

A Sermon.

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(Taken down by a hearer, at Oban, and revised by the author.)

Christ in the Ship, stilling the Tempest.

“And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” – Mark 4:35-41.

The Lord Jesus Christ was a Prophet, mighty in word and deed, before God and all the people. He spoke unto the people in those remarkable discourses that are recorded in the Gospels, the words of eternal life. Still, there were not many that heard the report, who believed the Gospel. There were only a few, comparatively, who were brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light through the personal ministry of the Great Prophet of the Church. As a Prophet, He was mighty in deed as well as in word, and He spake by His deeds, as well as His words, unto the people of that generation, while He still continues to speak by both unto subsequent generations concerning the things of His kingdom. The Gospels give us a record of many remarkable miracles that He wrought, which justified His claims to be the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. One said concerning Him, “If this man were not of God, He could do nothing.” It is perfectly plain that if He had been a false prophet, such wonderful works could not have been performed by Him. The Father would not have sealed any claim but that which was true and just. We have frequent and convincing demonstration, therefore, in the life of Christ that He was the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Redeemer of Israel, by the wonderful works that He accomplished.

Now, His words and works have been put on record for the instruction and encouragement of the children of men in subsequent ages. We are not to think that, because the Lord Jesus has ascended on high, and has entered into the immediate presence of the Father, He is not able still to do things such as human power cannot accomplish. “He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever”; and those miracles of His have been recorded to teach us that He can accomplish wonders still that are altogether beyond human skill or human resource. This, I believe, is true in the realm of providence (though, perhaps, in a different manner), as well as in the realm of grace. We do not recognise, as we should, the wonder-working hand of Christ in providence. We fix our attention upon secondary causes, and upon creature instruments, and we are apt to ascribe all that is done, all the success that is attained, unto the creature, when, if we were rightly taught, we would see, and acknowledge, the almighty power of Christ. “All power” has been given Him. But truly, it may be affirmed that, in the realm of the Christian's experience, and of the experience of the Church, we may see frequently, if we had eyes to see it, that He that speaketh in righteousness in the Word of the Gospel is still “mighty to save.” There are some men of a sceptical cast of mind, who do not believe in the miracles that are recorded in the Scriptures. They refuse to accept any testimony with regard to supernatural acts on the part of God. Why are these men disbelievers in miracles? Just because they themselves were never the subjects of any miracle. For one thing, they were never subjects of the miracle of the new birth, whereby a sinner is “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God that liveth and

abideth for ever.” Any soul that has passed through the experience of the new birth, that knows what it is to pass from spiritual death to spiritual life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the kingdom of God’s dear Son, has no difficulty in believing in heaven-wrought miracles. They, therefore, expose their own spiritual nakedness in no ordinary degree, who do not believe in the miracles of the Old and the New Testaments.

Now, in this particular passage of God’s Word, we have the account of a very remarkable work that Christ performed upon the Sea of Galilee, and I desire, in dependence upon the Spirit of Truth, to consider what is here recorded in the light of its spiritual meaning and significance. We may learn many things from this astonishing miracle, many things concerning the trials and difficulties of God’s people, and many things concerning Christ’s grace and wonder-working power. Let us observe: –

- I. – The Lord Jesus in this ship, with his disciples, on a passage across the Sea of Galilee.
- II. – The great storm that arose, with its consequences.
- III. – Christ asleep in the hinder part of the ship.
- IV. – The disciples awaking Him, with the cry, “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?”
- V. – The answer which Christ gave unto their cry. He rebuked the wind, and there was a great calm; and then He rebuked them for their unbelief; and
- VI. – In the last place, the impression that was produced on their minds by Christ’s word and work on this occasion. “They feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”

I. – First, then, let us observe, for a little, the Lord Jesus in this ship. Now, I shall consider the ship as an emblem of the human soul, and the first thing to which I desire to call your attention is that it was by Christ’s own command that this voyage was begun. He said, “Let us pass over unto the other side.” My friends, if ever a soul began a spiritual voyage from the shore of this world to the shore of eternity, he began it at the command of the Redeemer. “The Lord spake and it was done.” Naturally, we cleave to the world and the things of it; we do not desire to be loosed from the thralldom of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and so the command must come forth from the lips of the glorious Redeemer if a sinner is to turn his back upon the service of sin and Satan, if he is to turn his back upon the world, with its vanities, and with its pleasures. “Let us pass over,” He said, “unto the other side.”

You will further notice here the time at which He gave this command. It was “when the even was come.” Darkness had over spread the land, and it is when the sinner is in darkness that he first hears the command of Christ. He is not walking in light; he is shrouded in the darkness of worldliness and unbelief or in the felt darkness of distance from God; but at such a time as that, Christ is pleased to send forth His people upon the spiritual journey to the everlasting kingdom in which there is nothing but perfect light and perfect love.

It is to be observed further in this connection that, when the disciples got the commandment to pass over to the other side, they obeyed the voice of Christ. His word was with power. “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” and they immediately began to obey His call, and what was the first thing that they did? The first thing they did was to send away the multitude. They could not take the multitude and Christ along with them. And so, my friends, if you have heard the call of Christ to real saving purpose, you will send away the multitude, you will turn your back upon the world lying in wickedness. I do not mean that you will go away into a monastery or convent. That is not required of us according to God’s word. Christ prayed not that His disciples should be taken out of the world but that they

should be kept from the evil, and there is such a thing as being in the world and yet not of the world; there is such a thing as being separate in spirit and in practice from the world that lieth in wickedness, though lawfully engaged in its midst. Well, the disciples on this occasion realised plainly that they could not take the multitude along with Christ, and so they sent away the multitude.

Then the next thing that we are told is that they “took Him even as He was in the ship.” He had been in the ship all that day teaching the people that were on the shore. He was speaking to them the words of truth, the words of life, whether many of them profitted or not. I have not the slightest doubt but His own disciples were benefitted; those who were willing to be taught by Him were deriving benefit from His instruction. And now that He gives commandment that the disciples should loose from the shore and that they should set out upon a voyage, they are willing that it should be so, and they take Him as He was in the ship. Now, I understand this to mean that they took Christ without waiting for any outward or common preparation. They did not wait for preparing Him in any way for the journey. He was there in the garments that He had on during the day, during the time that He was teaching. They took Christ just as He was. And oh! my friends, this is a mark of those who hear the voice of Christ to real purpose in the word of the Gospel. They take Christ as He is. But that is not the way the majority of people would wish to take Him. The majority wish to add something to Him or take something from Him, in His person and His doctrine. This has been the way with false teachers and false Christians in all ages and generations. They are not willing to take Christ as He is; especially they are not willing to take Him with soiled garments in seasons of reproach and persecution. If Christ were brought near to them clothed in beautiful garments, clothed in garments that pleased the carnal eye and gratified the senses, they would be willing to have Him, but they are not prepared to take Christ and those soiled garments that He has through the reproach, the spitting and the mud that are cast upon Him by the world. I say, therefore, that it is a blessed mark of real saving faith on the part of any sinner when he is prepared to take a whole Christ in the ship of his soul as the reproached as well as the exalted Jesus.

Further, we read that “there were also with Him other little ships.” Christ was not in these ships. Still they were in the company of the ship in which Christ was, and so these little ships shared both in the storm and in the deliverance. My friends, it is a good thing to be in the company of Christ and His disciples, it is a good thing to associate oneself with those who fear the name of the Lord and live by the faith of Jesus Christ. Although you may not have as yet Christ in the ship with you, you will derive benefit by the society of Christ’s disciples. You will experience some of the storms that they have to come through, by being associated with them, but you will also experience some of the blessings that come to the ship in which Christ is. If those little ships had not been sailing with the ship in which Christ was, it is hard to say what would have become of them amidst the raging waters, but we have no record of their loss. It is quite possible there were some in these little ships, who were saying, “I am sorry we have not Christ in the ship with us. We would consider it an honour, the most precious thing under the sun, to have Christ in the ship with us.” And it is certainly true under the gospel that if there is a real, sincere, reigning desire to have Christ in the ship, that desire will be satisfied. “He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” “And there were also with Him other little ships.” Ah, therefore, you that are still without Christ, seek the society of God’s people; seek to be in their company; and seek that the Lord would extend the blessing to you although you are yet without it. He is able to do so, and He has done so to such persons in all ages and generations. It is a saying that grace does not run in the blood, but that it often runs in the line of the families of God’s people. They have a privilege that others have not, though sometimes they do not make the use of the privilege that they ought to do. It is hard to say at what moment the Lord in His abundant mercy may

pay them a saving visit, may visit their souls with His light and His truth, manifesting Himself as the God of their salvation. "The promise is unto you and to your children."

II. – I pass on now, in the second place, to observe the great storm of wind that arose. It might be that the disciples supposed that, when they had Christ in the ship with them, they would have a smooth and comfortable journey to the other side. At any-rate, I have no doubt they thought they would get across without any special difficulty. They might have bargained for some little ripple upon the waters, some contrary winds and waves, but they did not look for what actually happened. And here, my friends, although the Lord of life and glory was in the ship with these few disciples, a great storm of wind arose, which powerfully stirred the waves of the lake so that they began actually to come into the ship. Ah! it was not one wave occasionally that broke into the ship: one wave rapidly succeeded another. First, there was a little water in the ship, then the water increased until at last the ship in which Christ and His disciples were was actually full of water, and you know – some of you far better than I do – that, when a boat is full of water and is tossed amid the roaring billows, it is not far from sinking to the bottom. Now, I think that here we have brought before us something that is true in more or less degree of believers who are endeavouring to make their spiritual journey across the ocean of life. Oh! very probably when you began your course, you were like the disciples, thinking you would have a comparatively smooth passage. Had you not Christ in you? Had you not Christ with you? And I may notice here that there was a promise wrapped up in the command of Christ to pass over unto the other side. He would never have presented to them in the way He did the prospect of reaching the other side, if He was not assuring them that they would arrive safely there. Well, it may be you thought that, when you had all these spiritual privileges and comforts, things would go well and prosperous with you; but perhaps you were not very long upon the spiritual voyage when a storm arose. The Lord, in His mysterious providence, has appointed adversity for His people. He said to His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," and it may have happened that much tribulation soon succeeded the comfort that you enjoyed.

What are some of the waves of tribulation that pass over God's children? I may say, in the first place, there are *waves of common tribulation*, or tribulation which they have in common with the rest of the world. They may be called upon to suffer affliction in their bodies; they may have to experience trials in their families; and they may be called to endure deprivation in their temporal circumstances. Many are the waves of common tribulation which pass over the children of God, and in the times in which we live this is peculiarly and eminently true. When this great storm of wind arose, even this dreadful War that is still raging upon the Continent of Europe and upon the sea, we see that God's people have been called to endure waves of great tribulation in common with the rest of the world. They have not been exempted; they have suffered many hard and sore trials and bereavements in connection with their families.

