pardon, through the righteousness of Christ.

IV. – Lastly, in the way of application, it may be said that, if it holds forth the greatest encouragement, it also shows the greatest danger of neglecting the great salvation. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” What must be the aggravated guilt of those who are privileged with the gospel and its ordinances if they continue to reject this great salvation! He that believeth not maketh God a liar. How highly aggravated this sin of unbelief must be in the sight of God. How precious this passage of Scripture must be to true believers! “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom (the Apostle said) I am chief.”

[January 1917]

A Sermon

By the LATE JOHN KENNEDY, D. D., Dingwall.

“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” – Ezekiel 33:11.

This message from God contains, in the form of an oath, a declaration regarding Himself, and, with earnestness most intense, conveys a call to the house of Israel. The declaration and the call are therefore the two things to which the text demands our attention.

I. In considering the DECLARATION, we must first attend to the import and then to the form of it – to what God tells us, and to how He tells it.

1. The import of the declaration. It contains two statements. The first tells us, in what He hath not, and the second, in what He hath pleasure. Let us consider each of these separately.

(1) “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” And yet the wicked dies. He who saith, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked,” is He from whom came the message, “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.” The death of the finally impenitent is taken for granted. It is the mind of God regarding that certain event which the text calls us to consider. This passage gives no countenance to the idea that the death of the wicked is inconsistent with the mercy of God; for here we have divine mercy proclaimed right over it. In full view of this awful fact, Jehovah asserts His benevolence. Nor is it required – in order that we may reconcile it with the character of God as He is good – that we think of the death of the wicked as something less calamitous than eternal misery. Surely it is not mere temporary suffering, nor annihilation, over which Jehovah is exhibiting earnestness so intense. Only those who know not sin can be disposed to modify the retribution.

If a stranger, visiting this country, looked in on the homes made wretched by vice, some of which are not very far removed from the palace; or into the cells of our prisons, which are so prominent and so costly as government institutions, throughout our land; or on the sad scene of an execution, at which agents of the crown were present; – would he be justified in coming to the conclusion that our Sovereign was not benevolent – that such a state of things under her government was an evidence of our Queen’s lack of clemency? If the crime, on account of which the wretchedness, the bondage, and the execution were elements in the condition of the kingdom, was ignored, it would be no wonder if a conclusion, adverse to the character of our Queen, were drawn from these facts. But let the crime be taken into account – trace to crime these instances of misery – and then not a shadow of suspicion appears to rest on the throne of our kingdom, nor on the name of our Sovereign. A ruler that would forbid the exact exercise of justice in dealing with crime, would, in effect, be quite as oppressive as the most cruel of all despots. The mercy that winked at crime would produce more calamitous results than the sternest tyranny. Even goodness demands a restraint on crime, and punishment for the convicted criminal.

And let it never be forgotten that the death we are now considering, in relation to the government and character of God, is “the death of the wicked.” We must think of his crime when we think of his death – of his having resisted the will, disowned the authority, dishonoured the name, hated the being, and defied the power of God. Can we think of God as infinite in His being, glory, and goodness, without being constrained to conclude that eternal death is the wages due to all who thus sin against Him? Could we worship a God who, in the full knowledge of what He was, would award a punishment less than this? A God not necessarily to this extent just to Himself, could not be infinite, and could not be worshipped. Such awful justice as finds expression in the eternal death of the wicked, you must discover in the divine mode of government, ere you can either revere or love Him who is “over all.” If you accept in faith the truth of God’s infinity, you must accept as true the awful fact of the eternal death of all the wicked who remain unsaved.

The one pregnant difficulty is the existence of wickedness. While this fact must be assumed, it points to what must, to us, for ever remain an insoluble mystery in its relation to the will of God. But it is due to God, because of His infinite love of righteousness, that His

relation to the origin of sin should be regarded without any suspicion; and it is also due to Him, as Supreme Governor, that to His mind alone the perfect rectitude of this relation should appear. It should be deemed enough by us, if to Him the existence of sin appears to be perfectly consistent with all the glory of His holiness and goodness. Into what awful darkness your mind must enter, if you presume to attempt to occupy, in relation to this, any position except that of adoring silence! Do not venture, with your imperfect conceptions of the Most High, to imagine that His way of dealing with sin cannot be right, because it appears not so to you. Ignorant of God and, therefore ignorant of sin, men often venture to pass judgment on the moral government of God, as if they had before them a finite being, dealing with some trivial offence. All error has its root in ignorance of God; all ignorance of what may and should be known of God, in hatred of the light; and all painful difficulty – all feelings that interfere with our adoration of God, and our admiration of His ways – in the pride which thrusts us beyond our place as creatures in considering the ways of God. At any rate, the existence of sin furnishes an occasion for the infinite display of the very attributes of God on which it seems to cast a shadow – His holiness and His goodness – and a proof that God alone is necessarily infallible; for it appears that no creature can become so, either in heaven or on earth, except when, by a sovereign exercise of His goodness or of His grace, He involves their life in His own unchangeableness. If the existence of sin forms a dark background before which the glory of Him who alone is immutable all the more brightly appears, let our thoughts regarding its relation to Jehovah's sovereign will, produce the calmness of adoring silence behind the awe which overwhelms us, as we think of its moral hideousness and of its everlasting results.

There is no malevolence in God which could be gratified in the death of the creature of His hands. It is not because He delights not in mercy that sin has been permitted to exist, and death has been awarded as its wages. This is sufficiently proved by His providence and by His Gospel. Does He not cause His goodness to abound even to the evil and unthankful? Is not the earth, at any rate, a scene on which He makes manifest, in His providential dealings with sinful men, that He is "long-suffering and slow to wrath?" Each moment between birth and death is a fresh proof of this. And if, after a life made up of moments – each of them brightened by the goodness of God – the wicked dies at last, this calamity must be traced, not to lack of benevolence in God, but to impartial justice. And how ample the proof given in the cross that God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked! There, the death of wicked persons is seen dissociated from them, and endured by a person who is the only Begotten Son of God. There are the deaths of a countless multitude of wicked persons in one great retribution; and in the light of that awful fire, in which the wrath of God is exhaustively expressed, you may read the lesson of this text. They must die, but they so die in Christ that they shall surely live. Their deaths are swallowed up in the death of Him who is their Substitute; and because He alone is crucified, they all shall live. Here we see God dealing with sin apart from the person of the transgressor; and, instead of the guilty criminal, there stands at His bar a person who is His own only Begotten Son. O, how infinitely strong is the proof this affords, that it is from impartial justice, and not from malevolence towards the persons of the guilty, that the sentence comes forth which awards death to the wicked!

But there is more than this in the first statement – in God's declaration regarding Himself – which we have in the text. It tells us that such is the character of God, as revealed in the Gospel, that it is impossible for Him to find pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Now, it is not by ignoring the stern aspect of His character presented by the law, that you can be enabled to have before your mind the view of His character given in the text. Whatever was, is and must for ever be the character of God. He can never cease to be all He was revealed as being in the days of old. And by the law He reveals Himself now, just as He did then. You, as a sinner, have to do with Him under the same aspect of His character, and in

the same relation, as Lawgiver and Judge, as they who were under the former dispensation. And only in a way which is quite consistent with all He was, and with all He claimed, and with all He threatened, as the God of Sinai – only when His name is so before you, that you can recognise Him by the same glory which made awful the place of His presence on “the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire” – can you possibly attain to hope in His mercy.

