

Substance of Sermon

By REV. WILLIAM MATHESON, Chesley, Ontario.

Preached in Toronto on Sabbath, 5th February, 1922, in Reformed Presbyterian Church there,
on occasion of the lamented death of the Pastor, Rev. Samuel Dempster.

“And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man
fallen this day in Israel?” – 2 Samuel 3:38.

Saul had fallen, with Jonathan and other members of his house, on Gilboa. David had been acknowledged king by many of the children of Israel at Hebron. Ishbosheth, Saul's son, had been acknowledged king by those remaining loyal to the house of Saul. So long war had been waged between the two parties. Abner had proved himself the loyal follower of Saul's house and the able leader of its hosts. Yet in his heart questionings had been going on, for he was not certain that the kingdom was not David's from the Lord. Then arose a situation which forced the issue, for he desired to do the right and to advance the welfare of Israel.

Ishbosheth charged him with going in to Rizpah, Saul's concubine. This was to charge him with aiming to secure the throne for himself. There was revealed in Ishbosheth the same weakness that manifested itself so painfully in his father before him. He was a selfishly jealous-minded man. His concern was not for the welfare of Israel so much as for his own honour and prestige. Here he was ready to accuse his most faithful and tried friend of plotting his overthrow. Whatever it was to cost to Israel, Ishbosheth would defend his personal interests. Now were Abner's eyes opened to the utter unfitness of this man to reign over the Lord's people. Now the reality of Jehovah's having chosen David as king came home to his heart. Nor was he slow to act. He made clear to Ishbosheth what his mind now was, and he moved with determination and energy to unite the people of Israel under David.

Thus Abner showed his innocence of the charge laid by Ishbosheth and his goodwill toward Israel. Arrangements were soon made with David for the establishment of his royal authority over a united Israel. In Abner David discerned a whole-hearted Israelite, and now a promising counsellor and a faithful friend. His loyalty to the reigning house of Saul was rooted in integrity of heart toward Israel, and, indeed, toward Israel's God. But David's hopes in Abner's help were soon dashed to pieces through the vindictive treachery of Joab. Here again was a man with whom merely personal matters weighed to the embittering of his soul against such as crossed his path. Excusing himself by the death of his brother Asahel, who had fallen by his own fault at Abner's hand in battle, he traitorously slew Abner, and in such a way as to involve the reputation of the king. Thus was David constrained to let the people know his deep grief at Abner's death and the high regard in which he held him. With unfeigned respect he honoured him in his burial, and in song lamented his untimely death. A man of single aim for Israel's welfare, according to his ready discernment of the Lord's will, David ascribed to him this high and noble character, “Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?”

This day, my dear friends, we are gathered together under the shadow of a deep grief. Your beloved pastor has been taken from you, and you are this day shepherdless. I feel for you. I mourn with you the removal of a prince and a great man in Israel. Yet I am glad to hold the conviction that no one would be readier to reprove me, were it possible, than your late pastor if I were to use this opportunity of addressing you only in extolling his many virtues and those characteristic excellencies whereby he so warmly attached to his person those who had the honour and privilege of his intimacy, as we have. Therefore, we shall endeavour to reach some clearness of insight into the secret of true greatness. “What is it that

makes anyone a prince and a great man in Israel?" is our question to-day. As for the personal application to the one whose loss we so keenly feel, that is left for you to make it.

The first and fundamental essential to true greatness in anyone is an undivided heart. It is with this principle we have to do to-day. It does not matter what sphere of life a man may be moving in; it does not matter what line of business in life a man may be following; it does not matter what condition a man has to face of poverty or wealth, of squalor or of cleanly and well ordered comfort, of mountains of difficulty to climb or of manifold opportunities opening up before his eyes, except there be an undivided heart no man can attain unto greatness; and granted that there be an undivided heart, greatness is assured. To the undivided heart the very conditions which confound and stumble others become the very means to greatness. In Abner we see what it is to have an undivided heart. His whole heart was devoted to the welfare of Israel. His own interest was bound up in the interest of Israel. When he transferred his allegiance from Ishbosheth to David he did not change his aim. He simply recognised that he was mistaken in seeking Israel's welfare by supporting the house of Saul. He readily discerned Jehovah's purpose to establish the throne of David. Nor did he consider his own honour or prestige, and so manœuvre for a rich reward from David for his transferred allegiance. There are those who might call him fickle-minded or even worse. With that he had nought to do. He looked beyond mere persons to something on which his heart was so united that he forgot his own personal aggrandisement. Had he concerned himself with what might be said or thought of him, or with his own personal advantage, he would have shown the hesitancy that comes of a divided heart. Indeed, we may consider that it was on the simplicity of his heart that the artful Joab played to his destruction.

From an undivided heart flows steadfastness of aim, clearness of insight, loyalty of purpose, definiteness of counsel, determinateness of action, and persistency of energy. Now, these are qualities that we must sadly confess are manifested more notably by men of the world than by the people of God. This arises from the fact that the worldling is more wholehearted than the child of God. In the child of God the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. But in the worldling there is no such division. So it is that our Lord Jesus Christ urges upon us the example of the children of this world, not that we should go in their direction, but that we should be wholehearted in His service even as they are in the service of this world.

We come to consider from what an undivided heart proceeds. It proceeds from some object before our minds, to which we so give up our hearts that our entire life is devoted to it. To reach this object our whole thought is so directed that other things that appeal to others, and would appeal to us were it not for this object, are not allowed to interfere. Every influence and suggestion is now judged of in the light of this one object. Whatsoever may be in line to help us reach it is welcomed; but all else is put aside. Things that may seem hard and severe to those whose hearts are not so united appear quite in order to the one whose heart is undivided upon the object sought after. This is to be noted in the lives of all great men. When such a course is followed to obtain a corruptible crown, the heart of the wise is saddened. Yet how common a thing it is to see men give themselves up in this way to gain wealth, fame, popularity, power, or some other object of a merely carnal character. Such attain greatness according to the object they seek, but they can never so become princes or great men in Israel.

A prince and a great man in Israel is one who can say: "I have set the Lord always before me." He has a heart united to fear the Lord. This is the secret of the Christian's undivided heart. The living God is the great overpowering reality of his life. So was it with Joseph: "How can I do this great wickedness (commit this great evil) and sin against God?" So was it with Elijah: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand." So was it and must it be with all who are princes and great men in Israel. This is declared in the Book of Psalms, "O

God, my heart is fixed.” And when thus a man’s heart is united his life must bear some likeness to the life of Moses, of whom it is written that he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. His life is a life of faith. The worship of God is the principle that controls him in all his goings.

And this leads us to notice the character of true worship. How there can be the supposition of true worship where there is not absolute surrender to His will it is difficult to understand. Worship there can not be where there is not obedience. He who yields himself unto the Lord with an undivided heart, finds no place for his own will as over against the will of God. He has surely learned the perversity of his own will, so that he cannot presume to find place for it, especially in the matter of the formal approaches to God, which we call worship, even beside the will of God. But we must observe that it is only in Christ Jesus that we can come to that knowledge of God that makes an undivided heart. All the reasonings of philosophers and theologians are but in vain, so far as leading us to know the living God is concerned. We may have beautiful ideas of what God must be and definite thoughts of what He cannot be, and yet have nothing more than a figment of our own imagination. Such thoughts may go far in influencing our lives, but can never unite our hearts in the fear of the Lord. The living God reveals Himself in and through Jesus Christ, and Him alone. So it is declared, “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.” This honour belongs unto the Son of God as the Mediator of the Covenant of Grace. So we hold that He alone can be a prince and a great man in Israel who has an undivided heart as fixed on the living God incarnate in Jesus Christ.

It is true that God revealed Himself to His people before the Son of God came in the flesh. Yet it is to refuse to Christ His full honour when men teach the possibility of knowing the living God out of Christ. Since the fall all God’s revelation of Himself to man has centred round the promised seed. With ever-increasing clearness and fulness God’s revelation of His will is presented to us. The matter of purity of worship must grip the undivided heart of the servant of God. Therefore he moves with careful, reverent steps within the bounds wherein he knows he has the mind of the Lord. Beyond those bounds lie the open spaces where will-worship may have free play. To the truly undivided heart those spaces are uninviting, for within the limits wherein we do justice to the sovereign claims of God is freedom to be known and nowhere else. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Even so it is with will-worship.

It is true enough that the pure simplicity of New Testament worship does not appeal to the carnal mind. That would be to make it self-contradictory were we to have it so. “God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” So while it remains that the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God – they are foolishness unto him, for they are spiritually discerned – it must remain a problem insoluble to the world how the undivided heart delights in the pure simplicity of spiritual worship, and contemplates with pain the entertaining and ornate programme of service so popular in these days with those who give free play to their own will rather than wait upon the Lord. Revelation of Himself in the Scriptures prepared the way for the identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Incarnate Son. It is true, therefore, that even to His servants of old the revelation of God was only through the Son.

This is a matter of great importance. The whole question of our outlook on life and of our prospects for eternity turns upon the place we give to Jesus Christ. If we fail to honour Him as we ought, to give to Him the absolute homage of our entire being, it simply means that we have not the undivided heart of a true believer. He claims not only that His sheep know His voice and follow Him, but He also declares that they will not follow a stranger, because they do not know the voice of strangers. Such is the place He must get with us. We will not move in any direction except at His bidding, simply because we are jealous for His honour as our

Lord and Master. Of His very murderers it is declared that had they known Him they would not have killed the Lord of Glory. Yet they were accounted guilty. They had the Scriptures whereby to identify Him, but, prejudiced by various considerations, they would not receive the simple testimony of the written Word. And when He sent forth His ambassadors He put that very written Word into their hands, opening their understanding to understand it. Every question that meets us going through this world – and many a problem faces us these times – must be answered according to its bearing upon Christ according to His Word, if we are to answer aright. If our heart is undivided, happy, indeed, are we, for there is no test upon this question like the test of the times we are passing through.