Then, I observe, secondly, that there are also *waves of spiritual tribulation*, or tribulation of a special kind peculiar unto them who believe in Jesus and are His true followers. These waves, I may say, are outward and inward. There is, for example, the wave of *human persecution*. All that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution in one way or another. They may not be persecuted in the open and notorious way in which our reforming ancestors and our covenanting ancestors were persecuted, but if they will be faithful to Christ and to His word, they cannot but expect to meet with the opposition and hatred of the world. The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman cannot live comfortably together. True it is that the Lord sometimes makes the enemies of His children to be at peace with them, but that is to the praise of His sovereign grace and wonder-working power and not to the credit of what is in sinful, rebellious man. Then, I observe that there are waves of inward affliction or trial. For example, sometimes a wave of *corruption*, that seems as if it were completely subdued in the

soul, arises, and the child of God is ready to be overwhelmed. He had supposed that sin was subdued in him; he had supposed that such inward manifestations of the power of iniquity were things belonging to the past, but here he finds that they are still within his breast, a sea that constantly casts up mire and dirt, and he is constrained to cry, "Iniquities prevail against me." "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And then, again, there is a wave of *Satanic temptation*. You will remember that, when the Lord Jesus received the most clear demonstration from heaven that He was the beloved Son of the Father, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Wave after wave of Satanic temptation passed over His holy soul, and shall His people be exempted from this? No. I do not say that all those who have Christ in the ship of their souls experience the same measure of this kind of temptation. Some of God's children get a comparatively easy course through this present world, but I think I am safe in saying that the greater number know what it is to have wave after wave of Satan's temptations passing over them. He has many ways by which he tries them. He endeavours to persuade them that they know nothing aright, know nothing to any saving purpose; he tries to cast doubt into their minds concerning the glorious Redeemer Himself, as to whether He was the Son of God. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." And sometimes he may raise up dreadful unbelieving thoughts in virtue of the various trials that they are called to come through. They may be ready to conclude that these outward and providential trials are indications that the Lord is against them, and not for them, and that they never knew the Christ of God in truth, or even evidences that there is no God, and that religion is all a delusion.

Again, there is sometimes a wave of God's fatherly *displeasure*. The Lord is not pleased with them in their waywardness, in their rebelliousness, in their giving place to the suggestions of the adversary, or it may be, in doing something that is positively contrary to His word and to His precepts, and He sends a wave of His holy and fatherly displeasure over their souls.

There are other waves of a spiritual kind that might be mentioned. The Lord's people may be concerned not only about their own spiritual standing, but about the spiritual standing of others, in whom they are deeply interested. And oh! my friends, there are many waves of trials passing over the minds and hearts of God's children in these times, in connection with members of their families exposed to imminent danger and death, about whom they are not assured that these friends are in Christ or prepared for eternity. What extraordinary waves these trials are, they only know who go through such in their own personal and individual experience!

Now we see, further, that "the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." The ship, apparently, could hardly hold one drop more, and seemed to be on the brink of destruction. And is that not sometimes the case when the child of God experiences wave after wave meeting upon him? It may be as he walks by the way, or it may be in the still hours of the night, one wave after another comes in upon his mind, and he seems to have no standing ground. A wave of Satan's temptations may stir up rebellion within him, so that he is afraid that he will blaspheme the Most High, if not with his lips, in his heart. Ah! these are heavy waves, when the ship is full.

III. – I proceed now, in the third place, to observe Christ "asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship." Here, my friends, is a most astonishing circumstance. The Son of God was in the ship; a storm of wind was blowing upon the little vessel; the waves were slipping one after another into the ship; the water was all around, and must have come up to where He was. He must have been partially submerged under the water if the ship was full, as the words most clearly tells us that it was, and yet all the time He continued to sleep. The sound of the wind and the incoming of the water made no impression upon Him.

Now, what have we brought before us here in this wondrous circumstance? Well, we have certainly brought before us *the humanity of Christ*. Why was He asleep? For one thing, He was sleeping just through weariness, from exhaustion and fatigue, like others of the human race. He had been speaking to the multitude all the day, and I daresay He was observing that His words were making very little real impression upon the great majority of them, and between the exercise of speaking and the painfulness of seeing how little the vast majority of the hearers understood or appreciated the words of eternal life, He was wearied in mind and body, and so the Son of God asleep in this vessel teaches us His true, His genuine humanity. But then, I observe that this wondrous circumstance teaches us *His glorious Godhead*. If He were man only, there cannot be the slightest doubt but the wind and the waves would have aroused Him, would have stirred Him up and brought Him to an active posture, but He was the eternal Son of God, the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person. At the very moment that, in His humanity, He was almost submerged under the flood of water, in His glorious Godhead He sat upon the floods; He reigned King amidst the storm, and amidst the waves; He held the lake and the billows, and the ship in the hollow of His hand. There was an absolute impossibility that the ship in which Christ was could sink.

But let me observe that He was "asleep." Well, my friends, this was literally true here – Christ was physically asleep, just like any other. Is there any parallel to this in the spiritual experience of His people or in the history of His Church? Yes; the Lord Jesus at certain times is asleep as to the arm of His power compared with other seasons. He is the same essentially yesterday, to-day, and for ever. "His arm is not shortened that it cannot save; his ear is not heavy that it cannot hear," but He does not always put forth the arm of His power with the same degree of manifest energy. For example, you find the prophet Isaiah exclaiming, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord, as in the ancient days," as if, in a sense, the arm of the Lord was asleep. And so, my friends, in a comparative sense Christ is sometimes asleep in the souls of His people and in His true Church. The storm is blowing upon the ship, one wave after another is coming in, and yet He makes no motion; He does not put forth any power to help. And why is He asleep? Sometimes He is asleep because of sin. Sin has provoked Him justly to hide His face; sin has provoked Him to withdraw the exercise of His power. He is truly in the ship, but He is for the time being as if He were not in it at all, and the poor soul is in great distress. Would not these disciples have supposed that, whenever the wind began to blow and the waves began to come in, Christ would immediately get up out of His sleep and put forth His hand for their deliverance? But He did it not. He has His own ways and His own reasons for not arising at once to the help of His disciples.

There is a peculiarity that belongs to our fallen nature that is not to our credit, and that is, that sometimes when the Lord comes immediately to our help, we do not value it to the same extent. And we are apt to take credit to ourselves for some personal worthiness or excellency, as much as to say, "He thinks so highly of us that He cannot leave us a moment in trouble without stretching forth His hand to deliver us." Ah! the Lord Jesus is a wise as well as loving Saviour, and He will teach His disciples what poor, unbelieving creatures they are – not for their destruction but for their edification; He will shew them their own helplessness, their own unworthiness, and their absolute dependence upon Him as the God of their salvation, before He commands deliverance.

And one may safely say that at the present time Christ is to a considerable extent asleep, so far as gracious activity is concerned. Do we not see that there are floods coming into the visible Church, the enemy coming in like a flood, and yet the Lord appears not to put forth any power to stem the tide? Do, we not see this terrible War raging? Christ is certainly King of Sion and King of nations; He is still in the midst of the Church and in the midst of the nations, and yet He is asleep so far as any complete deliverance is concerned. He is allowing

the wind to blow; He is allowing the waves to come in; He is allowing the storm to rage; and the ship of the State – the national ship of many nations – is well-nigh full and ready to sink. Well, although He apparently takes no notice and does not put forth His hand to save, He is observing all the time, allowing poor sinful creatures to do their best, and teaching the nations how utterly helpless they are, with all their men, all their resources, all their wisdom and all their weapons, to bring this terrible storm to a conclusion. Oh! what a mercy it would be if they would be compelled, I do not say to give up the use of means, but to confess their sins and acknowledge that it is only the King of Sion and the King of nations who can bring the storm to a calm. There would then be hope in Israel concerning this terrible thing that has come upon us.

IV. – I pass on now to observe, in the fourth place, that the disciples began to awake Him, and say, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?”

The disciples realised at last that things were coming to a climax, that they were near destruction, and that, if the ship were to be saved, Christ would have to come to their rescue.

Now, my friends, here they did what was right; they appealed to Christ Himself to help them, to command deliverance. They did the very thing that they should have done sooner; and this is what the soul ought to do in its extremity. “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” But you say, “Do not God’s people always do this?” Ah! well, they do not always do it with the measure of earnestness that is necessary or profitable. They are often too easy about matters, and the Lord will have them aroused out of their lethargy. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” It has often been that when they were brought to their wits’ end, and that when they fell down as it were on their very faces, resolved that they would not rise until the Lord would command deliverance, that He spoke the word on their behalf. My friends, Christ is not angry with any soul that will beseech Him with importunity, that will endeavour to take the kingdom by force of earnest, persevering supplication. He is not angry with a soul determined to get an answer, saying, “To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

But you will see that in this appeal, “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” there is the mark of imperfection, of unbelief. When they addressed Christ thus, they suggested that they were in doubt whether He cared for their perishing or not, shewing that they were still unbelieving, rebellious creatures, ready to reflect on the Lord Himself when they were brought into straits. Oh! He cared infinitely more than they had any conception of; He was caring for them all the time, and not a hair of their heads would perish. He was there with them, and it was impossible that the ship in which He was could sink to the bottom, yet we see how the murmur of unbelief comes out. “Master, carest Thou not that we perish?” We are not to judge Christ by sensible signs at times, but this is often the utterance of unbelief, the utterance of a soul not realising Christ’s love or its own guilty deserts. If we had a deep, keen sense of what we deserve in the presence of a holy and just God, we would not be so ready to murmur against His painful dispensations. I do not speak this in a way of unsympathetic feeling towards persons in trial, whether of mind or body, but I say that we have such a slight sense of what we deserve as guilty, hell-deserving, rebellious creatures, that we are apt to doubt the care of the Most High, when He is caring for us all the time.

V. – This leads me now, in the fifth place, to observe the answer the Son of God gave to their cry. First, “He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”

Ah! He did not deal with them according to their unbelief. He dealt with them according to the riches of His own grace and love, although their very prayer cast a reflection upon His loving and unchangeable care. He answered them as if their petitions had been perfect in all respects. Oh! what wondrous love is this! He covers all their sins from His eyes. Christ came

into the world for this very purpose, that He might work out a righteousness to satisfy the claims of law and justice, and that He might weave a garment with His own holy fingers, that would cover all their guilt and defilement and corruption. He hears immediately when they cry, and He rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still." He spake the word, and it was done without delay. "The voice of this great Lord" is full of majesty and power, and oh! is not this full of encouragement to poor sinners? How it should teach us to call upon the Lord; how it should teach us to depend upon Him. And I believe that if there was more daily, constant, loving dependence upon Christ, upon His grace and upon His word, we would have more frequent experience of His wonder-working power in commanding deliverances for us. We would have miracles in our own private history, that would give occasion to praise His name for His goodness, and for His wonderful works unto the children of men.