Nor is it by concluding that, because God is love, therefore He loveth all, that you can have before you the view of His character presented in the text. Beware of being content with a hope that springs from believing in a love of God, apart from His Christ, and outside of the shelter of the Cross. It may relieve you of a superficial fear. It may excite a feeling of joy and gratitude in your heart. It may beget in you what you may regard as love to God. This love, too, may be the mainspring of very active movements in the bustle of external service; but it leaves you, after all, away from God, ignoring His majesty and holiness, dispensing with His Christ, and enjoying a peace that has been secured by a cheating, instead of a purging, of your conscience. The time was, when men openly preached an uncovenanted mercy as the resort of sinners, and laid the smoothness of that doctrine on the sores of the anxious. “Universal love,” in these days in which evangelism is in fashion, is but another form in which the same “deceit” is presented to the awakened. This is something from which an unrenewed man can take comfort. It is a pillow on which an alien can lay his head and be at ease far off from God. It keeps out of view the necessity of vital union to Christ, and of turning unto God; and the hope which it inspires can be attained without felt dependence on the sovereign grace, and without submitting to the renewing work of God the Holy Ghost.

“God is love;” but when you hear this, you are not told what must imply the declaration that He loves all, and that, therefore, He loves you. This tells us what He is, as revealed to us in the Cross, and what all who come to Him through Christ will find him to be. It is on this that faith has to operate. You have no right to regard that love, which is commended in the death of the Son, as embracing you, if you have not yet believed. It is only with the character, not at all with the purpose of God, that you have, in the first instance, to do. What right have you to say that He loves all? Have you seen into the heart of God, that you should say, He loves you, until you have reached, as a sinner, through faith, the bosom of His love in Christ? “But may I not think of God loving sinners without ascribing to Him any purpose to save?” God loving a sinner without a purpose to save him! The thing is inconceivable. I would reproach a fellow-sinner if I so conceived of his love. Love to one utterly ruined, and that love commanding resources that are sufficient for salvation, and yet no purpose to use them! Let not men so blaspheme the love of God. “But may I not conceive of God as loving men to the effect of providing salvation, and to the effect of purchasing redemption for them, without this being followed out to the result of His purpose taking actual effect in their salvation?” No, verily. For the love of God is one, as the love of the Three in One. The one love of the one God is the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If that love generated in the person of the Father a purpose to provide, and in the person of the Son a purpose to redeem, it must have generated in the person of the Holy Ghost a purpose to apply. You cannot assign one set of objects to it, as the love of the Father, and a different set of objects to it, as “the love of the Spirit.” And there can be no unaccomplished purpose of Jehovah. “My counsel shall stand,” saith the Lord, “and I will do all my pleasure.” “The world” which the Father loved and the Son redeemed, shall by the Spirit be convinced “of sin, righteousness, and judgment,” and thus the Father’s pleasure shall prosper, and the Son’s “travail” be rewarded, through the efficient grace of God the Holy Ghost.

You have no right to attempt to look in on the relation of Divine love to individuals, till first you attain, through faith, to a place among His children. “Secret things belong unto the Lord;” do not, then, try to share them with Him. In considering the doctrine of the text, you

have nothing to do with the question – “Does God love the wicked?” It is on the character of God that you are called to look, as He hath revealed this in the cross of His dear Son. You have no right to be influenced in judging of Divine procedure by preconceived ideas of Divine counsels, or of God Himself, but by the glory of His name, as He hath been pleased to reveal it. He does not tell me that He loves the wicked; but I am assured, when I look on Him as “He is love,” that He hath no pleasure in his death. The fullest exhibition of His character, and the overwhelming proof of His having no pleasure in the death of the wicked, are given to us in the cross of Jesus Christ. “Yes,” you say, “but it is in fulfilling a sovereign purpose of grace that He has revealed Himself there.” True, but it is infinite love which He has revealed. It is by this display of His love that you are to judge of the way in which it shall fare with you, if you come to Him in response to His call. Faith has infinite love on which to operate, in order to your encouragement. For, whatever be His purpose, it is abundantly evident that “God is love.” That is the character of Him to whom you are called to return. That is the view presented to you of Him to whom you are called to return, and it is with this that you have to do. And when you think of the special purpose in fulfilling which He has so revealed Himself, you may be all the more encouraged to return; for it is this which assures you that a salvation both free and sure awaits you when you come. The “purpose according to election,” while casting no shade on the infinity of the love, is a guarantee for the certainty of the salvation which you are called to accept. For a people, whom, in providing salvation for them, He accounted worthy of death, He gave His only begotten Son, that, buying them by His blood, He might save them by His power. You are called to meet that love in the Son as Jesus the Christ, and to present yourself on His blood as a suppliant for all the blessings of the covenant of grace. What more can you desiderate? What element of encouragement is wanting, in this form of doctrine, which any of the systems of evangelical theology, or all of them together, can supply?

(2) He tells us in what He hath pleasure – “that the wicked turn from his way and live.” The repentance of the wicked is an occasion of delight to God; for it is the first acknowledgment of His being “the true God;” the first tribute to His godhead from the creature of His hand; the first movement of a lost one from “the wrath to come;” the first rupture between him and that abominable thing which God hateth; the first act of homage to His Anointed, who is also His Son; the first fruit of the Spirit’s work of grace – it is grace returning to the fountain whence it came, and bringing a “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” sinner back to be “filled” with “all the fulness of God.”

Repentance is the turning of the wicked “from his way.” To this he was attached before, for in this he gratified the evil desires of his heart. But from “his own way,” as well as from all besides that is sinful, the true penitent turns to God. But he cannot do so without bringing the guilt and the source of his wandering with him when he comes. And he turns to God. To Him he desires to come, to be a debtor for forgiveness to His mercy, and for salvation to His grace, and to consecrate himself without reserve to His service. And he comes through Christ to God, for He is “the way, and the truth, and the life,” and “no man cometh to the Father but by” Him. He, as “the way,” is all that God, in the interest of His glory, can desiderate, and that is required to make Him perfectly suited to the sinner’s case. He who is “the way” is “the Word” “made flesh,” made sin, and made a curse. Through His flesh, rent because of sin and by the execution of the curse, “a new and living way” was opened unto “the holiest.” The entrance of this way is near to sinners in the Gospel – so near, that though the sinner can be brought nearer to it, it cannot be brought nearer to him. This way, no one but a sinner of our race may enter. It suits none else, and none besides is called. And his being a sinner is all regarding himself that is known to him who returns to God. It is not as a penitent, it is not as a loved one, it is as a “wicked” one, with all the guilt of his evil ways, and with all the

corruption of the old heart, that he comes. And when, as such, he comes to God through Christ for salvation from all sin, “there is joy in heaven over” him.

And it is pleasant to God that the penitent should “live;” and He secures that live he shall, and live for ever. Finding the Son, he finds life, for he finds in Him a righteousness in which he is set free from condemnation, and has a right to all the bliss that flows from the favour of God. He has now a principle of spiritual life in him, and the Spirit of life Himself to preserve and perfect it; and even now, foretastes of life may be his through faith; while beyond, in the full view of God, and before the wistful gaze of his own dimmed eye, are the rest, and bliss, and glory of the perfect life in heaven.

There are three reasons, each infinitely strong, why this should be pleasing to God. As our greatest pains and pleasures reach our hearts through their love, the measure of love must indicate the capacity for joy. But who can conceive what must be the gladness, resulting from the gratification of infinite love! And there is a threefold love of God, through the gratification of which He receives pleasure from the penitence and life of the wicked.