This leads me to observe further that it is from the Cross of Calvary that the light must shine upon us to unite our hearts in and unto Christ. The revelation of the Divine character may properly be said to be summed up in two statements: “God is love” and “God is light.” There are those who try to put such a meaning on terms as to embrace all under the one statement, “God is love.” This is popular to-day. It is impossible, and it is disastrous. Men may as well deny our reason itself as eternal justice, which is the real principle underlying all rationality. Our Lord Jesus Christ clearly shows how evil-doers shun the light. Men know what is to be shunned by evil-doers, were it possible. Evil-doers fly from justice. So in the Cross of Calvary we behold two principles displayed in all their glory. There is the principle of love, and there is the principle of justice. These two are never in opposition, for they cannot be in the very nature of things. The fruit of their union in the life is righteousness. To vindicate justice that we by sin have outraged, and to manifest love that we have set at nought, Christ died on Calvary. His death on Calvary reveals what God thinks of justice. He reveals there what Justice is. There also love is shown forth. The more we ponder the facts of the death which Christ accomplished at Jerusalem the more grievous will we find our fall into, and bondage in, sin to be. It is impossible that a more awful exhibition of the character of justice can be made than was made on Calvary. What awful words, “Awake, O Sword, against my Shepherd and against the man, that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts, smite the shepherd!” There can be no hope, absolutely none, for the guilty, for the one who must appear in naked guilt before the judgment throne of Christ. Only in Him who died on the tree, giving His life a ransom for many for the remission of their sins, is there refuge from the holy wrath of God, revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness of men. It is in this that the true view of moral law is to be had. Our modern Socialism, which is permeating Protestantism through and through, knows nothing of this. The question asked by them is, “What is the use or benefit?” Not “Is it just?” The one is mere animalism. The other is true morality. The one is the rule of fallen man, as Satan charged against Job. The other is the rule of the truly moral life, the child of God. Thus as we look in our confessed guilt to the Lord Jesus Christ, “The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world,” for pardon, and our hearts are united under the power of His redeeming love and of His inviolable justice, there takes place that change without which none can enter His kingdom. We are created anew in Christ Jesus into good works. The undivided heart in which He reigns becomes ours, and we become children of the day and not of the night any longer. According as He becomes more and more unto us, and we grow in clearer views of His Person and character, we are changed into His image again in the actual practice of our lives. The two foundation principles of our moral agency, love and justice, become the controlling principles of our lives. But surely as we ponder these things in the light of His death, we find ourselves overwhelmed with a growing sense of our unlikeness to Him and the impossibility of our salvation from sin except by Him.

And this leads us on to the question of how this great change – a new creation – is wrought in us. It is herein that the undivided heart becomes ours. Christ is the object of our trust. He is at the door with His overture of peace through the propitiating efficacy of His

blood. His very presence points to our danger and our need as sinners. But with heart set upon the creature, revelling in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life, we regard not His earnest entreaties. The day of our visitation is upon us, but we know it not. We can't discern the force of His warning and appeal. We would let Him pass utterly away and ourselves pass out into the blackness of darkness. But the light breaks in; we begin to see the force of His call unto us; we ponder His word in the secret of our souls. As we ponder the light shines more brightly, and though we dread it as it exposes our naked guilt before Him, we cannot escape it. And in our helpless need and guilty bondage no salvation can we know to rest in until we behold the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. We are saved by grace – the sovereign grace of the living One, against whom we sinned. As thus beholding Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, we cannot but believe in Him and He is made of God unto us our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But when arose the light upon our minds? Verily, not from the exercise of our own wills. It is the work of the Spirit of God who reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And whence came that great change, when we began to rejoice in Christ as our God and Saviour – when a new principle of life possessed us? This is the regenerating power and work of the Holy Spirit. And whence come those clearer views of the truth as it is in Jesus – of His person, character, and work? Surely from the Spirit of God, whose it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us that we may be sanctified. So the undivided heart of the Christian is so, as fixed on the living God, incarnate in Jesus Christ, and unveiling His heart on the Cross, and so fixed by the power of the Holy Ghost through the word of the truth of the Scriptures.

But it is written from the lips of the Lord that “Many that are first shall be last and the last first.” There shall be a reversal of earth's judgments at the final assize, when the secrets of all shall be revealed. It is then that men shall see what the service of the Lord means. It is required of a steward that a man be found faithful. It is not for the servant to choose his own method or sphere of labour. The word of reconciliation is committed unto him, even the faith once delivered unto the saints. He is called to sow the good seed of the Word where it may please His Master. His aim is to seek not his own glory, but the glory of Him who sent him. He may pass hence as among the least, but be found at last amongst the greatest. The widow's mite was more than the abundance of the rich when cast into the treasury of the Lord. So shall it be. Where the undivided heart is that values all things only as they bear on His glory, there is the “all the living that a man hath” cast into the treasury of the Lord. It is not done to enrich Him. It is not done to enrich the doer. It is done from constraint of the love of Christ, and as far short of His due to whose grace the redeemed must remain overwhelmed in debt for ever. It is the nature of grace to be satisfied with simple acknowledgment of the debt as utterly beyond payment. You know, my dear friends, the witness of the ministrations, walk, and conversation among you of your late pastor. It was the witness of an undivided heart. May it be ours to follow in the footsteps of that faith. This, I believe, that he, among the last on earth, desiring not to be among the first, shall be among the first on high.

[May 1922]

A Sermon.

By REV. D. GRAHAM, Shildaig.

Preached 8th November, 1920.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” – 2 Corinthians 4:17.

We have to consider as briefly as possible,

I. in the *first* place, a little in connection with the affliction that is brought before us here – the affliction of the Church of God. You can see that Paul joins himself here with the Church; he says “our afflictions”, his own afflictions, and the afflictions of the children of God to the end of time.

II. In the *second* place, we will endeavour to say a few words in connection with the description given here of their afflictions. He says “our *light* afflictions,” and we will endeavour to say a few words in connection with the way in which they may be considered light, however heavy they may be. Some of the Lord’s children have had very heavy afflictions in this world, yet it is designated here as *light* afflictions. “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment.” This is one of the reasons that causes it to be light. It is only of a short duration; it will pass away in a moment, and if we are saved and in Christ, as soon as we leave this world we will leave trouble and affliction behind us.

I. With reference to the afflictions of the Church of God, if we read our Bible, as we ought to read our Bible, we can see that the children of God from the very beginning had their afflictions in this world. Some have heavier afflictions than others, but they all had their own share, and the share with which the Lord saw right to visit them. If we begin at Abel we see that Abel had his own affliction. He was persecuted even unto death by his own brother, and this was a heavy affliction, but his affliction was only for a moment, and as soon as he died he entered the paradise above – he went home to be with Christ throughout an endless eternity. My dear friends, this should be our absorbing desire, first of all to make sure of Christ, to make sure of being in Christ, and if we are in Christ we will have an interest in this promise. All the promises are yea and amen in Christ, but as long as you are without Christ and rejecting Him in the gospel, you have no right to the promises – you have a right only to the curse of a broken law, to the condemnation that is due to your sins and to my sins. This is all that we have a right to as we are by nature, but as soon as the sinner is united to Christ he is one with Him, and then he has a right not only to one of the promises, and not only to a few of them, but he has a right to them all in Christ.

Then if we come to Enoch, we are told that he walked with God, that he pleased God, but we are told also, especially in history, that he lived in a fearfully wicked generation, and it is the opinion of some that that was one reason why the Lord caught him away. You know that in those days men lived until they were eight to nine hundred years old, and he was taken home when he was only a little over three hundred years. He was a witness for God in a wicked generation, and, according to some, the witnesses were very few in Enoch’s day, and we might just think of them and of the ways of the Lord towards them as of a tender Father looking on his children mobbed by enemies. You know that if you are a father and would see your child on the street or in any other place mobbed by his enemies and that you could rescue your child, you would just go and pluck him away from them and bring him into your house in safety. That is, in a sense, we might say, the way the Lord came and plucked Enoch from that wicked mob that lived in his day. He took him home with Himself to glory, and Enoch could say, “Our light affliction is but for a moment, and though I have been suffering

much from this wicked generation for the last three hundred years or so, it is only a moment, and my Father is coming, and He will take me away from them.”

If we were to continue and come on to Abraham. Abraham had his own trial; he had battles with unbelief from the very first day he got the promise in regard to Isaac until the day in which he got Isaac, the son of promise, and after receiving Isaac from the Lord the Lord tried Abraham. He tried his faith, but although Abraham had great faith, we believe he had great battles with unbelief, and it will be true in regard to the child of God in all ages that, however great his faith and other graces may be, they will be tried in this world. They will, however, stand the test, because they come from God, and what comes from Him will stand the test, but whatever we have of ourselves it is weak like ourselves, and it will not stand. They were trusting in the Lord, as it is said, “Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.”