Then you will, secondly, observe that He answered them in another way, in a way also that they did not expect, but in a way that was for their profit. He rebuked the wind and there was a great calm, and then He rebuked the unbelief that was in them, and this is as profitable as the other. He said, "Why are ye so fearful?" What is the reason that you are so full of fear? One might be ready to say at first sight, "Surely there was reason for fear? Was the wind not blowing like a tornado, were not the waves coming into the ship, was the ship not full of water, were they not just on the very point of sinking? Surely there was reason to fear?" "Why," says Christ, "are ye so fearful?" He did not mean that there was no reason at all for fear, but He said in effect that if they were considering who He was, what He had already done, what He had promised to do – He had promised in effect that they would reach the other side – they would not have given way to such overwhelming and unbelieving fears. And then, "How is it that ye have no faith?" I do not understand that the Redeemer here is expressing a doubt as to whether they possessed the principle of faith in their hearts. There was no doubt as to their possessing that, but He is rebuking them for the want of faith in exercise, for the want of the practical exercise of faith.

How is it that He thus rebukes them when we consider human inability apart from divine power? I am afraid we often lay undue stress upon human inability, and say, "Oh well! no sinner can bestow faith upon himself; no sinner can stir up faith into activity, even although it is there." True, none can do this of himself; but by the grace and power of Christ, the sinner may obtain faith and exercise faith, and so what He challenges here is their want of considering Him, who He was, what He was able to do, and what He had promised to accomplish on their behalf. If they had done this, they might well have faith in the fullest exercise. And oh! my friends, this is the way to get faith, and this is the way to have faith in lively exercise. It is not by considering yourself so much. Certainly, we ought to consider ourselves; we ought to recognise that we are poor, fallen, undone creatures, and that faith is entirely the gift of God, but yet it is not by simply looking at yourself that you obtain this gift. You must be brought to look away from yourself; you must be brought to look away to the Redeemer, and to consider Him. Consider His person as the Son of God made flesh; consider His offices as the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church; consider His ability and willingness to save unto the uttermost. "How," he says, "is it that ye have no faith?" The reason was that they were not considering Christ; they were not trusting Christ. He was nigh to them; He was in the very ship with them; He was pledged, as it were, in His person and in His promise for their safe passage to the other side of the sea. He rebukes them here, and He tells them that they did not need to lack faith. And, my friends, while we recognise inability, let us also recognise responsibility, and let us smite upon our own breasts, and say, "We are the guilty parties." That will make you come in a right frame of mind, confessing your sin, to Him who can work faith in you and strengthen all the graces of the Spirit.

VI. – In the last place, let us observe the impression that is produced. "They feared exceedingly."

The disciples were filled with holy awe in the presence of the majestic Son of God; they were brought low in the dust before Him, and they said, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" His glory had burst upon their view. Ah! this was no mere man; this was the God-man. "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

And oh! my friends, what a happy result this would be of trials in connection with the individual soul, the family, the Church, the nation, if the ultimate result would be that we would be constrained to fall down in humble and loving wonder at the grace and power of this glorious Redeemer. He sitteth upon the floods, and He shall reign till all His enemies be made His footstool. His people will, with holy reverence and burning love, at the end of the day put the crown of their eternal deliverance upon His glorious head. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

May He bless unto us His truth!

[May 1918]

A Sermon.

By the REV. GEORGE HUTCHESON, M.A., of Edinburgh and Irvine.

(Sixth Sermon of Series on Psalm 130.)

"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" – Psalm 130:3.

I am (as ye remember) from this verse, making out a very weighty and sad point of truth, that there is no standing before God, marking iniquities in strict justice, according to the covenant of works; and for finding out what is said in this text, for bottoming and clearing of this point, I proposed to remark six particulars from the text, two of which I

have spoken to in the forenoon, to wit, that which is supposed here, that God is a marker of iniquity, and what it imports; and, secondly, that which is proposed on this supposition, that if God should mark iniquity, as was explained, men, even the most godly men, could not stand, where somewhat was said to the importance of that phrase.

Now I proceed in explication of the point from the text (for to that I confine myself) in other four particulars; the first, and third in order shall be this: that this assertion, that men cannot stand before God marking iniquity, is of infallible verity, a most certain and infallible truth; it is not a bug-bear to affright children, but the infallible truth of God. This is hinted at in the text, partly in the psalmist his proposing the matter to God, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" He proposes it to God, who knows this matter better than any other, and who is supreme Judge in the matter, without whose determination, a decree [decision] in our own favour will signify nothing at all. It imports, "O Lord, let men dream what they will of their standing, thou knowest, that none can stand, if thou shalt mark iniquity, to punish it." And particularly, the infallible verity of this assertion may be gathered from the way of proposing it, and that is, by way of question, "Who shall stand?" Which question is a very peremptory denial of the thing questioned, for so the like question is resolved, Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Yea, the proposing of it by way of question, "Who shall stand?" doth import a defiance to any to attempt it, or to succeed in their attempt, and indignation at the presumption of any, that should dream of standing before God, marking iniquity.

But in the fourth place, as this assertion is of infallible verity, so it is of universal verity. This is held out in the question, for the question is, "Who shall stand?" That is as the parallel question is answered, Job 14:4, "None at all, good or bad. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, none shall stand;" for the psalmist here, a godly man, is taking in himself with others, as a man that could not stand himself without pardon. And so the phrase is, Psalm 143:2, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." The best of men that are come of Adam by ordinary generation, shall not be justified, if thou mark iniquity. Hence in Scripture it is clear, that saintship consists not in sinlessness, but in sincerity. As for original guilt, see in that, Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." And for a man's endeavours after he is brought into God, and is wrestling with corruptions to have these purged out, says Solomon, Proverbs 20:9, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Ecclesiastes 7:20, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;" but as it is, James 3:2, "In many things we offend all." Thus ye see that saintship doth not consist in sinlessness, but in sincerity. Neither doth saintship consist in the saints' sins not deserving condemnation, or in their being able to stand, though they have sinned, but in their sins being pardoned. Hence ye will find them sadly exercised in wrestling under the burden of guilt, upon their gross out-breakings, as David, Psalm 51. Ye have them praying for the pardon of great iniquity, Psalm 25:11, "For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." Ye have them pleading for mercy upon the account of innumerable evils compassing them, and their iniquities taking hold of them, and being more than the hairs of their head, Psalm 40:11,12. And when they are delivered from gross out-breakings, ye have them with Paul (Romans 7), groaning under a body of sin and death, till they attain to a song of thanksgiving through Jesus. So that not only doth the text hold out the infallible verity of this truth, but the universal verity of it, that if God mark iniquity, none can stand.

The fifth thing I gather from the text is, that the infallible and universal verity of this assertion, that if God mark iniquity, none can stand, might be gathered and closed with, if men were eyeing God much; this I gather from the text, where the psalmist repeats the name of God twice, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity?" and then again, "O Lord, who," etc.

Wherefore is this twice repeated in this assertion? Certainly not by way of idle repetition, condemned (Matthew 7:21) in many that say, "Lord, Lord;" nor merely because the psalmist is affected with that which he is speaking of, for so the expression of affections, or men's being affected with a thing, is expressed by a doubled exclamation, which may come in, in its own place, when I speak of the pardon of sin; but here, it is to make this truth out, that serious and frequent repeated thoughts of God is a mean to give folk a right sense of the desert of sin. And to make out this, consider, partly that when we seriously think of God, we know that He is omniscient, to find out that which is hid from the world; omniscient, to find them guilty that are innocent to others; omniscient, to know more of us than we know of ourselves; a consideration that John would have us marking, 1 John 3:20, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." If we know so much naughtiness of ourselves, by ourselves, what must God know, who knoweth all things? And Paul makes use of this consideration, 1 Corinthians 4:4, "I know nothing by myself" (to wit, in the administration of his office); "yet I am not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." Partly, if we will consider what is imported in the names of God, here made use of by the psalmist, we will find it further clear. The first name Jah, is a diminutive from Jehovah, that imports a supreme independent being. The second name Adonai, signifies his dominion and lordship. Ponder these well, and what a dreadful sight will it afford of the unspeakable desert of sin? A sinner in sinning rebels against a supreme Being, from whom he hath his being. This is made a great aggravation of sin to Belteshazzar, the greatest monarch on earth, Daniel 5:23, "Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven . . . the God in whose hands thy breath is;" "Thou hast renounced thy dependence on Him, from whom thou hast thy being." Sin is also casting off of the yoke of His dominion and lordship; it says upon the matter, that which ye have asserted of wicked men, Psalm 12:4, "They say, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is Lord over us?" That's the language of every sinner in sinning, and not only doth the sinner by sinning cast off the yoke of God's dominion, but he denies His power and justice to exercise that dominion to do Him skaith [harm]; therefore when the Lord would move men to fear Him, He gives an account of His dominion over the creatures, and instanceth it, in His bounding of the sea, Jeremiah 5:22, "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it?" etc. A consideration that a sinner in sinning, minds not, or he does defy it. Thus it is not unfitly determined that though sin be not infinitely ill in its kind, for then no distinction should be among sins, nor an infinite ill in its being, for then all sins should be one, or equal, and a finite creature cannot act that which is infinite, yet safely it may be said, that in respect of the Person against whom it is committed, it hath an infinite ill in it objectively, as being against an infinite majesty, in being and dignity; and, consequently, there is no standing if he mark it.

But sixthly, for further proof of this assertion, and for proof that the saints do so see God as to give them a right sense and sight of the desert of sin, I shall add this in the text, that when the saints are in a right frame, they are great students of the exceeding sinfulness and heinousness of their sin. Therefore a saint sees that none can stand before God, marking iniquity, because, when a saint sees God to be his party [opponent], and is in a right frame, he passes no sin, as insignificant or little, but he is an aggravator [acknowledges aggravations] of his sin; and this I gather from the name that the psalmist gives sin in the text, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities." He calls them not only many iniquities in the plural number (of which I shall not now speak), but iniquities gross in their nature, and "If thou, Lord, saith he, shouldst mark sins, as such, who could stand?" If I thought that I would not be cut short by the time, I would here observe, that the name of iniquity and transgression is frequently given to sins of a grosser nature, not ordinary, that are contradistinguished to the ordinary infirmities of the saints – to these sins, Deuteronomy 32:5, of which it may be said, "They are

not the spots of his children;" to these sins, of which David says, Psalm 18:21,23, "I have not wickedly departed from my God, and I have kept myself from mine iniquity;" and to these sins which Daniel (9:5) confesseth, "We have sinned, and committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments." But yet I find the saints, even in speaking of their ordinary infirmities, not sparing to give them the name of iniquities and transgressions, as Psalm 65:3, "Iniquities prevail against me, O Lord; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away;" where sins get the name of iniquities, and iniquities prevailing against saints, and the name of transgressions. In Psalm 40:12, "The sins that were innumerable, and more than the hairs of David's head," were his ordinary failings, yet they are said to "compass him about," and are called iniquities that had taken hold of him, so that he was not able to look up. And if it be enquired, "Upon what account the saints do look on all their sins as iniquities and transgressions?" I might observe from that, Psalm 32:5, "I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," that every sin, as well as gross sins, hath an iniquity, a perverseness in it, that must be pardoned. But ye shall particularly take notice of these three:

(1) That the tender and sensible frame of saints, leads them not to extenuate, but to aggravate their sin; they dare not minch [diminish] their sin; their tender frame leads them to lay it out in all the aggravating circumstances thereof; and it's a fruit of their tenderness so to do. And

(2) a sight of God (which is here implied in the psalmist) is a magnifying glass, wherein a saint will be made to see and look upon sin, even the least sin, as most heinous. It made Job (42:6) to abhor himself; and Isaiah (6:5) to cry out, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips." A sight of God will represent a very ordinary infirmity, as very heinous to him that sees God. But

(3) and lastly, every sin, even the meanest infirmity in a man, proves an iniquity, if he think lightly of it, or thinks he may pass it lightly, without running to the remedy of pardoning mercy. The least sin he is guilty of, will on that account be an iniquity.