(1) His infinite love to His people. –

He embraces one whom He infinitely loves, when the repenting sinner reaches the bosom of His mercy. The loved one was lost, and the loved one was dead; and now the loved lost is found, and the loved dead is alive. It was only because this was ever present to His eternal mind, that Jehovah could have rested in His love to His chosen. But now the event is actual, and the divine joy is made known throughout all heaven. O, think of joy in heaven over one whose sins made the Son of God “a man of sorrows!”

(2) His infinite love to His Anointed One. –

Each case of conversion is an instalment of reward to Him for doing the will, and glorifying the name, of Him who sent Him. The Father loveth Him because He laid down His life that He might take it again; and this love he expresses in fulfilling the promise, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” This He sees when He sees “His seed” – when the Father draws sinners unto Him, and follows this up by giving them, in Him, “all spiritual blessings” according to His intercession. The bestowal of such a reward, on such a One, must, to God, be the occasion of infinite delight.

(3) His infinite love to Himself, and to righteousness. –

“God is love.” He is so when contemplated in the unity of the eternal Godhead. But love requires an object; and He Himself who is love is the first object of the love He is. It is because His own infinite moral glory is ever present to His omniscience, that, through His love, it yields to Him who is “over all” such delight that He is “blessed for ever.” And “God is love” as subsisting in a Trinity of Persons. “The Father loveth the Son,” and that Son is, and ever was, “daily His delight.” “I love the Father,” saith the Son, and I was “rejoicing always before Him.” And the Holy Spirit, who “proceedeth from the Father” and from the Son, lovingly fulfils the purpose of the Father through the Son. O, infinitely holy sphere! O, sphere of infinite loving – the unapproachable sphere of the interrelations and fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! And “God is love” to righteousness in His relation to His moral government. And when He makes manifest that He is love to His people, He does so in such a way as to secure that in their salvation there shall appear to His view, to His infinite delight, all to which He is love – as to afford an opportunity of expressing what He is as love to Himself, what the mutual love of the Trinity is, and how He loveth righteousness.

How the beauty of His holiness, to which He is love, appears in its having pleased Him to bruise His well Beloved, that there might be healing to diseased, and peace to guilty sinners! How infinite must be His delight in this display of His glory, and how intent He must be on the salvation in securing which this joy was occasioned! Never did so much of His glorious character appear in any of His works as in the cross of Christ; but all this came forth in the prosecution of a scheme which bore on the salvation of sinners. True, all redemption work is

before us in the cross. But the ulterior bearings of that work must be considered. Actual salvation is the terminating part of the divine scheme of grace, and each step of it must be brightened with the glory that shone forth in the course which led to it. If “truth met with mercy” in the cross, it was with a view to their coming forth together, from the presence of God on His throne, in the glad-tidings of the Gospel, to guide a sinner unto “the holiest,” where alone He can obtain the blessing. If “righteousness and peace embraced each other,” it was with a view to His being righteous to Christ, in giving peace, for His sake, to those who deserved to die. The infinite display, already given, finds its complement in a work of grace. To this new occasion of expressing Himself, He comes in all the glorious brightness of His name, as revealed in the cross. And in how many ways, in His work of grace, resulting in the penitence and life of the wicked, He manifests the glory of His power, wisdom, faithfulness, holiness, and love!

And how salvation furnishes an opportunity of exhibiting the mutual love of the Persons of the Godhead! The Father’s love to the Son appears in His having delivered all things into His hand; and you are called to look, in the light of the Gospel, on this demonstration of that wondrous love. And the Son desired that the world should know how He loved the Father, by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. O, infinite wonder, that the blood which tells you there is peace for a sinner, is the demonstration which the Son has given to the universe of His love to the Father! And the Spirit, as the Comforter, takes the things of Christ, and of the Father, and, in fulfilment of the Father’s purpose, and of the design of the Son’s death, shows them to the sinners who are made heirs of salvation!

And how exhaustive, even as a revelation of divine glory, is the expression of His love of righteousness given in the death of His Son! The sins of a people eternally beloved, are imputed to Him who is His only-begotten Son; and for those sins, even He dies the death of the cross! O, how could any other exercise of justice, or all acts of justice that can occur in the course of His moral government together, express His love of righteousness as the atoning death of His dear Son hath done? Only once did He, in the exercise of retributive justice, deal with one who was “His fellow,” and only then could He, in one final transaction, give an exhaustive display of His righteousness. O sinner, all that God is, as He “is love,” takes side with His mercy, when He receives and blesses him, who, at His call, comes to Him through Christ crucified!

2. The declaration is in *the form* of an oath –

“As I live, saith the Lord.” It is meet that such a declaration should have such a form, for thus only could earnestness, springing from infinite love, express itself fitly in words. What a proof this gives you of God’s intense desire that you should believe what He declares! He swears by Himself in declaring to you that He hath no pleasure in your death, but that He hath pleasure in the repentance and life of all who turn to Him. Ought you not to fear remaining an unbeliever after all? Is this divine earnestness to be met by indifference? Does this wave, coming from the divine sphere, in the eager movement of a solemn oath, strike on adamant when it reaches you? Can you dare to dash it back by presenting to it a heart of stone? Are you to be unmoved and callous before this display of divine earnestness infinitely intense? Are you to sleep on, while this oath from heaven, uttered by the voice of God, strikes on your ear? For, does He not give Himself, in all the reality of His being and glory and blessedness, as security, for the truth of His declaration? How real to God He Himself is! But as He consciously lives in what He is, as infinite, glorious, and blessed, so is He true in the declaration of the text. What higher, firmer ground of assurance can even God give you than this? O sinner, it is enough! You might suspend on this ten thousand times ten thousand souls, each one as lost as the one soul you have, and you would run no risk. O, yield not to the unbelief that would dare to prefer a charge of perjury against Him for whom it is impossible to lie!

And does He not give Himself, in all the infinite resources that are His as God, in pledge of action according to the declaration of the text? Does not this suffice? Can more be asked? He shall cease to have, He shall cease to be, ere He can fail to be the God of salvation to you, if you return to Him at His call. O, what condescension is here! O, how can you be at ease while the infinite Jehovah is thus in intensest earnestness bending over you? O, lie in the dust before Him, as He approaches you in this marvellous act of condescension, and allow Him to lay the weight of His oath on your heart, to press out of it all its doubts regarding His truth and grace!

II. – The Call.

From out of the midst of divine glory, from off the divine throne of grace, and intense with divine earnestness, comes the call to the house of Israel – “Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways.” Whence, whither, how to turn, are the questions which these words require us to consider.

1. Whence?

“From your evil ways.” Every way in which you depart from the fellowship and service of God is “evil.” Forsaking God is the great evil. It appears so to God as He looks on His own infinite glory, and on the provision of His everlasting love. How – because of His love to Himself, and of His zeal for His own glory – His holy indignation must rise into infinite flame, against that sin on the part of the creature of His hand! And how wonderful it is, that, in the full view of all that evil, and in His immovable resolution to deal out to all sin a full retribution according to justice, He should call the sinner from his evil ways, to be embraced on the bosom of His mercy! But the call is issued through the rent flesh of His own dear Son. The precious blood of His Lamb is before Him, as He calls the sinner from his evil ways; and to the praise of all His name, He can call the sinner to His mercy-seat. What the great High Priest presents meets all His holy indignation as it demanded expression in the infliction of the curse; and in gracious dealing, for His sake, with the wicked, it can be brought to bear, as consuming fire, on the sin whence sprang the guilt which atoning blood removed.