Now if we come on to Jacob, Jacob had his afflictions in this world. That was a very sad day in the history of Jacob when the brethren came home with the coat of Joseph rent and besmeared with blood and presented it to Jacob. He said, “All these things are against me.” This was a very heavy affliction, but it was only for a moment; and you remember the day came in the history of Jacob when he, even in this world, got his Joseph back again. The dispensations of the Lord are wonderful, and it would be well for us if we had faith, and if we were seeking faith, that we would trust our all in the hands of the Lord. If you trust the Lord, give Him your soul and your body – give Him your family if you have a family, or whatever your concerns are in this world – commit them all to the Lord, and He will keep that which you have committed to Him; as Paul said, “I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” My dear friends, if we would commit ourselves to the Lord it would be well for us going through this wilderness of troubles and trials, for if you belong to the children of God you may put this to your account, that you will have your afflictions in this world. That does not mean that the children of God have nothing but afflictions and sorrow in the world. No. They have their days of joy and happiness, but if you take it upon the whole and put their joys in one balance and their sorrows in another while they are here on earth, their sorrows will certainly bring down the scale. “In this world,” Christ told them, “ye shall have tribulation.” In this world they have their night, and the day is before them, and you know the gloominess of a winter night. The believer has his winter here; his summer is before him. If we go to heaven there we will find our summer, but not on this side of heaven, although, as I have said already, that is not to say you have winter nights always on your journey; you will get glimpses now and then of the sun. I often compare this in my own mind to a very stormy and cloudy day. You see when the sky is full of clouds which are going very fast with the wind, you might get a glimpse of the sun, but as soon as you get it another cloud comes and takes away the sun from your sight, and we might say that this is something like the life of the true Christian in this world. He will have a glimpse of the sun here on earth now and then, but he is on a voyage from time to eternity, and on that voyage he will meet with storms. The wind will be high and the clouds thick, and he will only have a glimpse now and then of the Sun, but when he gets home to glory it will be an eternal summer, an eternal day, never a winter, never a night there, but as long as the believer is in this world he may put this to his account, that he will have affliction. I have met with some who had affliction in their body during most of their lifetime until the day of their death. In many cases the Lord was very kind to them in their soul, but they had their spiritual troubles also, their dark moments, but ah! my dear friends, it was only for a moment. Some of those afflicted ones, who are now in glory we believe, could say by faith many a time, “My affliction is light because it is only for a moment, and I will soon be in heaven with God the Father, who loved me from all eternity: I will soon be in heaven with Christ the Son, who loved me and came from the bosom of the

Father to this world in order to save me: I will soon be in heaven with the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the glorious Trinity, beholding angels and saints.” This reminds me of an anecdote in connection with an eminent man, John Grant, who died, I think, in Caithness. Shortly before he came to his deathbed a friend visited him, and he said to his friend, “If you will hear that I am sick, do not stay long in coming to see me, for I believe that the Lord will not keep me very long at the ferry when He will send the ferryboat for me” His friend went home, and some time after this he heard that John Grant was ill, and he came to see him. John was in bed very poorly when the friend came, and he said to him, “You are very poorly today, John.” “No,” said John, “I am not poorly, and I am not to be poorly. The Father will welcome me when I go home, the Son will welcome me when I go home, the Holy Ghost will welcome me when I reach home, the angels and the saints in glory will welcome me when I reach home, and do you call that a poor man?” Oh, my dear friends, if this were true of us, whatever afflictions we would meet with in this world would they not be light?

Then others have afflictions, troubles, and trials in their families, in their congregations, and should we have no cause of sorrow in the day in which we live than seeing the great majority of our congregations careless in regard to their immortal soul, would this not be affliction? And if we were as we ought to be, seeing our own children, our sons and daughters, hearing the gospel from their childhood, and still without Christ, and that we are sure of this, that if they die as they are their sorrow will be an eternal sorrow, would this not be affliction? There were many parents we believe who had very heavy affliction during the fearful war – their sons away in the war zone in danger of being killed at any moment. I remember being in Portsmouth, the last year of the war, in March or April, when we had the fearful reverses, and I was standing at a station one day when the ambulance train came in with the wounded. There was an old man standing beside me, and he was weeping. He said, “It is awful, so many young men dying out there daily, and others wounded and maimed,” and they were coming in there some without hands, others without feet, and some without eyes. He said, “I had only two sons, and one of them was killed right out with a shell, and the other was wounded four or five times, and he is now a prisoner in Germany.” Now that man had his affliction, and I had some hope it worked for his good; he had other afflictions along with them, but, however heavy they may be in this world, if they are to come to an end at our death everything will be well. Whatever prosperity you may have or I may have in this world, if we are without Christ then, at our death, our afflictions will begin, and they shall not be for a moment. No, they shall not be only for a hundred years, for, remember, if you die without Christ your sorrows will only begin at death, and there is an eternity before you without an end. This is what we may call and what the Scriptures call affliction – awful sorrow and anguish of heart, and it will meet the sinner who dies without Christ, let him be a prince or a beggar, but the affliction of the children of God is but for a moment.

II. Now I am going to say a few words in connection with the reasons which are brought before us here why the afflictions of the people of God are light, and the first reason is that they are but for a moment. My dear friends, we may say that all time, since the world was created until it will be going out of being, is only a moment in comparison with eternity, so that although you or I were suffering in this world, say, for a hundred years – and we would consider that very long – the end would come at the expiry of the hundred years. Even if we were suffering for a thousand years, and that would be a long time suffering, it would only be a moment in comparison with eternity, and we should lay this to heart. There are very few in this world who have the heart to suffer for Christ or His cause in the world, but I have no doubt that the Apostle Paul had sufferings on that account when he wrote this epistle and these words. He suffered much persecution from men from the very first day that he followed Christ and His cause. You remember that he was let down in a basket over the wall because of the persecutors after him; you remember that he was stoned and afflicted in different other

ways, but he says here, “our light affliction.” He had a good grounded hope that whenever he would die he would be with Christ, and that all his troubles and sorrows would be at an end then. We should all examine ourselves this very night, and ask ourselves, “Do I know anything of the troubles of the children of God? Do I know anything of their sorrows? Do I know anything of their joys?” We heard one man saying that he could follow the Lord’s children better in their sorrows than in their joys, and that is true of some of the true children of God; but that did not mean that they had no joy – that they had no moments or glimpses of joy in this world. If you have found Christ as the Saviour of your soul, surely you know something of the joy and happiness of having your sins forgiven. But perhaps you say, “But very soon I was plunged in darkness and unbelief, and the devil came with his temptations and all the other things that I had to meet with in my own bosom.” That may be, and, as I have said, already, if the sorrows of the Lord’s children in this world were put in one scale and their joys in another scale, we believe that the scale with the sorrows would weigh down the other scale; but this is not the home of true believers. You know that when a traveller is away from home, however great the hardship he may meet with on the journey, he will say, “Ah, I am only to be here one night; I am on my way home, and when I reach my family and my home it will make up for all the troubles that I have met with.” And if this is true in a literal sense, surely it is more so in a spiritual sense, and we should be willing to glory in the cross of Christ and whatever trouble we had to meet with in the world for the cause of Christ. I am not speaking of the trouble which the children of God bring upon themselves in this world, and for which they have to smite their breasts and say, “This is my own folly; it is myself who causes this trouble and this sorrow.” That is not to be welcomed or gloried in, and where will they go to be relieved? Oh, they must go to Christ.

Another reason or cause of this trouble being light is that they have the Lord’s promise that He will be with them. “In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them.” And He says, “When thou goest through the waters, I will be with thee.” He speaks to Jacob and to the true Church of God, “Behold, I am with thee.” This is what makes the affliction of the children of God light. Perhaps, however, they will not see him always. No, their eyes may be blinded with unbelief, and they will think they are alone, and this makes the burden so heavy; but if you and I could see clearly and believe that the Lord is with us in all our troubles, then we could say in reality, as well as Paul, “Our *light* affliction.” This reminds me of a little boy who fell into the river and was nearly drowned. As the current was taking him down he caught a stone in the river, and by this help, as he thought himself, he got out of the stream and came home to his mother. “Oh,” she said to him, “what came over you?” “I fell into the river!” “And how did you get out?” she said; “what a mercy that the Lord was so near you; you would have been drowned were it not that the Lord was so near you and took you out.” “Oh, no,” said the boy, “I did not see the Lord there at all; it was the stone which I caught that helped me out.” This is so like you and me when we are in our troubles. Although it is clearly evident – and the child of God will see it at some times – that the Lord was with him to help him, he will be under the power of unbelief and saying, “I was there alone; the Lord was not there,” just like the little boy.