Now, having taken some time to lay open this weighty point, anent the desert of sin, before you, that which I have said in explication of it to you, might easily be made practical by you, if ye were attentive, and applying it to yourselves; yet for your help herein, I shall add somewhat for *use*.

The general *use* is, to intreat you, as ye love the eternal happiness of your souls, to learn to say over this text sensibly, with application to yourselves. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, I cannot stand." It were a blessed part of a very lawful liturgy, for a man once a day, to say this over, "Lord, if thou mark iniquity, I cannot stand." Let me exhort you to mind this more, to make it your daily study to be sensible of the sinfulness of sin, and of the dreadful desert of sin, that ye be lost folk in your own eyes. This is a matter that is but dallied with by the most part, and so is seen on it. Ye are such strangers to the law, and Sinai, that the gospel and Sion have but little employment among you; it doth not relish with you as it ought. There are none that can say, "But forgiveness is with thee, that thou mayest be feared;" but they that can say, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who shall stand?" Pardoning mercy may well get compliments; it will be sweet news to none else, but such as have seen, and are sensible of the dreadful desert of sin; nay, none others have right [In sense of fitness for.] to the remedy of pardoning mercy.

And to help both good and bad to be more sensible, I would offer a five-fold consideration, to drive home the truth of this assertion, that if God mark iniquity, none can stand.

1. Wilt thou take a look of God, thy party [opponent], in sinning; consider Him in His supreme dominion over thee, to impose what duty He pleases, and that His will is the law of righteousness. Consider Him in His omniscience, to know how thou observest these duties

He enjoins, and comest up to that law which is thy rule. Thou mayest cheat the world and thyself, but God thou canst not cheat. Wilt thou consider Him further in His holiness and purity, abhorring sin in all, and in thee? O how loathsome and abominable is the pollution of sin to Him, a holy Lord God! which makes him say, Isaiah 1:13, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." And lastly, consider God in His power and justice, that if He put forth His dominion, to call thee to account, thou being considered in thyself, what will the issue be but that Hebrews 10:31, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," where there is not a cautioner [surety] to interpose betwixt justice and thee? Consider God thus, if thou wouldst be sensible of the desert of sin.

2. When thou hast taken a right look of God, in His supreme dominion, omniscience, holiness, purity, power and justice, cast up the sum of thy debt, which thou art owing to this party, and thou wilt be like that man (Matthew 18:24) that was owing ten thousand talents. Consider the law in its spiritual sense and meaning, and thou wilt find that Paul found himself guilty upon the account of his concupiscence before it came to the consent of the will, and so art thou. Consider that the law condemns evil thoughts, unripe and indeliberate motions, and how many of these art thou guilty of! Again consider the gospel, what a mass of duties it commands, or recommends, upon the account of gospel-encouragements, and what a vast count or reckoning wilt thou find over thine head! Sins of commission, and sins of omission; sins in the seed and root, and sins in the fruit, against the law, against the gospel, in thy particular station, and in thy general calling. O! what a dreadful count will there be, if a man cast up the rate of his duty, and in how many things he hath offended! There will be such a count, that as Job says (9:3), "That if God contend with him, he cannot answer one of a thousand." There is not one of a thousand challenges that a righteous man can put off, but he must say as David (Psalm 40:12), "Innumerable evils compass me, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I cannot look up, they are more than the hairs of my head."

3. But when thou hast considered thy party [opponent – God], and the debt which may be charged upon thee, and the number of thy sins, take another look of the nature of them, and their aggravations, from the times wherein thou hast sinned, such as, if they have been times of light, and it may be also thou hast been sinning with Zimri and Cozbi, when the congregation was weeping (Numbers 25), what sad affliction hath been lying upon the people of God. It may be thy sin hath been against as clear light, as Absalom's sin was, "when he committed incest with his father's concubines, upon the top of his father's house" (2 Samuel 16:22). It may be it was when thou wast under punishment and judgment for former sins, to deter thee from future. It may be it was when thou wast surrounded with mercies, when "God was drawing thee with cords of love, with the bonds of a man, and was to thee as they that take off the yoke from thy jaws, and laid meat unto thee" (Hosea 11:4). It may be thou hast been a person much obliged to God, who hast often been refreshed with pardoning mercy; He hath spoken peace to thee, upon condition thou wouldst not return to folly, and yet thou hast returned to it. It may be thou art one, whose example hath had influence to harden many others in sin, etc. I cannot enumerate the aggravations of sin, that professors of the gospel have been, or are lying under, but when the account is casten, it will not be found an account of cyphers, or insignificant petty nothings, but an account of iniquities and transgressions, very heinous and dreadful, all circumstances being considered.

4. I shall, in the fourth place, when you have considered your party, the sum of your debt, the number of your sins in their nature, and aggravating circumstances, exhort you to ponder how just God is, the truth of His threatenings against sin, and the curse. Think on that place (Galatians 3:10), "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them;" and it were to good purpose that these chapters,

Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26, were more frequently read and thought upon. It were to good purpose that we heard Moses from Mount Sinai thundering oftener, not to drive us from Christ, but to Him. It's a woeful trick in our hearts, that leads us to look over threatenings with a light eye. We would consider that the threatenings will be accomplished, as well as the promises, and the least farthing of the sinner's debt will be exacted off the sinner, or off his cautioner [surety]. Thou must either do, or get one to do for thee, and when thou readest the threatenings, think on the posture wherein thou standest.

5. And fifthly, that ye may sensibly say over this assertion, "If thou, Lord, mark iniquity, who shall stand?" I recommend you to consider the sufferings of our blessed Lord. Consider if such things were done to "the green tree," what will be done to "the dry?" And there a man that hath any sense of sin, will read the dreadful desert of sin, when he considers that wrath for sin made Him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And how His holy nature abhorred that cup, and put Him to pray that it might pass from Him; and how it made Him in His agony sweat drops like blood! When thou judgest of the desert of sin by that, thou wilt stand then, and more sensibly think, that thou wilt not be able to stand before God marking iniquity, for if such things were done to the green tree, when His holy human nature suffered so much, being supported by His divine nature, what will be done to thee, who art a dry tree, out of Him? If God would speak home these things to your hearts, ye would subscribe to that verdict Solomon hath (Proverbs 14:9), that they are fools that make a mock at sin, nay, that they are distracted, that are lying under the guilt of sin, and can take rest in themselves till they see if a remedy can be had, till they come to that which follows in the text, "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."

There are some particular inferences that I intended to have spoken to from this point, but the time being past, I quit them.

Only remember that which I have been upon, what hath been spoken to you of the dreadful desert of sin, a doctrine that is very necessary, but little laid to heart by many of you. Ye have got the gospel-knack among you, and have learned to talk of sin, and of making Christ a refuge against it. But I dare not account all gold that glisters, nor look upon all them as real converts, that can talk in a gospel-dialect in Irvine. I would drive none of you from Christ; if any of you find your need of a Saviour, come away, He waits to receive you; but lay a solid foundation, acquaint yourselves more with the sinfulness of sin, with the desert of sin, and with the impossibility of standing before God marking sin, in strict justice, that ye may close with Christ in earnest. God bless what ye have heard for Christ's sake!

[Continued in October 1918]

[June 1918]

Notes of a Sermon.

Preached by the REV. D. MACFARLANE, DINGWALL,
Retiring Moderator of Synod, on 21st May, 1918, at Inverness.

“So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem” – Joshua 24:25.

In this chapter we have an account of Joshua’s last address to the people of Israel, for we read in the twenty-ninth verse, “And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.” In order to make the covenant, “He gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and they presented themselves before God” (verse 1).

I. – Joshua began his address to the people gathered together by reminding them of what the Lord had done to their fathers.

First, he reminded them that the Lord had turned them from idolatry to serve the living and true God. “Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac,” and to Isaac Jacob, from whom the twelve tribes of Israel descended.

The second thing he reminds them of is their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt by the Lord through the instrumentality of Moses and Aaron.

The third thing he reminds them of is that the Lord brought them through the wilderness into the land of Canaan, and how He subdued all that rose against them before they got possession of the land of promise. “For they got not the land in possession by their own

sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them” (Psalm 44:3). They were so much favoured of the Lord that none could curse them. Balaam was hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse them, and although he desired to curse them, he could not do so, and instead of cursing them, he blessed them. God has power over the tongues of men. In that land the Lord says, “I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat” (verse 13).

II. – The second thing in his address is an exhortation to “fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord” (verse 14). But whether they would obey the exhortation or not, Joshua told them that he and his house would serve Him. “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (verse 15). To this the people answered and said: “God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods. For the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed. And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord, for he is our God” (verses 16 to 18). As they were too self-confident in saying that they would serve the Lord and not forsake Him, Joshua said, “Ye cannot serve the Lord for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins” (verse 19). After this he warns them of the evil that would come upon them if they forsook the Lord, and served strange gods. “If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good” (verse 20). To this the people answered and said unto Joshua, “Nay; but we will serve the Lord” (verse 21).

After asserting repeatedly that they would serve the Lord, Joshua told them that they were witnesses against themselves if they did not keep to the profession they made that day. In order that they might adhere to their profession Joshua made a covenant with them as we have in our text. Did the people keep to the covenant? Yes, as long as godly men were at their head as leaders. “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that He had done for Israel” (verse 31); but after these died, they broke the covenant, and began to serve strange gods. This shows the importance of having godly men in the Church as leaders of the people. As long as godly ministers were at the head of the people in our own country, the people kept to the truth and served the Lord according to His word; but when these died, the people forsook the Lord and His word and turned to idolatry. There was not a time in the history of the Church, in which people made a covenant to serve the Lord, but there was a revival of religion and prosperity in the Church. The godly king Josiah, the last good king in Old Testament times, made his people enter into a covenant that they would serve the Lord, and a great revival of religion and a reformation followed. There was great need of this when this good king began to reign, for “the book of the law” was lost among the rubbish that was heaped up in the house of God, but it was found, read, and preached, and the result was that a glorious revival of religion took place.