“From” all “your evil ways” you are called to turn; for there can be no turning unto God if there is any reserve of sin. Each evil way is opposed, by an infinite contrariety, to the will of God. Sometimes the conscious reserve is reduced, under the pressure of conscience, to one evil way. What eager cries come from the flesh, for that one, and only that one reserve! And what attempts will be made to come to terms with God, while still cleaving to some darling sin! But it may not be. All sin must be forsaken by the will that inclineth Godwards. How can Divine holiness admit of any reserve? To cover any sin with your embrace, is to place yourself naked before the sword of God. He must strike at sin. O, beware lest He strike at sin through you! Come forth in your desire, away from, quite out of, all sin, to God. “Cut off your right hand,” “pluck out the right eye,” rather than pass on to the fire that never shall be quenched. And how can Divine grace admit of a reserve? Salvation from all sin is the boon which grace confers. Nought less than this can express its bounty, and nought less than this can suffice for you. Less than this you cannot have from the hand of God. He cannot give you salvation to the dishonour of the law of Christ, as the one authoritative rule of life. His holy grace undertakes yet to give to the law, even in that form, its claims in full; and it begins to do so by bringing a sinner, with a heart broken from all sin, under its holy yoke.

“But must I rid myself of my guilt, and of my evil heart, before I come back to God?” Verily not. You are called to come as you are, in the midst of your evil ways, with all the guilt that lieth on you, and with all the fountain of evil in you. Burdened and filled with sin, having no righteousness to cover your persons, and no excuse to hide your guilt, and while there is nothing in all your consciousness but sin, all over and all through, – with no ability

yours but the fell power to transgress, – you are called to receive all the pardoning mercy and all the saving grace you need.

2. Whither?

To Himself God calls you. To Himself as revealed in the declaration going before – to Himself as on His throne of grace – to Himself through Jesus Christ. Beware of a godless Christianity, as well as of a Christless religion. Souls, having only the uneasiness caused by the fear of death, are anxious only for something that will take their blind dread away. They have not known God in His awful glory as Lawgiver and Judge, and they care not to realise Him in the person of the Saviour. They feel not their need of a divine Saviour to remove the guilt, and to subdue the power of sin. And they ask not to be admitted, under the Spirit's teaching, into the mystery of the cross, to see a way for sinners unto God. The glory shining from the face of Jesus draws them not through the Mediator unto God. And they shrink from the pressure of Divine authority on their conscience. But "he that believeth on me," saith Christ, "believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me." By Christ you must "believe in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Believing thus, God shall be before you in such an aspect of His character, and in such a relation to sinners through Christ, – in such marvellous love, and in such readiness to bless you when you come, – that you will be sweetly subdued into compliance with His call, and you cannot choose but to come. Divine glory, shining from the face of Jesus on a quickened soul, melts the heart, and causes it to flow down to the footstool of the throne of mercy. And the very view of God which wins his confidence, secures the homage of the penitent. He must appreciate His awful righteousness as displayed in the cross, as well as realise His majesty, ere he can have hope. And what he requires to encourage him, suffices to subdue him into an unreserved surrender of his whole being to God. The life that moves towards Him in hope, bows to His sovereign will, and lies in adoring worship at His footstool.

3. How?

In willingness to accept the terms proposed by God, as terms of salvation and of service. Even if you feel that you cannot come back to God – that, unless He, in His almighty grace, comes for you, you cannot come to Him – yea, even if you should shrink from asking Him to come, – if you only turn in the distant darkness to Him who is the way, and to God through Him, willing to owe Him the turning and drawing that you may come, as well as the blessing when you have come, – He "will pour out" His "Spirit unto you, and make known" His "words unto you." Turning thus, you will verily be debtors to His grace for all you need. And you may be hoping debtors, for He raiseth the poor from the dust, He bringeth the fallen from out of the horrible pit, and He gathereth, as He calleth, outcasts from the very ends of the earth.

Surely, then, God may ask the question, "*Why* will ye die?" You have this question to answer. The reason for your dying is not on God's side. He has abundantly shown this. And on your side it is not found in your fall in Adam, nor in the ruin resulting from that fall. It is not in your helplessness, for you are called to lie under the gracious power of God to be saved by Him. It is not in the influence of the world, insidious and mighty though that be, for it cannot constrain you to be aliens from God. It is not in the might of the great enemy, nor in the multitude of his hosts, nor in the depth of his cunning, nor in the greatness of his cruelty; for, "strong man" and "murderer" though he be, he cannot, for one moment, keep, you away from Him who calleth you, if you are disposed to come.

Then "*why will ye die?*" God meets you in the face, where you are, and as you are, with this question. You are bound to give an answer, for only your own unwillingness to return can slay you. And are you to remain unwilling? If so, how can you justify yourself? 'My

unwillingness,' you say, 'is just the lack of something which I can only have from God, and if He does not bestow it, then what can I do?' But, friend, do not think of your unwillingness as a mere negation – a blank for God to fill up. It is positive wickedness; it is sinful madness. It is an insult to God, implying contempt of His love, of His Son's precious blood, of His great salvation, and of His glorious name. To remain unwilling is to remain a rebel, disowning Divine authority, and bidding defiance to Divine power. And are you to choose this, rather than submit to be saved, ruled, and filled by God? 'Oh, but my unwillingness is the result of my being in a state of death as an alien from God, under the guilt and power of sin; how, then, can I help myself?' But, friend, the question is not, how you can help yourself, but, will you be indebted for all help to God? Will you die in your pride, even when confessedly helpless, rather than let Christ be "all in all" to you – rather than let the grace of God do all for you? To this point you are shut up, and this leaves your unwillingness exposed in all the nakedness of excuseless rebellion.

"Why will ye die?" Whatever may befall those who never heard the call to return to God, "why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," have been given you, and is death to be *your* end? But the Gospel has been preached to the Gentiles, and to Gentiles also God hath granted repentance unto life. To each Gospel-hearer, therefore, this question is addressed by God. "The Son of man," who came "to seek and to save that which was lost," has come to you in your sinful helplessness, offering Himself to be to you all that you need, in order to your everlasting salvation; and, after all, will ye die?

And "why will ye die? What is there in death, that you should choose it rather than life? And yet, every sinner who remains impenitent is charged with choosing death. God charges you with this when He addresses to you this question. And you are charged with choosing death because you love it, for He saith – "he that sinneth against me, wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death." Rejecting the Gospel is sinning against Christ. You cannot do so without wronging your own soul. And this you do because you hate Christ. Not because you are merely indifferent. You would not sin against Him as you do, if you were merely indifferent. A consideration of your own interest would turn the scale, if there was an even balance. But it is not indifference, but hatred, that is your state of feeling towards Christ. And you cannot hate Him without loving death. 'O no,' you say, 'I cannot love death – I shrink from shame and agony, and both are implied in death.' True, what you regard as death you would fain escape from. But, in the view of Christ, it is death to be away from God. And you do love to be away from Him. And in loving this, you love death. And such is your love of this that you will not abandon it, though God tells you, and your conscience whispers to you, that if you abide an alien, you must perish for ever. You know that the death you love is linked to the death of woe from which your conscience makes you shrink, and that you cannot cleave to the former, without holding both in your grasp. And you never have at once any portion of time but the passing moment; and on that narrow foothold you always stand at the brink of hell. What you do there, is always finally done, for it is done by you on all you have of time. And there you keep fast your hold of that which must bring you down. Even now and there you do so. O "why will ye die?" Is there aught in "outer darkness" to commend it to you, so that you would choose to pass into the midst of it? Or is there aught in the "devouring fire," and the "everlasting burnings," to induce you to "dwell" with them for ever? Care ye to be in the bonds of despair, and under the fang of the "worm" that "dieth not." O, "why will ye" thus "die?" To God, who puts the question, give, if you can dare, the answer. And if you have no answer to give, fall silenced before the footstool of Him who calleth you. But break the silence of excuselessness by a prayer for mercy, and continue to cry, till an answer cometh from the mercy-seat, "Turn me, and I shall be turned."