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” I may tell you another note in connection with a young woman who was in Caithness in the days of Mr. Cook. He was at a communion season there, and on the Sabbath he was serving a table – I think it was the last table that was served – and he was speaking to the child of God at the table in this way, “Child of God at the table, you have found the presence of the Lord at the table to-day, and you are saying to the Lord, ‘Take me home with Thyself as long as I am in this joyful frame. I am afraid of meeting the world and that the world will take away from me this joyful frame that I got at the Lord’s table. Take me home to the mansions above!’ Mr. Cook said, “The Lord says No. I will not bring you home

yet. You have a lot of trouble to meet with in this world before I will bring you home.” When the soul heard this it cried out, “Oh, take me away home with Thyself, so that I will shun these troubles.” He said, “The Lord says No. I will not bring you home yet. If I were to bring you home just now without going through the troubles you have to meet with in this world, you would lose part of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory.” And when the soul heard this it cried out, “If that is so, leave me here on earth as long as Thou seest right, so that I may not lose even one drop of the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory.” Oh, my dear friends, I do not say that it is what we have to suffer in this world that is to merit in the least the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, but I say this, that these troubles are, as it were, preparations preparing the child of God to drink more and more out of the joys above when he is brought home. We read this question in the Word of God, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” And we are told that “these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” This was what sustained our forefathers when some of them had to lay down their lives for the sake of Christ. They believed that their affliction was only for a moment, and that in a very short time they would be home with Christ in Glory, and they were willing to go to the stake and face death in other ways. Ah, my friends, we look too much on the things that are seen – the pleasures of the world, riches and honour, but what will it avail us on our deathbed although we were millionaires like Carnegie if we are without Christ? Your millions would be as little in your eyes in that moment as the dust that is under your feet. The pleasures of this world will not make you happy even in time. Should you get your fill of them, you would be like the prodigal son at last. They would be nothing but husks, for the things of this world cannot satisfy the immortal soul, the never-dying soul. Nothing will satisfy our souls but Christ, and if you have Christ as your Saviour, you have everything that you need for time and for eternity. May the Lord bless His word.

[July 1922]

A Sermon.

By REV. D. M. MACDONALD, Portree.

“I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” – Revelation 22:16.

The book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John when a prisoner on the Isle of Patmos. In order to prevent him from preaching the glorious Gospel of Christ his persecutors banished him to this lonely isle, but the Lord Jesus over-ruled their evil intentions for the good of His Church by giving the Apostle wonderful visions of His glory and revelations of His gracious purposes towards His people till the end of time. These visions and revelations were written by the Apostle in this book.

When John Bunyan was confined in Bedford Jail his enemies thought they had silenced him, but there God gave him the will and opportunity to write the “Pilgrim’s Progress” – than which no other book except the Bible is more widely read. Thus the Most High over-rules the evil purpose of His enemies and the trials of His own people for the good of His cause in the world.

The excellencies of the Saviour are proclaimed in the many wonderful titles given to Him in the Scriptures, and the description of Him in our text brings before us various aspects of His character as the Redeemer of His people. We shall consider Him first as “The root and offspring of David,” and in the second place as the bright and morning star.

I. The root and offspring of David.

(1) The Lord Jesus is spoken of as the great agent in creation.

Through Him and by Him and for Him all things were made. He was the root of David in the sense that David had his being from Christ. Our natural life has its being from Him. He upholds us each day and provides for our needs. Sinners too often forget this and act as if they were quite independent of Christ. They neither submit to His authority nor own His claims on them. The mercies received from Him are abused, and the privileges bestowed are treated with contempt. How few they are who seek to use their term of life in the world for the glory of Christ and His cause! In our day the great majority are spending their lives in self-gratification, fleshly lusts, and carnal security. O, sinner, how dreadful your account will be at last if you pass on to the bar of judgment unrepentant and unforgiven? Seek grace to give yourself up to Christ now that your time and talents may be employed for His glory and that you may possess His favour in which there is life.

(2) Christ is the root of the life of grace.

In Him there is infinite fulness of grace to meet the needs of His people. They are altogether undone in themselves. They have no righteousness, no spiritual strength; no merit; no holiness as they are in themselves to meet the demands of God’s Law and Justice. Sin has corrupted them in their nature and faculties. The Holy Spirit convinced them of their ruined condition and led them as poor helpless sinners to Christ. He enabled them to believe in Jesus Christ and being united to Him by faith they were justified. He then became to them the source of the grace received so that they are saved by grace through faith. O, believer, how much you are indebted to grace! In Christ there is for you sustaining, preserving, sanctifying, and dying grace! “He will give grace and glory and will withhold no good from them that walk uprightly.”

(3) It is evident that if the Lord Jesus is the author of the life of grace in every Christian He must also be the source of the life of glory. The redeemed are glorified through Him. He declares that He gives His sheep eternal life, and that none of them shall perish. He has entered into the holiest of all on their behalf with the infinite merit of His sacrifice, and where He is there His people shall be at last. “I go,” he said, “to prepare a place for you.” “In my father’s house are many mansions.” Eternal glory awaits all true believers in virtue of their union with Christ.

We shall now notice what is implied in Christ being the offspring of David. It was prophesied that the Messiah should come from David according to the flesh. The psalmist-King of Israel rejoiced in anticipation of the fulfilment of the promise given to himself. Isaiah emphasises the humanity of the Saviour where he says, “And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” Thus the term “root” brings before us the divinity, while the term “offspring” implies the humanity of the Messiah.

The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, states the reason why Christ assumed our nature, sin excepted. “For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he

also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The Lord Jesus became the substitute and surety of all whom the Father gave Him to save. It was necessary therefore that He should obey the Law and endure its curse in order to procure salvation for them. The inflexible justice of God also demanded satisfaction. The divine substitute met the demands of both. From His birth to His death on Calvary He obeyed the Law perfectly. On the cross He endured its curse to the uttermost and gave His blood to justice; for without shedding of blood there could be no remission. During the great war, a convalescent French soldier allowed the surgeons in the hospital where he was recovering, to transfuse a quantity of his blood to a fellow-soldier, who was at the point of death, with the happy result that he recovered. The nurses discovered that the soldier who parted with his own blood was in poor circumstances, and had a large family. They made up their minds to give him a present of money, and when they had gathered a sufficiently large sum, one of them in the name of the staff offered it to him as a token of their goodwill in view of what he had done for his countryman. The soldier looked at the gift, and firmly refused it, saying, "I gave my blood freely for my fellow soldier, and I am not going to accept anything for it." No doubt he considered it a sufficient reward that his blood had been the means of saving the life of the other man. On a far higher scale the Lord Jesus gave his blood freely for unworthy sinners, and His reward will be the eternal salvation of all who accept Him as their personal Saviour. "Who, it is written, for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame."

In our nature He has ascended to the right hand of the Father, and shall reign until all His enemies be made His footstool.

II. *In the second place we shall consider*

(1) Christ as the bright and morning star.

The reference here appears to be to the Polestar, which, according to astronomers, never changes. It is described as being bright, and therefore gives light. Now Christ is the altogether glorious One, the chiefest among ten thousand, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. He is the light of the world. Sin has darkened the minds and alienated the hearts of sinners from God. But Christ enlightens the minds of all whom He saves, giving them a knowledge of Himself in the supreme worth of His adorable Person, and of themselves as poor and needy sinners. By His Spirit He brings the great realities of eternity before the minds of believers and causes them to see the nothingness of all created things in comparison with His own preciousness as a Saviour. He gives light on the world to come. His Word informs us that the righteous shall go to heaven, but the wicked to Hell. There is no middle place such as Purgatory. All the saved shall be with Christ in glory; the unsaved shall be with the Devil in eternal misery.

(2) The stars give light during the night. Christ gives light as to duty in the night of persecution and backsliding. He enabled His people in Scotland to follow the path of duty when they were hunted to death on the moors and hillsides on account of their faithfulness to Him.

Mariners used to be guided by the stars at night, and made sure of their course by the stars. Christ guides His people through many temptations and trials to the place that He has prepared for them. We are all on the ocean of time passing on to eternity, and if we take our course from Him who is "the bright and morning star," and be guided by Him all shall be well with us at last.

The morning or Pole star is regarded as a fixed star. It does not change its position like the planets. Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He never changes in His

person. We are subject to many changes in our appearance and in our minds, but He is always the same.

Nor does He change in His attributes. It is a most precious truth that, having loved His people from the beginning He loves them unto the end. His mercy, compassion, power, and goodness undergo no change. Believers are sorely troubled with wandering hearts and straying minds. They continually come short of the divine glory, but their Saviour will never cast them off. He bears with their weaknesses and infirmities. His favour will never be withdrawn from them, and eventually they shall be conformed to His own image and put into possession of that Kingdom that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

His Word is unchangeable. Some people think that the Bible should be altered to suit their views, and that what they consider uninspired portions of it should be expunged. God's Word can be of no real benefit to such people, and unless they come to entertain orthodox views of the Scriptures, and receive Him of whom they testify, they must perish at last. A worthy missionary, who suffered intense persecution and trials during the Boxer rebellion in China, records that he felt the Word of God supporting and imparting strength to his body as well as to his soul. "I wonder," he pertinently asks, "what benefit a higher critic placed in my situation and in continual danger of being killed could obtain from the Bible regarded by him as containing inaccuracies and uninspired statements."

The promises of Christ are ever the same. He has declared that He will never leave nor forsake His people. "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." The believer finds many things in himself to depress him. He has to contend with a corrupt nature, a deceitful heart, and a tempting devil so that his hope may come very low and he may be afraid that he will be left a prey in the hands of his spiritual enemies, But that shall never take place, for Christ will uphold His people amidst all their trials and afflictions, and bring them eventually to that place that He has prepared for them.

The purposes of the Lord Jesus shall all be fulfilled because they are unalterable. Neither fallen angels nor sinful men can frustrate them. His infinite power controls all the events of time. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His permission. This is a comforting doctrine to the Church of Christ. All that concerns them has been ordered in the Covenant of grace, and will be perfected.