There can be no true revival of religion without the Bible. It may be said that the Bible is lost in our own day, inasmuch as that its doctrines are not taught by many from the pulpit, and the effect is that the people, with few exceptions, turn to idolatry. When our own nation

entered into a covenant to serve the Lord, there followed a great revival of religion, which continued till they broke that covenant. It was a national covenant, the sum of which we have in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Our forefathers signed that covenant, not only for themselves, but for their posterity in coming generations. It is still binding upon the nation in England as well as in Scotland. The great majority of the divines who framed the Confession of Faith were Englishmen, and a few of them were from Scotland. Many have thrown away the Confession of Faith, and, having broken the covenant, they have turned to idolatry, and the result is as Joshua threatened the people of Israel, that the Lord is turned to do them hurt, and consume them by the sword of war, famine, and pestilence and other evils. Not only Churches broke the covenant, but our nation broke it also, forsook the Lord and turned to idolatry, and our rulers do what they can to support idolatry.

What I wish to impress upon you, in connection with the subject of discourse, is the duty of entering into covenant to serve the Lord.

(1) It is the duty of individuals to do so. We have read of some godly ministers and men who were for many years in Christ, writing a covenant with their own hand and signing it, that they were giving themselves to the Lord, and promising to serve him in sincerity and in truth all their lifetime on earth. They found this a means of strengthening their faith, and removing their doubts and fears in regard to their saving interest in Christ. Young children, boys and girls, should enter into covenant to give themselves to the Lord in the days of their youth, to serve Him and to have nothing to do with idolatry. They were given in baptism by their parents to the Lord, but they should give themselves to Him too. It was the custom of godly parents, when their children came of age, to tell them that the vows which they took upon them on their behalf, were now lying upon the children themselves.

(2) It is the duty of families to enter into covenant to serve the Lord, as Joshua and his family did: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

(3) It is the duty of Churches to enter into covenant to serve the Lord. We as a Church bound ourselves by a covenant to serve the Lord. The sum of that covenant is to be found in our Deed of Separation, and as a revival of religion took place every time people bound themselves by covenant to serve the Lord, a revival of religion followed our making a covenant, as a Church, to serve Him. There was a revival of the doctrines of God's Word, a revival of grace in the hearts of the Lord's people, and many sinners, who had been dead in trespasses and in sins, were quickened and brought to newness of life in Christ.

Hitherto we have been enabled as a Church to keep to our covenant faithfully and stedfastly, notwithstanding the efforts have been made to make us break the covenant, but we are determined, by the grace of God, to adhere to it to the end of our life in this world. So long as Joshua and the elders outlived him lived, the people kept the covenant and served the Lord, but, when these died, the people broke the covenant and ceased to serve the Lord. So long as we faithful ministers and faithful men in our Church, our people shall keep the covenant to serve the Lord. Although it may seem uncharitable to say so, it is to be feared that there are some who would wish that the ministers and men who are faithful in keeping the covenant were removed from the world that they themselves might be at liberty to make any changes in our Church they desire to do. But, if the covenant is broken after we leave the world, we shall not be responsible for it. The stone, put up by Joshua, was to be a witness against the people if they broke the covenant. The stones in our churches and manses will be witnesses against us if we break the covenant we made in 1893. We are resolved to hand down to coming generations the doctrines of God's Word, pure and entire, as our forefathers handed them down to us. This is our plain duty, as you may see in the 78th Psalm: "Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to

come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he stablished a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born: who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments: and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation: a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God” (Psalm 78:1-8).

Joshua, knowing that he was soon to leave the world, spoke faithfully to the people he was to leave behind, exhorted, and warned them for their good. I, knowing that I shall soon leave the world, feel constrained to speak to you earnestly and lovingly for your spiritual and temporal good. I appeal to every individual present to make a covenant, in speech or in writing, to serve the Lord all the days of your life on earth. Let each of you, before you retire to rest to-night, make that covenant on your knees, and you will find the benefit of it afterwards. You cannot change your nature – that is God’s work – but you can make this covenant, and, if you do so, I would have good hope of your salvation. I long to see young and old brought under concern about their precious souls, and, if I saw that, I would cherish the hope that the good work of the Spirit within you was begun. Although those who are faithful in our Church would be removed from the earth to their everlasting rest, the Lord is able to raise up other faithful men to succeed them, as He raised up Joshua to lead the people after Moses had died, to keep our people in the good old paths. “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

[July 1918]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. D. MACDONALD, Shieldaig, Ross-shire.

(Taken from his own MS., and hitherto unpublished.)

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” – Isaiah 61:1.

Man knows the present and past, but is ignorant of the future. God alone knows beforehand whatever comes to pass. He knew, before ever the world was, that Adam, whom He would create holy and happy, would fall. Although he was in his creation perfectly able to continue in his integrity, yet he was left to the freedom of his own will, to stand or fall as he pleased. God entered into a covenant with him, not only for himself but also for his posterity. If he continued in his integrity, all his posterity would participate in the eternal happiness promised. But when he fell, they all fell with him, and became exposed to all the miseries that sin conveyed to them in its train. Adam freely entered the covenant, and his violation of it justly exposed himself and his posterity to eternal darkness. But the Lord, in His mercy and love, designed that He should have a people saved from among men, and He did not seal their damnation for ever, like the case of the fallen angels. God entered into a covenant of grace with His Son, so that, through the conditions of this covenant, His people might be saved. God, in His mercy and love, fixed His heart from all eternity upon His only-begotten Son as the Saviour of all those whom He elected and loved from everlasting. They were, and are, guilty of violating the law of God, and no one was able to render satisfaction to the broken law, or save them from its punishment, but God's Son; and He was as willing to fulfil the conditions of the covenant of grace as the Father was that He should do so. If anyone should shrink from performing such arduous work, the Son of God had reason to do so, considering the painful nature of the task which the Father was giving Him to perform. He might have said, in the days of His flesh, to His Father, “O Father, Thou didst honour me to create the world, which was indeed a great work, but it is nothing compared to the work which Thou hast now given me to do – to save Thy people. I then, O Father, delighted to create the world, seeing that it was to be the habitation of a holy race whom we loved from all eternity; but then I had no pain or tears or grief, as I had no body, and my divine nature was not susceptible of pain.”

I. – The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was anointed by the Holy Spirit to qualify Him, in general, for the work of redemption. To be able to redeem His people, the Son had to become man. The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin; they were only typical of Christ's sufferings. His incarnation was predicted by a succession of inspired prophets. Christ then appeared in the fulness of time in the stable at Bethlehem. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit from the womb, as it was promised in Isaiah 42:1 and at His baptism the Holy Spirit descended like a dove, to prove that He was more than ordinary men; and the Spirit was more abundantly poured upon Him than upon any other, because He needed to do more and bear more to perform the great work given Him to accomplish. An audible voice accompanied the visible appearance of the Spirit, to convince the world He was the real Son of God. It was His human soul that had need of being anointed.

Kings and priests were of old consecrated to their offices by anointing (Exodus 30:23). It was with olive oil, mixed with spices of pure myrrh, sweet cinnamon, calamus, and cassia. The tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, the candlesticks, and all the vessels connected with the service of God were anointed. No man was to make any oil like it, or he would be cut off from his people. No man was allowed to put any of it upon a stranger. It was holy oil for holy use, typical of the Holy Spirit and His operations upon the souls of men. It was not to be employed for any common use. It taught men – whether they were kings, prophets, or priests – their need of the Spirit for the knowledge of God and salvation, and for strength to be faithful to God in their offices.

When the servants of the Most High are anointed, sometimes they have more of the anointing and sometimes less, according to the work they have to perform. No doubt, Peter had more of it on the day of Pentecost than at any other time, when preaching. He had also a great measure of it when writing his Epistles (1 Peter 1:21). The saints have less of the Spirit at times, and no sense of the Spirit at all when in a backsliding state. Peter, when Christ rebuked him, was not in a watchful state of mind; and after he denied Christ, doubtless the Spirit withdrew Himself for a time, till Peter repented and wept.

But Christ's anointing by the Father was different; He had the fulness of the Spirit dwelling in Him. That measure was never withdrawn nor diminished, unless when the Lord left Him as to His comfortable presence, when He was suffering as the surety of His people. Their sins having been imputed to Him, He was suffering more or less in His soul till He finished the work upon the Cross. He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He experienced the hiding of God's face, and the withdrawals of His Spirit that He might be able to sympathise with His people in their desertions (Hebrews 2:17-18). He could carry more of the Holy Spirit than others, because He was sinless. The same measure would completely overpower the saints, seeing they are imperfect in this life.

II. – Christ's works as a prophet, for which God the Father anointed Him with the Spirit.

1. "To preach good tidings to the meek." He was anointed as prophet, as well as priest and King. As a prophet He reveals by His Word and Spirit to His people the will of God, that they may know their state by the Fall, feel their need of Christ, and embrace Him as their Saviour.

The first step towards their being made "meek," and receiving Christ in meekness, is their getting the sad news of their sinful and condemned condition by the Fall. It is most sad news for a man to be told that he is condemned for ever on account of a certain crime committed by him. God's people believe and feel that they are lost when they are convinced of sin. They become alarmed, like one who, awakened out of sleep, finds himself in a most dangerous condition, with the house on fire about his ears. They feel their sins like mountains dragging them into the depth of despair; they are in the devil's arms, and on the broad way to hell. The covenant of works is now in pieces under their feet, like a broken vessel at sea, everything but sufficient to keep them from drowning in eternal misery (Romans 7:10). They see they

cannot better their condition. They have no good works like the first Adam before he fell; all their thoughts, words, and actions are full of the leprosy of sin; and the law has no encouraging tidings for them – only curses for their breach of it and the dishonour they have done to God.

Some persons in ordinary life receive very sad tidings that embitter their lives to them, and strike at the root of all their pleasures and enjoyments. David, when he heard of Jonathan's death, wept bitterly, and could hardly be comforted. Jacob, when his sons brought to him Joseph's coat of many colours, was absorbed in grief. Such tidings, indeed, are heavy to be borne, but they are not equal to the tidings which the law brings to the soul, when it chastises him for sin and prophesies to him eternal torments. To leave one in this condition without better tidings would be a living death. Oh! the need that God's people have of "glad tidings" at such a time as this! Their souls are "weary because of murderers."

Christ came "to preach good tidings to the meek." He never intended to leave them in their sad state. Mercy, love, and compassion are with God, and Christ is in possession of abundance of blessings to comfort them. He comes to them, when they are anxiously waiting for Him, by faith in the appointed means of grace, and speaks to them by His Spirit and promise, using such language as "I am thy salvation," etc. Life, light, and power accompany His Word. These glad tidings tell them that He died and satisfied the law in their room and stead, and that, embracing Him by faith, they shall not be condemned. Then Christ embraces them in the arms of His favour and fellowship, and holds communion with them. Friends make feasts to prove their love to their friends. Christ does the same to His people. They hunger and thirst after God, and Christ entertains them with His grace, making up all their wants by His presence. As soon as He reveals Himself as their Saviour their darkness flees away as the midnight before the sun. When Christ restores peace, Satan flees; when faith becomes strong, unbelief absconds. When "the blood" removes guilt, God's chastisements are taken away, the law gives up cursing them, and all the promises suited to their case come from Christ, conveying comfort to their souls. They find that they are justified, and clothed with Christ's righteousness. At the Gospel feast they are like the prodigal son, feeding on "the fatted calf," with ring, shoes, and kisses from their Father, as pledges that they are restored to the family of God, and heirs of eternal happiness in glory (Romans 8:17 to end).