[February 1917]

A Sermon.

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

Preached at Edinburgh, on 20th November, 1916.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?” – Psalm 85:6.

In meditating upon these words for a short time, we shall consider three things in particular at present. We shall notice:

1. – The condition in which those who here prayed felt themselves to be in at the time, when they prayed, “Wilt thou not revive us again?”
2. – They were conscious of the great fact that it is God alone who can revive His own Church as well as individuals. It is not the work of man, it is the work of God.

3. – A certain effect which they expected would follow this reviving, and the effect was “that thy people may rejoice in thee.” They cannot rejoice while they are dead and disconsolate.

1. – Now, we are to consider, first, a few things in connection with the condition in which those who first offered this prayer found themselves in at the time, and it was a condition that needed reviving. They were conscious that they were dead, and that they needed reviving. You will notice that he uses the word here “again,” and that means that God did revive the Church in the past, but that they had now as much need of being revived, of having the work repeated, as they had at any time in the past.

Seeing that this was so, we shall notice a few things concerning the way in which the Church of God, the visible Church in the world, comes to be in such a condition as that she feels herself dead, and in need of reviving.

The first thing we have to notice in connection with that is this: –

God did many a time revive His cause in the world by quickening sinners, and by bringing them to repentance. But this is a thing that we ought always to remember, that, although God would have mercy upon one generation and bring many out of them, quickening them and imparting grace to them, yet the children of these men would just be as needful of being revived as their fathers. Grace does not run in the blood. We often felt the force of the statements that we find continually recurring in the Book of Judges. We find there that when God raised a Judge to judge Israel, there was a great reviving, and that continued generally for forty years. It struck us as being very wonderful that forty years was repeating itself so often in the history of the Jews during the time of the Judges, until we began to consider what really was the meaning of this period of forty years, recorded again and again, and we then saw that this was the reason, that, though God did reveal Himself to the generation among whom He raised the Judge, and though they were converted (and those who were not converted continued in the order of worship and other things which God commanded), many of their children who were raised up were ignorant and blind, and went away immediately from God. That is true down through history – that the children of godly parents, if not converted or revived themselves, will be as ignorant of God and of their own everlasting concerns as the heathen are, notwithstanding that God’s book is in their hands.

2. – We shall notice, in the second place, that, notwithstanding men forsake God, they always maintain a form of religion. It is not at all the way of man to cease to hold a form of religion in the world, but it will be a dead form, and there are several reasons concurring to bring about this.

The first thing I desire to notice in connection with it is that, when men are raised up to become ministers in the Church who were never revived, who were never converted themselves, they lead the people immediately to something that they can do themselves, to depend for eternity upon their own works, and if not upon their own works, they set before them a mercy in God which never delivered a sinner; “for the natural man,” however educated he may be, “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Any one who wishes to look back into past history will notice this, that it was an unconverted ministry that brought death almost in every instance upon the Church of God. Conversions cease, that is, true conversions, cease in the congregations where such men preach. They may be able to preach more eloquently than those who are taught of God, but not one sinner will ever be quickened or converted under the preaching of an unconverted man, however eloquent he may be, and, even however sound he may be; he brings death upon the congregation and upon individuals.

But, in the second place, it is not only that an unconverted ministry brings death upon the congregation by preaching to them a way of salvation which is not God’s way, and

holding forth that men will go to heaven by their own good works – and, indeed, they would require to have better works than they have – holding out that God is merciful, but they have no place in their doctrine for the atonement. They see no great need for the obedience and suffering and death of the Son of God in order to make atonement for the sins of men; and they see no need of the quickening work and convincing and converting work of the Holy Ghost, and this brings death upon a people.

The third thing I desire to notice in this connection is, that such men will not continue long until they begin to depart publicly from the great doctrines of God's truth. That can be proved in the history of the Bible. It can be proved also in profane history that, when the Church was filled with men who did not know for themselves the value, the exceedingly great value, of the atonement made upon Calvary's cross for poor, lost, perishing sinners, and the exceedingly great need that men had of being quickened by the Spirit of God – as none can quicken "the dead" but God – men went to heresies, and the history of the Church discovers that such heresies brought death, not upon one congregation only, but some heresies in the past (such as the Pelagian heresy, and others), brought death upon the whole of the Churches in the known world. Men were realising then that conversions ceased, and that men were dead and formal in their worship immediately after forsaking the great doctrine of man's total depravity and lost condition as a sinner by the Fall, so that heresy brings extraordinary death upon men. They become dead to eternal things, dead to their own concerns as lost sinners, dead as to their need of having a saving interest in Christ, and, as I shall have to notice afterwards, none can deliver from this death but God himself.

We shall notice, in the fourth place, under this head, how the death that reigns in this country came to reign in it. If you will look into it, you will find that it just came exactly as we have been showing. A whole host of ministers were raised up who did not realise the value of God's word, and who never realised in their own experience the infinite need of the atonement and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, who never realised in their own experience their need of the Spirit of Grace and Supplications to quicken and to change man's nature, and to cause sinners to repent and believe in Christ. Men rose who looked upon these things as antiquated doctrines, and who were quite prepared to drink in their fill of the rationalism of Germany. The ministry of this country, we say, drank their fill of the rationalism of Germany. They began to preach that there were many things in the Bible which were not right; that there were many things in it which were even immoral, the Book which God claims as His Own Book, and the Book of which Christ said, "Until the heavens and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle shall pass away from the law until all be fulfilled." Now, the effect of that was in this country –

First, a demand to cast out of the Creed what these men did not realise as necessary. There was not to be a word in it about man's total depravity, there was not to be a word in it about election, there was not to be a word in it about a particular atonement or about the application of the redemption purchased by Christ by the Holy Ghost to the souls of sinners whom God purposed to save. These, and other doctrines also, were thrown entirely out of the Creed of the *Free Church* about twenty-four years ago. I ask any man, however dead we were twenty-four years ago, I ask that man to look upon Scotland, and see whether we are not more dead now than we were then. The effect of it has been that the most of the people of this country – I mean just now, Scotland – have been converted to infidelity. Some of them go the length of boasting that they are atheists. The half of the people of this country never darken the door of a church. The cause of the whole thing was that men, ignorant of God and His Church, of themselves as sinners, and of the great doctrines of the grace of God, destroyed the Creed of the Church and taught lies to the people. The Spirit of God never acknowledges anything but truth. Men have made efforts again and again to have revivals, being conscious of the fact that their congregations were gone to the four winds, and that they would require

now to have a revival. Instead of looking to heaven and praying to God in the name of Christ to send His Holy Spirit to revive and change men, they looked to America. It is from there that we are expecting, as a country, to get something to revive us! If men are not more dead after these Americans go away than they were before they came, they are certainly not more living to the things of eternity and their everlasting concerns. If there be any in Scotland today who see how things have gone back in this country to death and darkness, it is time, my friends, that we should begin to pray with the Church of old, "Wilt thou not revive us again?" Otherwise we are undone. Men may like to go on in the pleasures of sin, men may enjoy these, but God tells us that the end of these things is death, death eternal, and anyone who has any idea of what it is to be a sinner, and a sinner's need of being saved, must realise that, in our day, the most are dead and going to a lost eternity. But, before I leave this, I must mention one thing, and it is that we do not believe that God, my friends, will forsake His own people, however few they may be, and however antiquated they may be looked upon, who will cling to God's truth and to His way of salvation, by the gospel of His grace. Certainly, in the midst of death, He will give them a reviving.