It is written that the glory of Christ shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the deep. God's people eagerly desire the coming of that time. They have themselves obtained a glimpse of His glory, and they wish that their fellow-sinners should likewise see His preciousness, knowing that if they do they shall, like Paul, count all things as loss and dung, that they may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having their own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. The world at present is in a state of turmoil. The nations have not, as a result of the war, become more disposed to accept the Gospel. Opposition to the claims of Christ and absolute indifference to true religion are prevailing in every country. False religions and infidelity are destroying multitudes, while in our own highly privileged land all kinds of sins are becoming prevalent. It is Christ alone by His Spirit who can bring about a change, and He shall convert the nations in His own appointed time. For it is written that all nations shall serve Him.

The morning star ushers in the day. The Lord Jesus has ushered in the Gospel day. He proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation personally. Throughout the towns and villages of Judea, sometimes in the synagogue, and at other times on the hill tops, and on the sea. He preached the precious doctrines of grace. He commissioned the Apostles to declare His Word to all nations, and He shall continue to send forth faithful preachers of His Word till the end of time. We need many such in our day. Our country would be very different to what it is if

the Gospel were faithfully proclaimed in its pulpits. There can be no greater curse on a land than a graceless ministry.

A day is a very short period of time. The Gospel day is given to nations, Churches, and individual sinners for a time. If they abuse it they shall suffer loss, but if they use it aright they shall profit by it.

We associate the ideas of light and privilege with the word day. The Gospel gives us light on the great realities of eternity, and it urges us to make use of our precious privileges while we have them, that they may be of benefit by the blessing of God to our souls. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." My dear fellow-sinner, give yourself no rest until you obtain a saving knowledge of Christ.

Much might be said in developing our text, but we shall confine ourselves to a few remarks in conclusion. The Lord Jesus will bring about the millennial day when Satan shall be bound for a thousand years and the Spirit poured forth in Pentecostal measure and power fulfilling the prophecies which declare that in this period a "man shall not say to his brother, know the Lord, for all shall know me from the least unto the greatest."

Then the great day of eternity shall assuredly come. To the people of God it shall be a day that shall have no night, a Sabbath that shall have no end. Their sun shall no more go down neither shall their moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be their everlasting light and the days of their mourning shall be ended.

To the wicked it shall be a night that shall have no morning, the blackness of darkness for ever. You who are still in your sins forsake them; flee from the wrath to come unto Him who is mighty to save. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst say, Come; and whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." Amen.

[September 1922]

Synod Discourse

By REV. NEIL CAMERON, ST. Jude's, Glasgow.

"Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours" – John 4:38.

At the beginning of this chapter, the envy of that inveterate class of men – the Pharisees – appears against the Lord Jesus. The causes of it were that our Lord exposed their hypocrisy, and that they were losing the popularity which they enjoyed hitherto among the people. These causes, fanned to white heat by the growing popularity of Christ, impelled these men from bad to worse until we find them exulting over our Lord upon the cross of Calvary. The successors of the Pharisees have not failed in any generation since, and in all probability they will continue in the visible Church till the last day. But Satan and his servants have been the means of driving the gospel away from places and peoples then and since, only to spread it more widely in other places to their own confusion, and the advancement of the kingdom of

Christ. So we read our Lord left Judea and departed again into Galilee. Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee, and on His journey He came to Sychar, being weary, thirsty and hungry, after a long journey. He sat at the well from which the inhabitants got water. While the disciples were in the city buying food, a woman came to draw water. Jesus asked a drink of her. From this sprang a conversation, the blessed results of which will last throughout the ages of eternity both to this sinful woman and to many of the inhabitants of Sychar.

The reason why our Lord came into the world was to call sinners to repentance, or to seek and save that which was lost. To accomplish this was His meat and drink. To see poor sinners coming to hear the gospel, drawn to Him by the Father, caused Him to forget His hunger and thirst and weariness. This was the meat He had to eat that the disciples knew not of. To see the fields between Sychar and Jacob's well bestrewn with people coming to Himself was the joy of His heart. This is true still; for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. But, alas! the fields of our cities and towns are often covered over with their inhabitants going not to Christ, but to vain plays, causing grief to all the Lord's true people and bringing God's eternal wrath upon their own souls. The last day will come, and then every one will receive according to the deeds done in the body whether they were good or bad. The people of Sychar will, on that day, rise with the men of this poor generation and will condemn them, for they came to Christ to be saved by Him while they had the opportunity. Oh, what fools sin and Satan have made of men as regards the things that pertain to their everlasting peace!

Let us now consider our text under the two heads: –

I. The labours into which we have entered;

II. Our duty in consequence thereof.

I. The nature of the labour referred to by our Lord is that in connection with the gospel, and not the labour that men had in connection with the material affairs of this world. It was labour of faith connected with the doctrine, form of worship, form of government, and discipline of the Church of God in the world. Since God gave the first promise of a Saviour to Adam in Eden, we conclude, from circumstantial evidence, that He instituted a form of worship through a bloody sacrifice by which sinful men were privileged to approach His mercy seat by faith. We conclude this from the historical fact that: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." Now skins must have been taken off animals; very probably off the firstlings of sheep, as future sacrifices manifest, or at least of animals considered sacrificially clean. Adam must have been instructed by God to offer the two animals – the skins of which God made coats of to cover them, and which were a beautiful type of Christ's righteousness in which God justifies and covers the guilty sinner – otherwise we have no warrant from God's word that sacrifices were to be offered until the time of Abraham. But we find that Abel offered a sacrifice to God by faith. Now faith means there more than the grace of faith in the heart of that young man; it means that he had the rule or warrant of faith, which is God's word. Abel is the first labourer brought to our view in God's word. We can picture him in our imagination as he appeared as far up as you can see, on the sky-line of time, faithfully labouring in connection with the upholding of God's instituted worship. Cain was a worshipper of the Lord, but he had neither the grace of faith in his heart nor the warrant of faith, God's word, in his worship; and consequently God had no respect to Cain nor his offering. And because God showed respect to Abel and to his offering, Cain endeavoured to wipe out such worship either by prevailing upon Abel to join him in his way of worship, or by putting him to death. When he failed in his endeavours to accomplish the former, he took the latter course. This is how we understand the words, taking them as they are connected with their context: "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him." So we see that Abel kept the faith, and finished his course as a faithful labourer, in spite of

the platitudes or wrath of his monstrous brother, Cain. He counted not his life too great a price to secure God's worship in purity for himself and those who would come after him. The labour of all who succeeded him and the opposition with which they had to contend – some of them even to death – are set forth in miniature form in this case of Cain and Abel.

Let us consider Enoch as the second labourer. It seems that ungodliness rose to a great height in his day. When we consider carefully the Epistle of Jude in connection with the following quotation, we can see as in a glass the enormity to which sin advanced then: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." So poor Enoch had to bear witness against the ungodly actions and hard speeches against God of the men of his time. He pleased the Lord as a labourer so well, on account of his faith and the faithfulness of his witnessing for God against sin in the professing Church – or sons of God who had married the daughters of men – the atheistic daughters of Cain's posterity – that He took him away to heaven soul and body together.

Let us consider Noah as a third labourer. He lived at a time in which the professing Church was exceedingly corrupt. The effect of marriages contracted between the sons of God – the professors of religion – and the atheistical daughters of men – the offspring of Cain – was such that God saw that the imaginations of the hearts of men were only evil continually, so that He was pained by their ungodliness to such an extent that it repented Him that he had made man. He told Noah that he alone was righteous before him in that generation, and that at the end of one hundred and twenty years, He would destroy with a flood the whole of them except Noah and his family. The Lord commanded Noah to build an ark for the saving of his house. Noah began to build this ark, and to preach righteousness – law and gospel – to these men; but because they had grieved the Holy Spirit so that He forsook them, not one of them repented or believed. But Noah continued to build and preach as commanded, with the result that when the flood came, he and his family were saved from being drowned, while all the rest perished. We find Noah, immediately the flood was over, worshipping God in accordance with God's institution. He did not change the order of worship although he was alone in that godless generation, and on that account God promised him that He would not destroy the world any more with a flood of water, and gave him the rainbow as a sign of that covenant.

Let us consider Abraham as the fourth labourer. God called him from among the idolaters in Ur of the Chaldees. He obeyed the call and went forth not knowing whither he went. We find him setting up an altar and worshipping God in every place he came to. He did not swerve in the least after the heathen idolatry with which he was surrounded, but continued faithfully to worship God by sacrificing lambs, etc., as types of the great sacrifice of the promised Messiah. He was called the friend of God and the father of the faithful on account of his strict adherence to God's instituted form of worship, and the pains he took to teach his children to continue the same after he would be taken away. We read that he did all this by faith on God's promise in which Christ was set forth, and the way he was to worship by faith in Christ. Abraham was put to a great trial of his faith and obedience when God commanded him to offer as a sacrifice his son, Isaac. He got in that great trial the clearest view of the day of Christ, and the one offering by which He for ever perfected all them who are sanctified. "Abraham saw my day and rejoiced," our Lord told the unbelieving Jews.