How are they described as "meek"? A meek person is humble and harmless. God's people were not meek once, but were wild, fostering deep-rooted pride and enmity against God. Grace effected a remarkable change in them and gave them a new disposition – as remarkable as if a lion would become a lamb, and a tiger a dove. Grace made them meek like Christ, who is meek and lowly above all others.

2. "To bind up the broken-hearted." Their hearts were broken with the hammer of "the Word" and melted down with the grace of repentance, mourning with godly sorrow for breaking God's law and for exposing their souls to the pain of the second death. Their hearts became a sweet sacrifice to God (Psalm 51), as they were filled with pantings after Him and resolutions to renounce their former sinful course and to walk closely with Him. They are often "broken" after being healed, every time sin gains the ascendancy. But Christ comes to bind them up, as the good Samaritan did to the man who fell among the thieves. He pours the healing oil of the Spirit into their wounded hearts, and comforts them with the wine of heavenly joy and gladness.

3. "To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." God's people love God and His law, and would like to be loyal subjects to Him, but they find "a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds." Their spiritual enemies often gain sway over them, and their souls come into prison. Darkness, shame, and bondage follow a prison life. One cannot exercise himself with freedom, as before. The soul, knowing God to be omniscient, feels ashamed before Him, and has not the freedom, through

the Spirit, to delight in worshipping God as before. The soul mourns for nearness to God and for the spirit of prayer. Prayer, which used to be a delight – bringing fine wheat and honey from heaven – is now a burden. Religious duties are bitter, like the waters of Marah. God's people are bound up, as Peter was kept by four quaternions of soldiers, who would show him no mercy. But Christ comes, as "the angel" that came to deliver Peter, with light, freedom, and power, and the chains that Satan and the flesh bound them with fall off. The gate of the throne of grace opens through Christ, the Angel of the covenant. Then are they absorbed in wonder, love, and praise.

As sinners in our natural estate, we are imprisoned by the law of God. Christ died in the room of His people, and paid all the debt they owed to the law. He subdued Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that He might deliver us from their sway. Christ triumphed over them in His cross (Colossians 2:15). Vengeance was inflicted on them for all the injuries they had done to God and men. This is "the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God." The time of their individual deliverance through Christ is acceptable to them also. As the year of jubilee, which was a time of deliverance in Israel, was proclaimed by the sound of a trumpet, so the Gospel has been proclaimed to all nations for the deliverance of God's people from the law, sin, spiritual death and Satan, for their comfort and advancement in the visible Church, and their complete freedom in glory. There their knowledge of God and of the glorious mysteries of redemption shall in Christ's light be increasing more and more. Their worship of God shall be extremely sweet, and their love to Him inconceivably great. An infinite ocean of glorious mysteries in the being of God will exercise and ravish their finite minds for ever and ever.

[August 1918]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. LACHLAN MACPHERSON, East Williams, Ontario.

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” – John 10:27.

These words were spoken in reply to the question put by the Jews as to whether He was Christ. He told them before, but they believed not, and the reason was because they were not His sheep; for His sheep hear His voice, etc. Christ here sets forth the character and privileges of His people.

I. – Their name – “My sheep.” All sinners are spoken of under the similitude of lost sheep (Isaiah 53:6). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” – “Lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24); and the similitude is appropriate. No animal is so apt to go astray, and when astray it has no sense, no aptitude to find its way back. Believers are found sheep, collected and brought back after being scattered and lost. A few things in which they resemble sheep:

(1) They are not capable of doing for themselves. They need the oversight of a shepherd to protect them from injury, to prevent them from wandering, or bring them back when they have wandered, and to provide for their sustenance. They cannot subsist without pasture and water, and this they cannot get everywhere, nor provide for themselves.

(2) They are fond of being together; other animals can rove alone through mountain and desert, etc. The sheep always keep each other’s company. If they happen to be left alone by accident, etc., they run, they bleat, and can take no rest until they find out the flock. Should they fall in with other flocks – goats for instance – they cannot rest with them.

(3) They are gentle and harmless. The wicked are savage, cruel, inclined to hurt one another – especially to hurt God’s people. They have teeth and claws like lions to tear and destroy. The new man is tamed; the lion turned into a lamb – peaceable, forgiving, meek, humble, etc. “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in spirit.” Christ was as a lamb brought to the slaughter, and as a sheep is dumb before her shearers so He opened not His mouth (Isaiah 53). They are like Christ. What an honour to be spoken of under the same name with Christ!

(4) They are useful and valuable, all of them useful, so should Christians be useful.

Observe, further, Christ’s property in them – “my sheep.” This is a sweet word to a Christian. It is a little but a sweet word. There are more flocks in the world than one. . . . “The flocks of thy companions” (Song 1). But only one belongs to God. The devil has a flock, and it is larger than Christ’s, which is called a “little flock.” You who hear me belong either to the one or the other of these. Which?

(1) They are His by the gift of the Father in the covenant of grace. “The sheep which Thou hast given me.” They are chosen by the Father, and given to Christ. “Thine they were and Thou gavest them me.” O, think you what a blessedness to be among those elect ones whom God the Father counted over to Christ as His, that your name should be in that list! What if it were left out! You would then wander like a lost sheep in the wilderness of sin until at last you fell into hell. O, admire the sovereign goodwill of God, in putting your worthless name there, without being asked to do it, and when you had nothing to recommend you more than others, and when these were as needy as you, and a great multitude of them, too, whose cases stood before Him, but were left out. O, think of the gift which the Father gave the Son! A number of wretched sinners, worthless in themselves, diseased, polluted, lost sheep, and which would cost Him much to bring them back! Think on the love and condescension of the Son in accepting of a gift in such circumstances, and on such terms, and think on that wonderful esteem with which He regarded them? He always speaks of the gift as one on which He sets a high value, and one on which He greatly delights. I am sure you would say, it is not worth Christ’s while to think so much of you.

(2) They are His by purchase. He bought them by His own blood. Dear purchase! He bought them off from justice. Here is a second wonder. What are you worth, do you think, O Christian? Surely nothing; and yet Christ gave Himself for you. His life for your life. It was a hard bargain, and yet Christ was willing to make it. The advantage is yours: all the trouble and expense was Christ’s. Although the Father gave you to Him, yet not one of you either would or could come back until He went for you. He had to search you out and bring you back by His power. This brings us to observe, that –

(3) They are His by conquest. “He delivered them from the power of darkness,” brought them out of the house of bondage by a strong and lifted up arm. “Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong” (Isaiah 53:12). He spoiled principalities . . . led captivity captive – conquered themselves, made them willing in a day of His power, and hence –

(4) They are His by the covenant in which they give themselves voluntarily, entirely, and forever to Him. “My beloved is mine, and I am his.” A believer first gives himself “to the Lord” to be saved, and to be His: then he gives all that he has. He gives himself away, a poor gift indeed, but it is all he has to give. He is no match for Christ, but since Christ is willing to take him, he may well give his consent.

Use. – Whatever blemishes, weaknesses, faults, etc., may be in any of Christ’s sheep He never disowns them: He still says of them, “My sheep.” Not one of them will He leave behind, however worthless, feeble, etc. He will gently lead those that are with young; He will carry the lambs in His bosom. Some are maimed, and not able to keep up with the rest on a journey; Christ will stay with them. A poor tempted soul may sometimes say, “My leanness, my leanness, I am not worthy,” etc. Yet Christ says, “My sheep.” The world would not own you; the great would not; the wise and prudent would not; and it may be some of the sheep themselves: perhaps Abraham may be ignorant of you, and Israel may acknowledge you not, but Christ will never cast off the meanest of His sheep.

II. – Their character and privileges. – It is not necessary here to make a distinction, or divide these into separate heads, as, in fact, their very character which is given them is itself one of their greatest privileges. I shall therefore take up the words as they lie.

1. “My sheep hear my voice.”

(1) They hear it in the way knowing it and understanding it as His voice. There are ears that cannot hear. The Spouse knows the voice of her Beloved from every other voice. If a stranger came to the fold and called the sheep by name, they would not hear or listen to it, as if they heard nothing. The Jews saw His miracles, heard His sayings, but saw not nor heard

Christ the Messiah in them. They had no spiritual discernment, no spiritual understanding. Sinners hear daily, and yet do not discern Christ's voice in what they hear, because they are not of His sheep. Levi the publican heard, and the disciples heard, "Follow me." The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall live. Saul of Tarsus heard; they that journeyed with him heard but saw no man: they knew not Christ's voice in it: Saul did: "Lord, what will thou have me to do?" The unconverted hear Christ's voice in the common way, but hear nothing in it which makes it to them His voice.

First: this implies spiritual illumination: they understand and receive the things of the Spirit of God. They have an insight given them of the divine mysteries of the gospel. They are all taught of God.

Secondly: it implies a readiness to obey it. It is a voice that they like to hear and are constantly watching to hear. Hearing often signifies obeying. "Hear, and your souls shall live," and here their hearing is placed in opposition to the unbelief of the Jews who believed not. The soul that once hears and discerns Christ's voice spiritually believes. The ear that hears makes way for the word to the heart and the heart that thus feels believes, and hence it is stated that these sheep that hear, also follow Him.

Thirdly: it implies that they are protected thus from the danger of being deceived by strangers; by error – led astray by false impressions, or false doctrine. They can distinguish between His voice and these. Hence verse 8, "but the sheep did not hear them." They did not relish their sayings; did not follow them; and knew it was not the Shepherd's voice. And verse 5, "will not follow strangers," do not know their voice – will flee from them. "Abstain from every appearance of evil."

(2) They hear His voice as a peculiar privilege conferred upon them which none else enjoy. It is no small favour to hear Christ's voice. O my fellow-sinners, who care not whether you hear it or not, you would envy the happy lot of those friends of the Bridegroom who hear His voice and rejoice, if you only knew the value of the privilege, and what a severe judgment is it that Christ does not thus make Himself known to you, while He does so to others who sit on every side of you in the same church. You are a stranger to Christ and He to you, and you heed it not because you know Him not. How often do the saints of the Bible request of God that they may hear His voice. This is a favour He bestows only on a few. He is in this house, in this town, in this world walking among the churches, but it is not the happy privilege of all to see and hear Him. He only shewed Himself to His own after His resurrection. So now, Christ is with the believer; He hears His voice; "the voice of my Beloved."

(3) And *how* does he hear Him?

First, he hears His voice in His word – promises, threatenings, invitations, directions, etc. He is admitted to the King's chambers, where he has an audience. All addressed to him. "Arise, my love, and come away." Thou wilt follow me hereafter, because I live ye shall live also – that where I am there ye may be also.

Secondly, he hears it in Providence. God's is voice to the city, but the man of wisdom, etc. The wicked sometimes hear awful things which terrify them like Saul's companions on the way to Damascus, but the Christian knows a secret which, if they knew it, would allay their fears.