Let us notice, in the second place, how they are conscious that they could not revive themselves, but had full confidence that God could revive them. Just like the leper that came to Christ and said to Him, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," and He answered, "I will, be thou clean." You will see that the question that is asked here – "Wilt thou not revive us?" – means that they believed that He had the power, but could not say what His will was as regards the day in which the Psalm was written, and the same thing is true now. None who knows God savingly can have the least doubt in his or her mind but that God is able to quicken the dead – to revive not only one soul, but to revive millions of them at a time – in a moment, if that be His will, but what His will is, is a thing that men do not know. He reveals a great deal of His will. We know a great deal that certainly will be accomplished, but what He is going to do with the present generation is a thing that no one can say; but you can go the length of praying with the Church, "Wilt thou not revive us?"

Now, I desire to notice two or three things in connection with this second head, and the first thing is this – that God did revive His own cause, His own Church, in days when things were very low in the past, and He did it also when men did not expect it. You find in one place that when God revived His Church, those who lived at that time described their experience passing through this great work, as "men that dreamed."

"When Sion's bondage God turned back,
We were like men that dreamed."

They could hardly believe that what they were seeing with their eyes was actually a fact, when God began the work mightily by His Word and Spirit in the souls of men.

In connection with this, I desire to instance three or four cases in which this happened.

I desire to go back just now to the time of Hezekiah, King of Judah. Things were very low then. If you read the beginning of the prophecy of Isaiah you will see how dark things looked – how really low things were – for He calls the people there, "Sodom and Gomorrah," and their rulers, "rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah." He declares their sins were red as scarlet, and crimson, just as if you were depicting the condition of this country at the present time. Our rulers are not better than the people; our sins are as scarlet, yea, as crimson, but He invites us to come and reason with Him. About four years after the seven tribes on the west of Jordan – called Israel in those days – were taken away captive by the King of Assyria, Hezekiah and his princes resolved to hold the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem, and that messengers should be sent through the land of Israel to invite those who were left of these tribes to come to that feast. You find that those who went were mocked by the people, but notwithstanding that most of the people mocked these messengers, there were a few out of

these tribes who humbled themselves and came, and that shows that it was pride that caused the rest not to come. And when the seven days of the feast were finished, such was the experience of these men and women of God's infinite love and pity towards them, that they could not separate, but began to plead that they should have other seven days. When these were over they went and broke down all the idolatry – the idols and the idol-worship – in the land of Judah, and went on till they reached Dan. That was God's work. You will notice that it was just through the means that God revives men, just by the means – the word preached and read, the sacraments administered (we do not mean by that that the Sacrament of the Supper is a converting ordinance at all) – and you find that this reviving which He gave to the Church in the days of Hezekiah continued for a considerable time.

Again, how low things were in the visible Church when our Lord Jesus Christ was upon the earth! He had to describe the professors of that day – those who were the most strict – as hypocrites over and over again. That is how God Himself, when He appeared in the world in human nature, had to describe the Church, and you may depend upon it that it was not bigotry nor narrowness that caused Him to do it, but because truth demanded it. He described them as having taken away the key of knowledge, as having not entered themselves into the kingdom of heaven, and as having prevented those who would enter into it. On the Day of Pentecost God revived His Church by the doctrines of grace. Peter charged the people with the very sins which they had committed, and the Spirit of God made those charges that the Apostle levelled against his audience as pricks in their consciences. He convinced them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and we read that three thousand were added to the Church in one day of such as should be saved. That was decidedly not the work of man; it was God's work – God the Holy Ghost making use of the word of truth, for He will never use any other instrument but His own sword. And that reviving which began in Jerusalem went over the whole Roman Empire, even within twenty years after the Day of Pentecost, and the Gospel He sent went to the ends of the earth, because God's Spirit accompanied the word and made it effectual unto salvation to the souls of poor, lost, perishing sinners.

I desire to notice, again, a third instance. See you how dead, exceedingly dead, things were before the Reformation broke out in Europe, – perhaps I would not be wrong in saying that in the history of time, since the beginning of time, perhaps even in the days of Noah, things were not lower. It is set before us in the Book of Revelation as a time in which the witnesses were dead on the streets of the city, and the people rejoiced because these witnesses, who tormented them who lived on the earth – that is, who told them that their sins, if continued in, would bring them down lower than the grave, to weeping and gnashing of teeth – had now ceased; and they sent presents to one another in their rejoicing. But after a dark, long night the witness became alive, when the breath of the Holy Ghost breathed into men; and we had the first effects of it in this country itself. John Wycliffe was about the first who raised his voice against the iniquities of the Church of Rome. You have John Huss immediately after. You have also Jerome of Prague. You have, one hundred years later, Luther, whom God quickened by His Word and Spirit in a cell down in the basement of a monastery in Germany, and made him realise that he was a sinner, that God was angry with him, and that he would be lost for ever unless he received forgiveness of sins. He went through all the inventions of the Church of Rome, and that conscientiously, trying to see if he could attain to peace of conscience – to forgiveness of sins – but he never could attain to it. He was only getting worse and worse, when the Scripture came to him three times: “The just shall live by faith.” But Luther, like Samuel, did not know God's voice. But the third time it came he was just in the very act of trying to obtain eternal life by his own merits. It was by faith upon Christ that he was saved. Now, when Luther received Christ as He was offered to him in the Gospel as his own Saviour, and without any merit of his own, he rested upon Christ alone for salvation. Faith, my friends, is just like an empty hand. It is not a thing that

brings anything to God, but it comes empty, needful, to receive from God what it needs, and that is forgiveness through the blood of Christ for all sins – past, present, and future. Now, when God raised this man and when he saw how many millions were going to eternity dead in trespasses and sins, deceived by the Church of Rome, by the Papacy, he immediately began to preach to his fellowmen that there was no merit in man's works, but that the whole foundation of man's salvation was Christ, the Son of God, in the glory of His person, and in the glory of His offices as the Prophet and the Priest and the King of the Church, and that in the glory of the merit of His blood He washed away the sins of the guiltiest sinner who would come to Him. There was a reviving of God's Church. Men and women were rising up, day after day, who were throwing away from them their idols and their superstition and their works of darkness, and they showed in their life and conversation in the world that they were living men – living for eternity and not for time only. This reviving took place also in our own country.