Let us now consider Moses as the fifth labourer. Moses was instructed by God to set up a place of worship, and all the details of it were shown him in Mount Sinai, also all the ministry and sacrifices which were to be used in that worship. He made all things in all their smallest details in strict conformity to the pattern shown him, and kept to the worship so ordered, all his days, not without much opposition. So the Lord gave him the character of being a faithful servant in all His house. We have all the details of the tabernacle he built, and the order of worship ordained by God, in the inspired writings of Moses. The children of Israel prospered while they kept strictly to this order of worship, and when they departed from it they were punished with sword, famine, and pestilence down till the end of that dispensation. Why was this strictness manifested by God in connection with the worship of the Old Testament Church? Because by it Christ was typically preached to the people. "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

All the holy prophets laboured to keep the people from the idolatrous worship of the surrounding heathen nations, and to warn them of the consequences which would follow departures from the order of doctrine, worship, and government set up by God under the hand of Moses. In the days of Elijah the false prophets who supported idolatry were nine hundred, while Elijah stood alone as a true and faithful prophet of Jehovah the God of Israel. The same thing happened on several occasions, as the Word of God reveals – Satan had many prophets to lead the people astray, and the true prophets of God were few in number. Still, the people had no excuse, seeing they had the written Word of God to guide them in everything pertaining to faith, worship, and practice. They had also the providence of God, which made it quite manifest that while they kept to the instituted worship of God they had peace and prosperity, but when they departed from the same, they had dispeace and sore adversity. But the people could not be kept from following Satan's messengers. At last the Lord, after visiting them with many judgments for their repeated relapses into idolatry, brought the king of Babylon against them by whom they were almost annihilated, and the few who were left alive were carried away to captivity. The Holy Ghost recorded the reason why all this fearful vengeance overtook them: "Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand" (2 Chronicles 36:14-17). Surely the above should teach men in every future generation of mankind the awful consequences of following the ways of the heathen, or idolatrous nations, and of mocking God's messengers and despising His Word. But no; for we in this nation are guilty before God of the very sins for which God's wrath was so fearfully manifested against Israel and Judah in those days. But God cannot be mocked; for that which a man soweth, the same shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. All these laboured by faith.

Christ, now that He was going to leave His disciples in a sinful and God-hating world, drew the attention of them who were to serve God in the gospel of His Son to the labours of all His true and faithful servants in the past. These Old Testament labourers were set before the Apostles as their example, and their duty and privilege in having had such faithful predecessors was brought home to them by our Lord's words: "Other men laboured, and ye

are entered into their labours.” The New Testament shows how faithfully, even unto death, did the Apostles prove that they were the worthy successors of former labourers in the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood. All these labourers were inspired by the Holy Ghost to reveal God’s whole counsel to men, but since that revelation was finished, the duty of labourers now is to hold fast the form of sound words, *i.e.*, to preach the word, and to rule in the Church according to the precepts of that written Word. There is a very solemn warning given against any interference on the part of man with the whole contents of God’s Book: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18,19). This Scripture should cause infidels, who tear God’s book to pieces, to tremble for fear at God’s threatening which will certainly be executed; and it was from the above truth that we concluded many years since that these men have committed the unpardonable sin. May the Lord, of His infinite mercy, keep us and all our fellow-men from committing this awful sin. These infidels may have high places in Churches now, but that will not save them and their adherents from the righteous judgment of God on the day of final reckoning. So let men beware.

Let us now consider the labours of faithful men in the Church of God since the Apostolic age, as that is recorded in the History of the Church. In doing so, we can only mention a few of the outstanding labourers, because our time will not allow us to do more on the present occasion.

In the year 315 A.D., a presbyter of Alexandria, called Arius, maintained that Jesus Christ was not God equal with the Father; also that the Holy Ghost was not God, along with other heretical views. A great controversy arose in the Church on account of these views. Athanasius entered into this controversy with his whole heart, and, notwithstanding that he was deposed (for he was the Overseer or Bishop of the Church of Alexandria) and banished and persecuted by all the ministers of the whole Church backed up by the Roman Emperor, he would not yield to such soul-destroying and God-dishonouring doctrines. He was so absolutely forsaken by men in contending for orthodox doctrines against the views of the Arians that the well known phrase came into being – “Athanasius us against the whole world.” After being banished from his people sixteen times – each time he advised them to stand firm, which, to their honour be it said, they faithfully did – he gained the victory for the truth of God, and for the fundamental doctrines vilified by his opponents. The doctrines of Arius were condemned, and the Biblical doctrines concerning the Godhead of Christ and of the Holy Ghost were vindicated in the Church throughout the whole of the Roman Empire. This man proved that he was a faithful labourer who would not compromise the doctrines of God’s truth in order to obtain a sinful peace with his fellow-men.

Let us take Augustine as the second labourer. He was born at Tagaste, in the north of Africa, in the year 345. In his day, Pelagius promulgated doctrines which denied the effects of the fall of Adam on mankind, also many other pernicious doctrines. This Pelagius was one of the brightest ministers of the Church at his beginning. The Rev. James Durham wrote in his lectures on the book of Revelation that, if he were asked who the bright star was that fell into the fountains of water, turning them to wormwood, which caused many to die on account of the bitterness of the waters, he would say that it was Pelagius. Augustine took a very wise course in dealing with this enemy of God’s truth. He wrote at large on the doctrine of predestination, the depravity of human nature, and the operation of divine grace. When these works of Augustine were published and read, men saw that they were the very doctrines of the Bible, and that the doctrines of Pelagius on original sin and the freedom of man’s will were subversive of the Scriptures. So Pelagius lost the day, not before he had done great harm

in the Church. Augustine's works are held in high esteem by all sound divines till this day. Calvin gave him a high place in all his works. He was truly a labourer that needed not to be ashamed, dividing the word of God aright, and was a true successor of the labourers who preceded him.

As the third labourer, let us take up Luther. He was awakened to a real sense of his guilt and natural depravity by the Holy Ghost in a monastery in Germany. He tried to attain to peace of conscience by going through all the penances prescribed by the Papacy; but the more he tried them the deeper his misery became. The words came twice to him, "The just shall live by faith," but he, like Samuel of old, did not know God's voice. While he was on his knees going up the stair falsely called "Pilate's Stair," in Rome, the Scripture, "The just shall live by faith," came to his mind with such light and power that he rose off his knees. From that day Luther began to teach that sinners are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by any works or merit of theirs. The light went forth along with the truths which he divulged by his teaching and writings, so that the false and superstitious doctrines of the Papacy appeared to men in their true colours. The power of the Papacy was shaken to its foundations. Every effort was put forth to destroy Luther and his doctrines, but truth is strong and it shall prevail. After all the efforts of the Papacy to crush him – its power was universal at the time – he came off victorious by the grace of God, and ultimately died in peace in his bed. He had a great work to do and he was immortal until he finished it. He was another of the faithful labourers in God's house, who did a great work by faith.

Let us consider Calvin as the fourth. He did more to establish the doctrines of the Scriptures, and to expound their true meaning, than any other man did before him or since. His "Institutes of the Christian Religion" reveals a mind of the highest order and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. This work alone did much to advance the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and to close the mouths of the Papacy in their efforts to prejudice the minds of men in high and humble positions against it. In our opinion, no student should be allowed to pass through a Divinity course without studying this work of Calvin. It would be a tower of strength to ministers of the gospel in meeting with errors in doctrines, etc., while serving the Church of God in their generation.

Calvin endured a good deal of persecution and trials both from enemies and friends; but he held uncompromisingly to God's Word in everything to the very last. He truly earned the character of being a faithful labourer both by doctrine and example.

John Knox may be considered as the fifth labourer. None of our Reformers had more courage than he had. He faced boldly and dignifiedly those in civil authority in Scotland in defence of God's truth and the rights of the Church of Christ. Some men endeavour to revile his character as being harsh and uncivil to Queen Mary; but they either forget or willingly conceal that that unfortunate woman boldly endeavoured to undo the whole work of Reformation in Scotland by setting up the Papacy, which had been overthrown by Acts of the Scottish Parliament. She was thus a traitor to the constitution of the Church of the Reformation which was more dear to John Knox than his life, and, further, he had the law of Scotland and the authority of the Lord behind him in so doing. A more intrepid servant of Christ than John Knox can hardly be found in any country. His name will always remain fragrant to all lovers of civil and religious liberty, not only in Scotland, but also wherever faithfulness and integrity towards the truth of God and the salvation of lost sinners are admired.

I regret that on account of want of space, I can only offer a passing remark about other very faithful labourers, who endured much in order that the truth of the gospel would remain with us.

John Welch, of Ayr, was a labourer who suffered the greatest hardship because he would not compromise nor surrender any of the claims of the Lord Jesus or the civil and

ecclesiastical liberties of His Church in Scotland. For this he was imprisoned, then condemned to death; but, instead of being put to death, he was banished to France. Notwithstanding of all these great trials he continued faithful unto death.

Andrew Melville was another faithful labourer. He also endured imprisonment and was banished on account of his constant adherence to, and his defence of, the Creed and Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

Robert Bruce, of Edinburgh, had to endure banishment to Inverness for the same causes, three times. But he could not be prevailed with to lower the truth for King or Council. He certainly deserves a very high place in the estimation of all true lovers of freedom, and honesty in his dealings about the affairs of God's house.

Samuel Rutherford was as faithful as any man this country ever produced. He suffered banishment to Aberdeen for his adherence to God's truth, and would have suffered death for his faithfulness to Christ's Crown and Covenant had the Lord left him a few days longer in the world. He and Alexander Henderson and George Gillespie will have a warm place in the hearts of all the Lord's faithful people in Scotland to the end of time for the large share they had in framing the subordinate standards of the Church of Scotland, and for their faithful adherence to the same to the end.

Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron, Hugh MacKail, and James Renwick, these were men "who jeopardized their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." They forsook all for Christ. They lived for years in dens and caves of the earth; suffering from cold, hunger, nakedness and sword until they were one by one caught and put to death. Were it not for these men, and the unconquerable grace of God given them, the gospel of the grace of God had not come down to us. Scotland will not know till the day of final judgment how much its people owe to these mighty men of God. The benefits of their faithful labours in the cause of Christ will be held in everlasting remembrance as long as godliness will be continued in our beloved country. All these noble men, both of the first and second Reformation periods, did contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

Let us come nearer our own time. We can see how Dr. Chalmers and many other faithful men laboured to deliver the Church of Scotland from the incubus of Patronage, and when they found it impossible to move the British Government to repeal the Patronage Act, they set the Church free by separating from the thralldom imposed by unrighteous law, while maintaining the principle of Establishment and Endowment of the Church by the State. Thus the Church of Scotland became free.

In the past generation Dr. Begg and Dr. Kennedy, also the Rev. Alexander MacColl faithfully contended against innovations in doctrine, worship, and the infidelity then lifting its monstrous head in the Free Church of Scotland. These men continued to warn the people of the dangers to which they and their children were exposed by these heretical and infidel doctrines tolerated in the Free Church by majorities in her ecclesiastical courts. But, notwithstanding all they did to oppose the floods of Satan coming in to the Free Church, they were not successful in saving it from being overwhelmed. They surely did what they could. Their memory as faithful labourers should not, and will not, be forgotten by such as love God's truth. They were not men who loved contention, but being men of faith, they felt bound to oppose everything that destroyed the pure gospel of Christ, and the order of worship revealed in the Word of God. They served their generation well and slept.

At last the enemy of God and the souls of men thought that he might take a bold step, seeing that these faithful men had gone to their everlasting rest. So an Act was passed by an overwhelming majority in the General Assembly of the Free Church by which her doctrines and principles, as set forth in her subordinate standards, were completely undermined. When the enemies of God's Word thought they had won the day, and that the Free Church, as formerly constituted, had for ever passed away, the Rev. Donald Macfarlane rose in the

Assembly of 1893, and tabled a protest by which he, in his own name and in the name of those who would follow him, refused to submit to the Courts of that Church as constituted under the Declaratory Act; and declared that steps would be immediately taken to revive the Free Church of Scotland as constituted in 1843. This step was actually taken, as recorded in our Deed of Separation adopted in August of that year.

We have now given an outline of the labourers into whose labours we have entered. Beginning with Abel, we have traced briefly throughout the inspired and uninspired history of the Church of God, the labours of men (possessed of the faith of the gospel) to keep pure and entire the faith and scriptural form of worship set up by God in His Church. It will appear to all who are not prejudiced in their minds that the father of our Church – the Rev. Donald Macfarlane – falls into line with the faithful labourers of the past. We have entered into the labours of these faithful men, and consequently our responsibility to God and men is great and far reaching. Therefore let us consider very briefly our duty.

II. Our duty in our day.

(1) Our Lord, who was Himself the Father's servant in whom His soul delighted, said to His disciples: "One soweth and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour." So we should make sure that He sent us, as otherwise we cannot labour in faith, and our services will not be acknowledged by Him.

(2) Our duty is: Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry (2 Timothy 4:2-5). We clearly see that Churches in this land have set their back upon God's truth, and that they have turned to fables, so let us keep closely to God's Word in everything pertaining to doctrine, worship, and practice.

(3) Another duty is: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath the believer with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). Let us take heed that we will keep separate from the mixture of the world and the flesh and the devil which has become almost universal in the Churches in this country. The Holy Ghost has depicted clearly in the above quotation, the conduct of Churches in Scotland to-day; so our duty is plain. Let us, as we have already come out from among them, keep separate from men who cater to men's lusts instead of holding the faith in worship and practice. Alas, that it should be necessary!

[October 1922]

A Lecture

By REV. NEIL CAMERON, ST. Jude's, Glasgow.

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“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and trust not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” – 2 Corinthians 6:17,18.

The Apostle Paul, in his two letters to the Church of Corinth, expresses the tenderness of a father towards his children. This did not cause him to flatter them in their sins. On the contrary his love to them caused him to reprove, rebuke and exhort them in their unscriptural conduct. He did this from faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and their souls. The utmost candour is used by him in exposing their departures from the principles and doctrines of the gospel which he had preached among them. He tells them that he did this with great grief and many tears. But being moved by the Holy Ghost, His were the thoughts and words written by the Apostle, and not merely his own. Paul's care for all the Churches was a very outstanding trait of his character as a minister of the gospel, and the salvation of immortal souls was that for which he laboured so vehemently. He was a man of one aim. That aim was to spread the knowledge of Christ among the heathen, so that they might be saved. As he writes: – “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward” (2 Corinthians 1:12). But let us come to our text, and –

(I.) Let us consider when and for what reasons the Lord's people are commanded to separate from a Church; and

(II.) God's promise to such as will obey.

There are about forty years since the words of our text made a deep impression upon the writer's mind. It was evident even then to all who loved God's Word, and the affairs of His Church, that the Free Church of Scotland had made an ominous beginning of departing from the infallibility of the Scriptures, and that she was exerting all her energy to have her Subordinate Standards changed. This was causing many searchings of hearts among the godly within her pale. They found themselves in the same circumstances with the godly in the time of Hosea, to whom the command was given: – "Plead with your mother, plead; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts" (Hosea 2:2.) The question was agitating many, and was repeatedly asked the writer: "Should we not separate ourselves from the communion of a Church which shows so little respect to God's Word, and to her Subordinate Standards?" This moved the writer to search the Scriptures for light on the path of duty. In reading carefully the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, it was observable that there were many things in that Church which were anti-Scriptural and disorderly.

Let us notice a few of them.

(1) There were divisions (schisms) among them. They were divided into four parties; each contending for its own leader. The Apostle sharply reproves them for this "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? . . . Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" This deplorable condition of affairs in the Church at Corinth, against which the Holy Ghost spoke so sharply and in very condemnatory terms, was being repeated in the Free Church, almost in the same form. She was divided into two parties, viz.: The Rainy party, and the Constitutional party, led by Drs. Begg and Kennedy, and the Rev. A. MacColl. Almost every one said, "I am of the Rainy party; I am of the Constitutional party." So far the resemblance corresponded exactly, and might be treated exactly in the same way. This difference, however, did appear, that schism in the Free Church was caused by men who were endeavouring to destroy the very foundations, and that those who contended for the Constitution of the Church deserved praise. The infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible were being assailed, and an effort to change the Church's relation to her former Constitution and practice was being made by Dr. Rainy and his followers, so that no alternative was left for those who would not accept of such God-dishonouring and soul-destroying changes, but that they should "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." Drs. Begg and Kennedy were doing their best, like the Apostle, to exhort and reform the other party to cease their schism, and to return to the former unity of faith and practice in the Free Church. As the Apostle did not say one word at the similar contention in Corinth about separation, but did his very utmost to restore unity, the writer came to the conclusion that the time had not yet come for separation from the Free Church. He came to this conclusion, not because he was so terrified at the mere sound of that word – "Separatist" – as some have feigned to be since; but because he was convinced that the Word of God did not demand it at that stage.

(2) There was also a scandalous case of incest in the Church of Corinth. The inspired word states it thus: – "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from you." The remedy demanded by the Word of God in this case was excommunication. It did not ask such as disapproved of the laxity of discipline to separate from the Church then. Laxity of discipline was becoming notorious in the Free Church. Some within her pale were puffed up on account of the supposed learning and ability of men who

were promulgating infidel views about the inspiration of the Scriptures and many of the fundamental doctrines of the faith. Instead of excommunicating these infidels, they were placed in Divinity chairs in her Colleges with the consequence that the minds of the students – the future ministers of the Church – were filled with their pernicious doctrines. Still the Constitution of the Free Church remained intact, so that there was a hope left yet, that the efforts of the few faithful men who did what they could to purge the Church of these enemies of God's truth, might, by the grace of God, be successful. This case demanded prayer and patience, but not separation there and then.

(3) Another serious matter requiring speedy correction in the Church of Corinth was, the extraordinary manner in which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated in her. The Holy Ghost reproves this conduct as to this matter by saying: – "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating, every one taketh before the other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What! have ye no houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said: Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." In this reproof we find the Holy Ghost bringing before them the real manner in which they should celebrate the Lord's supper, and condemns them for partaking of other food or drink in the place of public worship. It clearly taught them that no food was to be brought there, but the bread and wine used in the sacrament. This should have put an end for ever to the feasts of love used at that time in the Church. These feasts could never have had the sanction of the Apostles; but they were continued until they were forbidden by a Council of the whole Church about 250 A.D. Let us hope that this was not true of the Church of Corinth. Notwithstanding these disorders, there is not a word said about separation.

(4) Another very serious error in doctrine had to be reproved in that Church. Some taught them that the dead would not be raised. The Apostle reminds them that he had preached to them that God, the Father, raised up Christ from the dead, and that this fact lay at the very foundation of saving faith. He, in a long and closely reasoned argument, proves that the resurrection of Christ assures that all men shall be raised again on the last day. But he says not a word here yet about separation. So we come to the conclusion that neither schism, if not persisted in; nor most serious irregularities in dispensing the Lord's supper, unless continued after due exhortation; nor fornication, if discipline should not be neglected; nor fundamental errors in doctrine unless stubbornness in the same becomes manifest, were a real cause of separation from a Church. We saw that every scriptural effort should be used to purge the Church of such errors before the final step of separation from her communion should be taken. These efforts were then being put forth in the Free Church. These considerations caused us to conclude that the time had not then come to separate from that Church; but on account of the words of our text, we fully made up our minds that such a step would have to be taken by and by.