(4) Now, a few things as to *when* he hears Him.

First, by promise in afflictions. "It is I, fear not." . . . Consolations, a stranger intermeddled not with.

Secondly, by counsel, direction, and light, when in perplexity.

Thirdly, when at the throne of grace in fellowship with Him.

Fourthly, when at preachings and sacraments. A word in season comes home with such power – it suits the case. It gives relief, joy, light; it is the voice of his Beloved. What a privilege to hear Christ’s voice on a dark and stormy night!

2. “And I know them” (see also verse 14). As much as to say, “Put on as good a face as you please, you are not like my sheep; I know them; as for you, you are strangers to me and I to you. Ye are not of my sheep.” This is a sweet word to a Christian, and well may Christ say it, for dearly did He buy them. But what does He mean when He says, “I know them”?

(1) He knows their number, and every one of them in particular as those whom the Father gave Him as His own, and for whom He shed His blood. There are secret things which belong to God, and there are things revealed which belong to us. No man was ever admitted into God’s cabinet to look at the book of His eternal decrees; but Christ, who was with Him from eternity, is acquainted with all these, and had their names given Him before He ever appeared on earth. What one gets as his own he will feel interested in, and know more about it than about other things; but Christ paid a price for them, and not as a whole merely, but for each individual: Could He but know them for whom he travailed and agonised? – “Can a woman forget,” etc. (Isaiah 49:14-16). Christ as God knows all men; He is the searcher of the hearts (Revelation 2:23), but He only knows those whom the Father gave Him as His sheep. All others, in a sense, are strangers to Him. He does not know them. “They are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise.” But,

(2) Christ has certain marks to distinguish His sheep, by which He knows them (2 Timothy 2:19). “The foundation of God” – here is a hidden and a visible sign; of the former I spoke already. Shepherds usually have marks on their sheep to know them. There is an inward and outward sign; they are sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. Now, however difficult it may be to others to distinguish between sheep and sheep, yet the Good Shepherd knows His own mark – visible – life and conversation, but others feign this mark; therefore, an invisible, a secret mark – the work of the Spirit. Examine yourselves; if you have the latter, you will have the former. But various ways to know –

- (1) by voice,
- (2) by countenance,
- (3) by gait, manner, etc.

It may be said that Christ has a mark on every part, member, etc., of each of His sheep – their feet, ears, cry, look. There are two great marks which Christ has on His own sheep which none else has – the seal of the Spirit, regenerated, sanctified, His own image on them, and this manifesting itself more and more in the life; and the mark of His own blood by which they are justified.

Use 1. – Warning and reproof:

- (1) To such as deny that Christ has any special knowledge of His sheep; that there is no such thing as an elect number given to Him as His sheep, such are Arminians. And
- (2) to such as feign to be His sheep, but who are not – hypocrites.

(1) Arminians. For whom does the Good Shepherd lay down His life? “The sheep” (verse 2). Who are the sheep? Not all (verse 26). Christ laid down His life for the sheep, whoever these are, and for no more. Observe the definite article, *the* sheep; for them He laid down His life, and all these He calls His sheep, and distinguishes between the sheep and others who were not of them (verse 26,27,28) – and these, “the”, and “His” sheep are saved. “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish”; but many perish, but not sheep, for they “never perish.”

(2) Hypocrites. “I know my sheep.” Can you deceive Christ? How often does He say, “I know thy works” (Revelation 2), and then, “I know you not.” Will you pass for one in the flock? Will you escape in the crowd? Will you thus creep into heaven unnoticed? Remember, there is a way to hell from the sheep-fold! Remember Judas!

Use 2. – Comfort to God’s people: “I know my sheep.” This is a mark of the Good Shepherd – to know His sheep. This implies an acquaintance with them. Yes, Christ knows you, Christian, by name as His, and He knows all that you are; He makes a point of knowing every circumstance connected with each of His sheep. Some are afraid that Christ does not know nor troubles Himself about them. They are low of stature, and think they are hid from Him. They think He does not hear nor regard their prayer, and, although often they try to put themselves in His way so that He may thus take some notice of them, yet He withdraws Himself and keeps always at a distance; and, still, they like Him and His flock, and cannot think of leaving them. The Good Shepherd knows all the ailings, the weaknesses, the pains, the sorrows, the trials, griefs, wanderings, and failings of His sheep. He knows their temptations, and He bottles all their tears. He knows their wants, and what would do them good. He has His eye constantly on them, and when one wanders He brings it back: when the enemy is strong, He will rebuke him and restrain the remainder of His wrath. O, blessed comfort! O, blessed Shepherd, who watches day and night, and knows minutely the state of each one in His flock. You might have a friend able and willing to help you, but, if you could not make him acquainted with your wants, his good will and ability were both useless to you – Christ knows you, and as He does, He will be thinking of you. “I am poor and needy, but God thinketh upon me” (Psalm 40). He knows all these things – as to their object, cause, and tendency. He knows them, as to their distribution, measure, place, continuance – and knows as to the care of them, and management to the end. He knows them in sympathy, and feels for and has compassion upon them.

Think on this, Christian, Christ knows you and your enemies: knows how to anticipate all the evils which hunt you, and knows whatever you think, that what He does to you is that which will do you most good. “All things work for good,” etc. (Romans 8). You cannot be lost. If you should wander, Christ would go and seek you out. He could know you among a thousand others and take you out from the very heart of other flocks. He has His own mark on you, and knows you. The saints may not know you, Abraham may not, but Christ will. The world may not know you, the stout professor may not, but Christ does. You are engraven on the palms of His hands, and, although He hides Himself from you, He does not, nay, cannot, hide you from Himself.

3. “And they follow me.” They follow Him, for they “know his voice.” They will not follow strangers, but flee from them; they know not their voice. There is here knowledge, confidence, and liking, or love.

Observe,

first, they “follow.” They do not go before. This is the character of Gospel obedience.

Secondly, Christ’s love goes before. The Christian’s love will follow. We follow an object we love. Christians are called to take up the cross and follow the Lamb. Whence do they follow Him? To pastures through the wilderness, whithersoever He goeth. How do they follow, and in what? In heart and life, seeking to imitate Him, and to submit to the way, whether hard or easy. They follow Him as soldiers their captain in all conflicts, from earth to heaven.

[September 1918]

A Sermon.

By the REV. GEORGE HUTCHESON, M.A., of Edinburgh and Irvine (1674).
(Seventh Sermon of Series on Psalm 130.)

“If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee: that thou mayest be feared” – Psalm 130:3,4.

Ye have heard how the psalmist in the first and second verses, wrestling with plunging perplexities, expressed here under the name of deeps, gets guilt stopping his audience and success to wrestle with, in the third and fourth verses, wherein, as ye have heard, we have,

first, a sensible confession concerning the desert of sin (verse 3).

Next we have his refuge, when he is humbled with the sense of that; and it is pardoning mercy, forgiveness with God, to which he claims in the beginning of the fourth verse. And,

lastly, ye have the end for which God lets out and bestows pardoning mercy on sinners – that He may be feared.

For the first of these, in the third verse, I am near a close of what I purpose to say upon it, for besides the conjunction ye have heard ought to be betwixt the sense of sin and the sense of trouble, without which the sense of trouble is but brutish, ye have also heard that guilt will readily meet the people of God in straits, when they are made to cry out of the deeps unto God. Beside these (I say) I insisted the last day on that great point, that iniquity marked by God, according to the covenant of works and the rules of strict justice, is that which no man is able to stand under; and ye may remember how, at great length, I both explained and continued this truth, by several deductions from the text, which I shall not now repeat. I shut up the point with a general word of exhortation, that sinners that look for everlasting happiness, would learn to say over this text with application to themselves, “If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, I cannot stand,” and to do it sensibly. For the fixing of which, and bearing of it home, ye may remember what considerations were laid before you, as considerations concerning God your party [person against or opponent], considerations concerning the number of your sins and guilt; it’s called iniquities in the plural number; considerations concerning the nature and aggravations of your guilt, upon which account also it’s called iniquities; considerations also of the just threatenings of God, and of the infallible execution of them upon the sinner, or his surety; considerations concerning the sufferings of Jesus Christ, a glass wherein as in a mirror the desert of sin may be seen.

Now before I come to the next verse, I shall mark three or four particular inferences. And,

(1) Ye have here a clear discovery, that there is no justification by works, that a man by his works cannot think of standing before God. Justification by works is that only which we know by the light of nature, and that first covenant made with mankind in Adam, and therefore every man hath a natural propension to do his own turn that way. The Jews “being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3). Ignorant persons think to please God with their repentance, and the

mending of their faults, and doing better. Papists plead with an open mouth for justification by works; some mongrel Protestants would mumble out somewhat that way; but ye are to consider that the covenant requires that which is now impossible, even perfect holiness, and that covenant, being once broken, is everlastingly broken. And for any evangelical paction the text leads us to, there is no medium betwixt God's marking iniquity and forgiving iniquity; a man must either stand to his hazard of God's sitting down on His tribunal, and marking his iniquities, to punish them; or he must lay aside all thoughts of complementing with God in this matter, or of patching up a business of grace and good works in his justification before Him. They that study the first part of the text well, that if God mark iniquity none can stand, they will easily be put from that conceit of justification by works, and plead forgiveness.

And therefore (2) I would have sinners considering that there is no standing under guilt, except Christ be fled unto for refuge. If ye have not taken sanctuary in atheism, that ye look upon all that is said in this preached gospel as cunningly devised fables, will you but look to it, and think with yourselves – What will you do in the day of visitation, and in the day of wrath, when the just threatenings of God shall be execute against sin, and all sinners that are out of Christ, when many will be ready to cry out for hills, and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb? O! consider it, if ye can be persuaded to be in earnest about your souls, what ye think to do in the day of God's wrath for sin, in that day wherein the senseless sinners that made a sport of sin, will be made to sing that doleful note (Lamentations 5:16), "The crown is fallen from our heads, woe unto us, for we have sinned." Then ye will find it desperate folly and madness that ye went on in sin, and fled not in time from the wrath to come. Ponder that parable, Luke 16:24 (which is not to be stretched beyond the principal scope, as if there were charity for others in hell), and ye will find what a dreadful bargain sin is, when a drop of cold water to cool the tongue, would be an ease to the drunkard in torment, and he cannot have it; when his warning of others is a witness against himself, that he was a desperate man, that run such a hazard, that is now past remedy. Think I say, on these things, if ye look not on this word as fables.

But (3) if none can stand before God's marking iniquity, then the sense of guilt should make us justify God in all the troubles that come upon His people. When we consider that the Lord may for sin, not only, as in a solemn day, call our terrors round about, as the word is (Lamentations 2:22), but may everlastingly condemn us in hell; how dare a sinner murmur under lesser calamities or troubles! The language of a man sensible of the desert of sin is, that which ye have, Ezra 9:13, "Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve;" and that, Lamentations 3:22, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." A man that is sensible of sin and of the desert of it, ye will not find him a murmurer against any cross inflicted, but a wonderer at the moderation that shines in the sharpest trials. Therefore (as I said upon the first head) the sense of trouble, without the sense of sin, is ill company, and will breed many distempers, which the sense of sin, joined with the sense of trouble, will bear down and prevent.