But before I leave this second head I desire to point out this, my friends, that if you look at this country to-day, are we not in need of reviving as much as ever we were in our past history? Are we not perishing – going to a lost eternity – pleased with ourselves, having plenty to flatter us to our ruin, calling out, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace? Are men not sinning against God on Sabbath-days and week-days, refusing to give the place to the Son of God which the Father gave Him, and from which no creature can dislodge Him; refusing to give the place to the Holy Ghost, whom the Father and the Son gave to be the Comforter of the Church? It was He who was to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. It was He who was to glorify Christ by taking of the things that are His and revealing them to lost men. Since we have taken the work of the Spirit into our own hands what death has come over us! Although we should speak with tongues even as angels, if God's Spirit will not make use of that, it is nothing better than sounding brass. It may please the ears at the time, but it is from God the increase must come. Even although Paul himself should plant and although Apollos should water, it is God, my friends, that must give the increase. While we are looking for the increase anywhere else than from God, from Jesus Christ, who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour at the right hand of God, and who is there at this moment for this purpose, that He might give repentance to Israel and remission of sins, we shall remain dead. We have much reason, much cause, why we should in our day pray this prayer over again from the bottom of our hearts, "Wilt thou not revive us again?"

3. – But, as time will not allow me to enlarge, we shall notice now, in the third place, a few things as to the effect in the hearts of those who would see and also realise such a work as this – God reviving His people, reviving the dead, converting sinners and turning them from the ways in which destroyers go into the way of truth and salvation. He says "that thy people may rejoice in thee."

Now, I desire to notice in connection with this three or four things.

The first thing is this: – Our text brings God Himself before us as the great object of the rejoicing of His people (not excluding at all other things), but it is a fact that true godliness rejoices in God Himself, as you find the Virgin Mary saying when she went to see her cousin Elizabeth. She said her soul was rejoicing in God her Saviour. They who have God – the three Persons – for time and for eternity, have ample cause why they should rejoice, for it matters very little to those who have God as their own God whether it should be death or life, as neither of these things can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, consequently the Church cannot rejoice in God, except He revives them. And I may mention, in connection with this, that it is not only that death that came upon all men by the Fall, but a deeper death, I fear, than the ordinary. All by nature are dead in trespasses and sins, but there seem to be times in which men are more dead in their minds, as if they could

not think at all about things that are spiritual, things that are eternal; as if they had become so materialistic in their minds that they cannot think of anything but this present life and the things of the world. Well, at such times as these, when men live and spend their time providing for the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, it is a common thing that the people of God themselves become more dead; and, if you look at the professors of our own day and compare them with those who professed religion, say, forty years ago, what do you see? At that time men and women would warn sinners seriously, advise them, bring them to a private corner, and speak seriously to them; rebuke them for Sabbath desecration, and other sins. And we remember well when boys, if playing on God's day, would run away as fast as they could if they saw one of God's people coming their way, but how are they now? They laugh in your face. Well, a part of that effect is just what I mentioned already. How it is lying like mountains of brass upon the souls of those who are dead in trespasses and sins! But there is a part of this deadness lying upon the souls of God's own people, and, if we are not deceived, some are conscious of being dead, more dead than they believe those who fear God ought to be, so dead that they will be sometimes questioning if they have been revived at all. So you see that they have a cause why they should pray for reviving for themselves, and for the true Church. How much do we need to pray, "Wilt thou not revive us?" and, if He will do that, men then could rejoice in Him; for it is the living that praise Him in that day.

The first cause of rejoicing, as I said already, is God Himself, what He is in His own Being, a God of infinite love, infinite mercy, infinite pity towards lost men; while, at the same time, He is a holy and just, and an eternal God. When those who are revived can behold the glory of the Lord in the Bible, as a man looking at a friend's face in a glass, they begin to rejoice in Him, for what He is in Himself and what He is to them as their own God, their portion for time and for eternity.

I desire to notice another reason why they rejoice in Him. We are told that He knows well who are His, whether men know them or not. They rejoice in His salvation, not only in Himself. I remember reading in Dr. Owen's writings about times of trial, when men would be put to the test, as to whether they would follow Christ and forsake all. He said that no man or woman, for any opinion or knowledge he or she might have of Christ, could follow Him and part with things they had seen or handled, who had only a notional knowledge; but those who behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, who were enabled to receive Him as their own Saviour, he said that neither death nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, could ever separate these from Christ. Now they rejoice in His salvation at a time when He revives His Church, and when their own faith is revived and strengthened, and when they can say "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine." They can rejoice that day in their portion, they can rejoice in what He is; but, when they look upon perishing sinners in the world, they would have to fold their hands and conclude they were all lost but for what they know of God's salvation. How suitable it is for perishing men, and how God is able to make the most careless sinner begin to seek with all his or her heart God in Christ as their own portion. They rejoice in this, and what a cause of rejoicing they have. When they look upon their own families, or congregations, should they be ministers, they could have nothing but mournings, were it not that they know that God is able to revive and bring to life again the dead souls of men, and that He is able to make a people willing in a day of His power, and that He is able to cause men to forsake the ways of sin, and of the world.

If you have the grace of God in your heart, when you look at your son or your daughter without grace, you cannot rejoice in anything that they can do, and you cannot rejoice in anything that they possess, but in this one thing that God is merciful, and that, for Christ's sake, He may, to His own glory, save your son or daughter. If we know anything at all, when we look at immortal souls we have no other cause of rejoicing in the world but this – that we

know assuredly that God can quicken the dead and that He is just when He justifies the ungodly; that He invites sinners to come to Him to receive life, to come with an empty hand and stretch it forth to receive eternal life in the gift of God through Jesus Christ, without money and without price, and that is a cause of rejoicing.

But I desire to notice one other thing, before I stop, as a cause why God's people rejoice in Him, and especially at times when He revives His Church again and revives themselves. There is such a thing as enjoyment in the things of God. If you never could say that you found any joy in God's house, and if you be dead in trespasses and sins, it is more than probable that you never felt anything in God's house but the coldest house that ever you were in. The flesh can get something in the picture-house, in the theatre, at the dance, at the vain song, but the flesh can get nothing in God's house unless you bring the song and the play into it. If you do this you can get something for carnal men and women to enjoy, but a spiritual worship is tastelessness itself, a weariness to the carnal mind, but it is not so to those who are revived. David could testify by his own experience that he would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of his God than dwell in the tents of iniquity, and that was the name he gave to the house in which he dwelt himself, for he says, "The Lord is a sun and a shield, and he will give grace and he will give glory, and he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." He was revived in his very heart in God's house and in the means of grace in private. He says, "It is good for me to draw near unto God." How is it with you? Well, my friends, God can make His own people rejoice in drawing nigh unto Him in secret, in their own secret closet, and He may make them rejoice in the public means. They said before, "Master, it is good for us to be here." It is called a feast of fat things; not at all, my friends, of inferior things, but of the best, of wine on the lees, well refined, and this is the wine of God's infinite mercy and pity towards perishing men. He is offering this to sinners who will accept of Christ as He is freely offered in the Gospel. That has many a time caused men to rejoice in Him, and to rejoice in Him more than the world could rejoice when their corn and wine did abound.