And (4) if even the most godly man be thus liable to punishment (for who can stand, if God mark iniquity?) and even for his ordinary failings, consider what is the godly man's case, when he falleth in grosser out-breakings. If when thou lookest upon thy daily escapes through ignorance, rashness, precipitancy, shortcoming in duty, thou art made to lament, and say "Lord, I cannot stand before thee, if thou, Lord, mark iniquity," how may the lamentation be heightened, when thou fallest in gross sins and spots, and by them causeth the enemy to blaspheme! And the truth is, were folk more frequent in laying to heart their ordinary escapes and infirmities, it would be a mean to

caution them against out-breakings in grosser debordings [excesses], but when these are not laid to heart, and mourned for, it provokes God to write it with some vile blemish. And I shall add, if the Lord mark iniquity, and a godly man cannot stand, what shall become of a wicked man, who hath no interest in Christ? If a David (suppose he hath been the penman of this Psalm) be trembling and sinking under the burden of iniquities, what a posture should monsters for profanity, who declare their sin as Sodom, be in! I confess they are not troubled with sin, because they forget that they have immortal souls, but their trouble is coming. They see godly men plunged and perplexed, under apprehensions of wrath, when they are free of gross out-breakings; and they are not affected with all their impieties, but O! what a witness is that against them, who walk as monsters among men, and are never troubled! Ponder that word, 1 Peter 4:17,18, "The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall become of them, that obey not the gospel of God? and if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?" If godly men dare not think of standing before God, marking iniquity, how can these monsters for profanity and ungodliness think to look God in the face, marking their iniquities?

But now, I proceed to the second general in the text, and that is the refuge to which the psalmist betakes himself, when he is thus humbled, and abased under the sense of the dreadful deserts of sin: "but there is forgiveness with thee." That is, Thou hast declared Thyself to be a pardoner of sin on gospel-terms, and this forgiveness is with Thee; that is, it's Thy peculiar right, in opposition to all pretenders. None have a right to pardon but Thou, and it's Thy right, when the law and our own consciences do condemn us, to step in and forgive; and, therefore, though upon account of the covenant of works, I cannot think of standing before Thee, I betake myself to the refuge, that "forgiveness is with thee."

There is a general word that I might here mark, that is, that there is a remedy in God for all difficulties, under which the saints are humbled, and abased as insuperable, for when in the third verse, he hath said, "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who can stand?" there is a but, a reserve, an exception added, "Forgiveness is with thee." There, indeed, is a hopeless case, but here is a remedy for it in God; so that there is no case (how hopeless soever it be) that is desperate, if folks go to God with it.

But this I leave, and pitch upon the main point in the text, that there is pardoning mercy in God for sin, and this is the only refuge to a sensible sinner oppressed with sin and guilt. It is here the psalmist's only refuge and ease, when he cannot think of standing before God marking iniquity. It is Job's only refuge, chapter 7:20,21, "I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men? Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself? (but all that will not make thee reparation.) Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" And it is the happiness of fallen man, not that he is sinless, or able to satisfy justice for his sin, but that he is a pardoned man, Psalm 32:1, etc., "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." This we would not need to insist on, to prove it, if souls were in the psalmist's posture here, if souls knew what it were to be under the burden of the debt of sin, there would be no happiness like that, to have sin pardoned; God would be to them a matchless God upon this account, Micah 7:18, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?" He would be a matchless God upon the account of His pardoning iniquity, whatever other proof of love He should give, or withhold.

Now because this is a most important, and weighty gospel point of truth, "The pardoning of sin" (and I know not, when I may fall upon it in a catechetical way, I purpose to quit my ordinary way, and to insist upon this head, "The pardon of sin," which would give me

occasion to speak to several things, for information of judgment, and to set you to your duty), I shall reduce what I intend to say on it, to these heads.

1. What is pardoned?
2. Who they are that are pardoned?
3. What the nature of this pardon is?
4. When pardon passes in favour of the sinner, whether it be irrevocable?
5. What is the right method of the application of pardoning mercy? which will lead me to the last thing in the text, "That forgiveness is with God, that He may be feared."

These and the like, through the determination of the Scriptures, may be of special use to you.

1. What is it that God doth pardon? It is sin or iniquity, so the former verse, and this collated holds forth. It's the iniquities under which he is groaning in the former verse, for which there is forgiveness with God in this verse. So in that forecited place, Micah 7:18, "He pardons iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage;" and Psalm 32:1,2, it is sin, iniquity, transgression, that is pardoned, covered, not imputed, to intimate that sin, under whatever name it be expressed, is that which God pardons.

Now to prosecute this, I shall not fall upon many descriptions of sin, and its nature; it shall suffice us to know, that sin is the transgression of the law, and that of the law of God. Neither the crossing of folk's humors will make a man a sinner, James 4:11,12. There are a number of rigid censurers, that would make their will a law to all, or have all to walk by their rash judgment, whereas there is but one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy. Neither will the commands of men, obliging them in law, conclude men to be sinners, unless there be a superior command of God, obliging them to give obedience to these commands of men. But waving that, to the end I may resume, and follow forth something to your edification, I shall briefly speak to these four: –

1. That all men have sin to be pardoned.
2. That sin is a crime, and a debt, that needs a pardon, a burden that a man will not willingly lie under, if he look tight on it, nor be at rest till he get it off.
3. That sin being a debt that needs pardon, and a burden too heavy for any, the unpardoned man looks upon himself (if in his right wits) in a doleful plight, till he be pardoned. And
4. That it is the chiefest of good news, to a man sensible of the debt of sin, that God is a pardoner of sin.

For the first of these, all have sinned, or done that which needs a pardon, I shall not need to repeat what I spoke the last day upon this, when I cleared the universality of that assertion, "That if God mark iniquity, none can stand before him" (verse 3). I shall only add two scriptural confirmations this day. One is, that, 1 John 1:8, where the Apostle, writing to the godly, says, as to original sin, "If we say we have not sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" and another confirmation, when as to actual sin, he says, verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." And another confirmation ye shall take from the pattern of prayer, Matthew 6:12, where these who are allowed to call God Father, even the godly, are required to pray daily, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" or as Luke 11:4 hath it, "Forgive us our sins."

I shall say no more of this, but briefly mind you of these four.

1. It serves to refute the perfectists, that pretend to sinlessness. It was the damnable error of the Pelagians, that they affirmed, that as we have no guilt by Adam's sin, so men might live without sin, not only *sine crimine*, without any gross scandalous outbreakings (as we confess some sins, or some ways of committing sin, are not incident to the people of God,

1 John 3:9). But they assert, that men may live *sine peccato*, without any sin at all; and when they are urged with that petition enjoined in the Lord's prayer, where we are bidden pray for the daily forgiveness of sin, they answer, that men should say that petition *humiliter*, but not *veraciter*, humbly, but not truly, and in sincerity; which is both an imputation on the majesty of God, and a refutation of their error – an imputation on the majesty of God, as if He did require, that men should lie under pretence of humility, and a refutation of their own error: for if they should lie and pray hypocritically, and not sincerely, they prove themselves to be sinners, and not perfect, as they pretend.

2. We might here put papists to mind what they say, when they plead for the sinlessness of the blessed Virgin Mary, though in this they do not agree among themselves. The Franciscans and Jesuits, they assert, that she was conceived *immaculate*; others, as the Dominicans, assert, that she was conceived in sin, but she was immediately cleansed from it; but both of them agree, that she lived without actual sin. We are for to declare her blessed above all women, and highly favoured of the Lord, but we dare not contradict Scripture, which concludes all under sin, Romans 3:23; nor her own confession, Luke 1:47, where she owns God as her Saviour, which imports her acknowledging that she was a sinner; nor yet contradict our blessed Lord, His taxing of her as culpable, John 2:4, when she would enjoin Him by her motherly authority to work a miracle, “Woman (saith He), what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” He owns her as a woman, not as His mother, in the acts of His mediatory office; and reflects upon her as one culpable, that would require of Him to work a miracle.

3. But I would from this recommend to all of you to grow in acquaintance with your pollutions, sinfulness, infirmities, and manifold daily failings. And for this, alas! we need not light candles, there is not need of any secret search, as the word is, Jeremiah 2:34, the skirts of our garments tell what we are; to us may be applied that word, Isaiah 3:9, “The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.” But were we as spotless as Paul, it is our duty to be exercised with the root of sin, with the body of sin and death, with that law which is in our members, rebelling against the law of the mind, with that will that is present with us, when we delight to do good, after the inner-man (Romans 7). Ye would drive this trade, and mourn for your secret sins, lest God be provoked to give you up to scandalous outbursts, which the world will read. When ye are not exercised with secret sins, ye provoke God to give you other work to do, little to your advantage. Learn to be at that work, which the people are at, Isaiah 59:12, “Our transgressions (say they) are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them;” and at that trade David was at, Psalm 40:12, while he saith, “Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me.” Estrangement from our sinfulness is an impediment to our humility. All the crosses in the world will not humble, or bring a man so low, as acquaintance with his own pollutions, and sinfulness of his nature. Estrangement from sinfulness is a great obstruction to repentance; he cannot be a penitent that is not a daily student of his own failings and infirmities. And estrangement from our sinfulness is an impediment to pardon; for sin must be taken with, and confessed, before we can expect pardon, and that cannot be while we live estranged from it. Thus you see the losses that follow the neglect of acquainting ourselves with the sinfulness of sin, our daily pollutions and infirmities.

But the fourth and last word I shall give you from this (and I shall go no further for the time) shall be this, that the consideration of the universal sinfulness of all mankind should excite folk much to commend God. It commends God, as upon many accounts, so particularly upon these two; one is, that He spares the world daily, though there be so much

sin both of saints and others abounding in it. Who would sit with so many wrongs as God gets every day, and yet He destroys us not? How often might He say, as He said to Moses of Israel, Exodus 32:10, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, that I may sweep them away from off the earth;" and yet He doth it not! How often might He do with us in this world as He did with Sodom, and the old world, and yet He bears with us! How often might He make the visible Church a terror to itself, and all the world! And how often might He make the saints a burden to themselves, and yet great is His goodness, that He spares a sinful world, and sinners in it. And upon another account it commends God, and that is, that He lets not the sinfulness of His people make void their interest in Him, but notwithstanding their sinfulness, allows them to call Him Father; that though they be daily, by their repeated provocations, iniquities and transgressions, drawing rods forth from His hand, yet that doth not make void the covenant, Psalm 89:32,33, "That he will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes, nevertheless his loving kindness will he not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." O! but the study of our sinfulness would make daily a new wonder to us, it would not be common news, "but a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). And as we grow in the study of our sinfulness, the sweeter should these truths that hold out the remedy of sin grow and continue.

(Continued May 1919)

[October 1918]