But I must not be detaining you. But would to God, my friends, that He would answer this prayer again to our beloved country; that He would revive us again, and you would see if that were to take place, how the people of this country would turn their back immediately upon all their own inventions; how they would cast away their idols to the moles and the bats, and how they would devote themselves with their whole heart to worship God according to His own Word, and that, in one day, would make union in Scotland which men could not break down, but nothing else will do it. No; men may make unions merely for policy's sake; putting things together which cannot be joined. When God begins this work He can warm men's hearts by His Spirit, by His love, and He can unite men in their hearts to one another in such a way that the power of Satan and of men cannot separate them. That is a union which we would, with all our heart, pray for, a union in the love of God, in the love of Christ; a union in the Holy Ghost, a union in the Word of God, in every syllable of it. We would pray for it, rejoice at seeing it, and, if we are not deceived altogether, would like to see it tomorrow. But other efforts by dead men to put two pieces of cold iron together will be as unavailing as anything man ever tried, for it is impossible, my friends, to join men unless there be love in the union, and love makes an honourable union, and a lasting union, and a profitable union. May the Lord bless anything consistent with His Word!

[March 1917]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. CHRISTOPHER MUNRO
of Kilmuir, Skye, and Strathy, Sutherlandshire.
Preached at Kilmuir on 2nd July, 1864.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” – John 14:27.

Here Christ may be said to be making His last will and testament in behalf of His disciples, and in it there is an answer to Peter’s question who said at one time, “We have forsaken all things and followed thee, and what will thou give us? or what shall we receive?” With many other things that may be learned from the context, we have one of them in the passage read as a subject of meditation on peace, the nature of which peace is declared in the statement – “my peace.” Let us consider,

- I. – this peace as explained by Christ;
- II. – the manner in which it is given, “I give it you, not as the world;” and
- III. – the fruits – freedom from trouble and fear.

I. – Let us consider the nature of the peace spoken of by Christ. There is no peace, says God, to the wicked, that is, to the sinner as such, for with him God is at variance, because man has transgressed the law and continues to offend his Maker, and, by doing so, provokes Him more and more. We see, at times, among men, what may be taken as a faint illustration of this state of variance. There is a man of high rank, of great wealth and honour. A son of his commits some act or other that deeply offends his father. As it reflects on his rank and honour, or because it disgraces him in the eye of society, he banishes his son from his presence, disowns him as one of his family, disinherits him and suffers him not to come near

his house, and denies him all access to his presence. This must be painful to the son; he feels that his father is displeased at him, and has no peace for the loss of his inheritance. This grieves him and makes him unhappy, and leaves him to the upbraidings of his own conscience. But the state of man as a sinner is far worse than this, for it is God who is offended by him: He who has power over him in time and eternity; Who has his life in His hands, and who can kill both soul and body in hell for ever. As much as God excels the creature, so much does peace with Him exceed in value peace with any man. As the wrath which sin has kindled in God cannot be appeased, but by a complete satisfaction being given to Him as a true righteous and holy God, man can never procure peace by anything he is able to do or suffer. This being foreseen and God having purposed to save many men, He laid the chastisement of their peace on His Son. He appointed Him to procure peace, and, therefore, Christ calls it here His peace. He came to the world to stand in their law room, and till He finished the work He had to do, this peace was not His in a certain sense. While on earth His feelings in general were of the nature that rendered Him "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." These are the results of sin. "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." "In sorrow thou shalt eat bread." Christ felt no sorrow, no grief on account of any sins of His own, but He was dealt with as if He were a sinner, and that because the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of all His people. He sinned not, but for the sins of His people He bore the curse and the punishment of sin, and in enduring this, He experienced what it is to have no peace with God; what it is to do with the anger and wrath due to sin. His state of feeling under these is indicated in what He said on several occasions. "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." There never was such an appeal as this made to the mercy and love of God. A sinless Son, the object of eternal love, overwhelmed with trouble, appealing to one of infinite compassion and claiming Him as His Father, never thinking of anyone else, never looking in any other direction for help, nor expecting any from another quarter, and yet there could no relief be granted. In what striking light does the expression used by Him set the intensity of His feelings! "What shall I say?" He who knew all things, and who spake as never man spake; He who had a word of instruction to every one that applied to Him for information; He who could speak to the deepest yearnings of humanity; who could administer comfort to the sorrowful of every description; who could warn and exhort and unfold the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge, and, with ease, lay bare the most hidden workings of a heart deceitful above all things; He seems here at a loss what to say in the circumstances in which He stood. He saw at a distance as if it were a dark cloud accumulating; He knew it was charged with divine wrath, even the wrath which His people deserved, and that it would have to burst forth with fury on Him as their substitute. At the contemplation thereof His holy soul was troubled, and cried out, "Father, save me from this hour." "But it was for this I came unto the world. It was in order to stand in their room and bear this wrath and so turn it away from them forever."

See Him again in the garden, stretched on the cold ground, under the chilling shades of night, and in a bloody sweat caused by the agony of soul into which He fell from the same cause. See Him at Pilate's tribunal, where every indignity was done Him that cruel scorners could invent. See Him on the Cross, and hear Him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

In all these it is seen what it is to do with God angry at sin. Having finished the work, having died and risen from the dead, in possession of what peace is He seen? This is His peace; His purchased peace, His possessed peace, which is a part of the glory into which He entered after His sufferings, and in which He dwells forever. The darkness that hid His Father's countenance passed away, and it now shines on Him in its full glory and sweetness and joy, never more to be obscured nor hidden from Him. With what joy He ascended into glory accompanied by the heavenly host! With what acclamations are the

eternal gates of heaven called upon to open that the King of Glory may enter! With what welcome is He met there as the good and faithful servant! What must be His soul satisfaction now at the right hand of the Father! What peace is here! It is that which is His as the Head of His Church, and which He bestows on His people: this is part of the legacy that He has left to His Church on His departure from earth. It could not have been procured but by His leaving them and going to the Father in the manner He did. No wonder then though He said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." It is not of their securing, nor does it depend on their merits. As enjoyed here it does depend on their walking with God or in the ways of His commandments, but, strictly speaking, Christ is their peace; its source is in Him, so it shall never fail.

II. – Let us consider the manner in which this peace is given. "Not as the world giveth." The world give to those whom they consider worthy of their bounty. They give sometimes in order to gain fame, and not with any desire to benefit those on whom they bestow. Christ no doubt gives to receive glory, but never without having the highest welfare of those on whom He bestows it on view. The world often give, and would afterwards deprive men of their gifts; but this never takes place with Him. The world sometimes in giving fail to accomplish their intentions in the least degree, or, instead of doing good, increase the evil they would remove; but He never fails to alleviate the miseries of those whom He succours. He upbraids not when He gives liberally. "According to the riches of His grace" He gives. But this is never done by men; they give but little to any according to their means, but He gives according to His riches in glory.

III. – Let us now consider the advantages flowing from Christ's peace. They are these – peace with God and peace of conscience. In consequence of these advantages, they have no cause to be troubled or to be afraid in want or sickness, in distress or in calamity, in the prospects of trials, in the expectation of death, in going through the dark valley of the shadow of death, or at the resurrection, when they shall be raised up from the long sleep of death, and see Christ coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on all the ignorant and unbelieving. For, though appearing in such glory and terrible majesty, yet He shall even then be their peace, so that they need not be in trouble or fear. No wonder then, though it is said to pass all knowledge, and that it is said of them whose it is, "Happy art thou, O Israel! who is a people like unto thee; a people saved by the Lord?" Abide in Him, then, ye who have believed in Him, and follow peace with all men. Walk in His ways, and hear and obey His voice daily that "your peace may flow as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." Ye who are unbelievers, this peace is not yet yours. You may now think that you can easily do without it, but the day is coming that shall prove to you that there is nothing more dreadful than to be destitute of peace with God. May it be in mercy! Amen.

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