A serious examination of this Second Epistle revealed that the efforts of Paul to correct the evils that had crept into the Church at Corinth had a very salutary effect in bringing about a real reformation. He refers to it in the following glowing terms: – "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire! . . . In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." But it is quite evident that there were some in that Church who did not repent of their evil doings; for Paul says

again: – “Lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many who have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.” So that we are led to the conclusion that, although some in that Church truly repented and removed the evils rebuked by the Apostle, others did not. Human nature being what it is, the very fact that their sins were reprov'd would cause them to indulge more boldly in them than they did before. Taking a broad view of the contents of these two Epistles, this must have been the effect of Paul's efforts to restore purity and peace. It seems also that those who did repent of their sins held too much fellowship with those who persisted in them. We gather this from the fact that the context makes clear that what they were to separate from was, a mixing of holy and profane things together.

The Apostle had warned them before of the danger of such unholy fellowship by saying: – “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” He had set an example of this in Ephesus, as we read: – “But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spoke evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples” (Acts 19:9). He now commands the disciples at Corinth to do the same. The immediate preceding context makes plain what they were to withdraw from: – “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.”

Some Divines would restrict the above to marriages between the heathen and them who believed. Seeing the Apostle wrote concerning such marriages differently from the injunction of our text, that would greatly limit the meaning the words convey. He wrote about such marriages thus: – “If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away; and a woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.”

Others again hold that the above command referred to keeping separate from the unbelieving world. This meaning is conformable to God's call in the gospel to every sinner – to come out of the ways and fellowship of the world that lies in wickedness; but the command in our text was to separate from dangerous and disgraceful practices within the Church, and was addressed to believers. The Apostle wrote elsewhere about the duty of believers as regards intercourse with the men of the world: – “I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators of this world: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.” He then places his finger on the separating line: – “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” When men who were received as believers and brethren into the Church, proved by their conduct that they were of the world and walked according to the course of this world, they are strictly forbidden to have any fellowship with such men. Such men in Corinth had mixed up in the Church, the world and the flesh and the devil. All this was done in the name of Christianity; and there seemed to be no way to bring them to order, so that separation became a necessity. The wheat and the chaff had to be separated.

Let us now consider the bearing our immediate context has had and still has on the duty of Christians in very similar circumstances in our beloved country. Atheists have been in the world since Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. Such men did their utmost to undermine the Bible and its doctrine, but they were doing so outside the Church of Christ. About the middle of the last century, men arose in Germany within the Church who made a

most determined attack upon the infallibility and absolute inerrancy of the Bible. These men laid claim to great scholarship, and wrote elaborate treatises against the belief hitherto held of the Bible and its doctrines. They did this by using the same words and methods of attack found in the writings of their predecessors, Voltaire, Tom Paine, etc. But however incredible it might have been to the Churches then, that men holding the same views with those Atheists would, in so short a time be, not only tolerated in the Church, but raised to the highest places of honour, it became a fact. These men were made Professors in the Theological Halls of Germany. Students from the Free Church of Scotland and from other Churches went to Germany to finish their course in Divinity under these men on account of the supposed profound learning of which they were possessed. These students imbibed with avidity their infidel views; while others read their productions at home and were infected with the same plague. Professors and ministers in the Free Church began to air these infidel views; because Satan had got men to believe, that these doubts about the Bible were always a certificate that such doubts were the outcome of great learning and penetration of mind. Almost every one of these infidels, who took a more daring step in criticising the Bible than any of his companions, was sure to have a D.D. conferred on him, and if any vacancy occurred, was placed in a Professor's chair in one or another of the Divinity Halls of the Free Church. This made manifest that the Free Church was determined to destroy the integrity and infallibility of God's Book. Side by side were to be found men, who believed in the Bible as a God-breathed book, and infidels who repudiated this orthodox doctrine. The same thing was true in all the Courts of the Church. The Apostle's pertinent question applies exactly in this case: – "What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" The effect of this extraordinary conduct has been, that the majority of the people ceased to consider the Bible as inspired, have become infidels, and have given up religion altogether. Congregations in which a thousand worshipped forty years ago, cannot muster two hundred to-day. Surely the end of this will be a bitter day.

Paul asks another question: – "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" In those Churches social meetings are held at which a minister begins generally with praise and prayer. They proceed then to sing vain songs; and in many of these gatherings the dance, playing of cards and even boxing has been indulged in. What is this but an endeavour to show concord between Christ and Belial? That men who profess to be the servants of Christ should act so, is a proof of Mr. Spurgeon's statement: – "A clerical sycophant is only fit to be a scullion in the devil's kitchen," especially where the "cup of tea" is used. We can easily imagine that, should the inmates of an asylum were to begin a service in the name of Christ, they might forget themselves and so end by singing songs, etc., but that men in their sober senses would do so, shows the utmost irreverence. All such meetings are held in the name of Christianity. But is it Christianity! What has Christianity to do also with bazaars and sales of work? Is this not turning the house of God into a den of thieves? as our Lord said to sellers and buyers in the Temple of Jerusalem. This is certainly mixing darkness and light, unrighteousness with righteousness. Every one can see that as the one element comes in the other departs. So darkness prevails and light has departed. Since these men are ignorant of the spiritual joy with which the Holy Ghost by the gospel fills the hearts of true believers, they must have an occasional feast for the flesh on the husks which the swine eat. What is all this but the world taking on the name of Christianity? Some of whom we thought well at one time endeavour now to excuse such unchristian practices, while others who did come out and became separate have already gone back to those beggarly elements and seem to see nothing wrong in them.

At this year's General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland a motion was brought forward craving that the Assembly should take steps to have social meetings and sales of work removed out of the Church. But notwithstanding that a petition signed by forty-nine

members of one of her congregations was tabled to back up the motion, it was not considered. The decision was that they should pass away from it. We appreciate very much the efforts of these men to purge the Church of such pernicious practices, and we hope that other congregations will come to their assistance. We consider it is high time for them to do so.

When a motion was brought forward to extend the right hand of fellowship to the Y.M.C.A., an amendment was also moved craving the Assembly to have nothing to do with the Y.M.C.A. One of the Professors said that "he was not prepared to support the amendment on the ground that he did not think the matter had been sufficiently discussed by the Assembly or that the facts were sufficiently well known for the Assembly to frame sound judgment upon the matter." He further said that "when the Association was formed no provision was made for games," but that "more recently card playing, promiscuous dancing, and theatre going had been sanctioned. But more alarming still was the attitude of the Y.M.C.A. against the Scriptures, as evinced by their responsibility for what was known as the Shorter Bible." We desire to thank this Professor for his candour in exposing so much of the carnal practices and anti-scriptural work of the Y.M.C.A. But the position he took up in not supporting the amendment amazes us exceedingly. Surely, after making such extraordinary charges against that Association, his only logical and reasonable duty was to support to his very utmost the amendment. The man must have lost his bearings entirely in this matter when he could have come to the conclusion that he should acquiesce in the motion that the Free Church should associate with that body. How has the mighty fallen!

The infidelity, and the mixing of holy and profane things, and the passing of a new creed which completely separated the Free Church of Scotland from her former standards, caused us in 1893 to come out of her and to be separated from her. In doing so we carried all the doctrines and principles of the original Free Church with us, and we endeavour to hold them still. We had the command in our text as our warrant in doing so, and have it still in keeping separate from the present Free Church. We have good reason for being thankful to the Lord that He led us out of that fellowship, and while things remain as they are, we should take good care lest we may be again entangled in the yoke of bondage. Certainly the prospects of reformation in the Churches of Scotland are not promising. May the Lord bring back the Churches of the Reformation to the faith and practice of the gospel, is our prayer.

II. Let us now consider the Lord's promise to such as will obey this command. We have obeyed, in much imperfection, the Lord's command by coming out from the Free Church in 1893, on account of the facts stated above and many other causes which are not mentioned.

Have we any ground for believing that the Lord has taken a fatherly care of us since then? Yes, truly in many ways. He has called effectually many in our congregations into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ since then. We record this fact to the praise of the glory of His grace and not for any self or vain glory. Some of His own people got, not only great reviving in their souls, but also strength of body then, which, to some extent, continues with them to this day. This was also true of many who have gone to their everlasting rest. The joy of the Lord is the strength of His people in every age, and let it be said to His glory, we have had much of this joy in our waiting on Him.

Let us consider what inestimable privilege it is to be a child of God? To enjoy peace with God, the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, is more to a poor sinner saved by grace than to be the son or daughter of a king or emperor. What are such dunghill honours when compared to the honour of being the Lord's children, and consequently heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ? We ought to value very highly this privilege, and that it raises those who have it above all the mighty titles and honours of the men of the world. All these titles and honours vanish away for ever at death, and kings, lords, and beggars are the same in the grave, and they will appear before the great white throne without any such distinction; but the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty will then appear in glory. They may be and often

are poor and despised in the world, and may be considered as the offscouring of all things, but they are precious in the sight of God. Oh to be one of them!

But let no one think that we mean that all who are called Free Presbyterians have this most blessed privilege on that account. No; for we cannot be the sons and daughters of God without being born again and without repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. All sinners within the hearing of God's call in the gospel, are commanded to come out from the world that lies in the wicked one, and especially from the religious world, of whom we wrote above, and to separate from them. For this world, of whom our blessed Lord Jesus said in His intercessory prayer in John 17, "I pray not for the world," is in every generation, and all who are saved do separate themselves and keep separate from that world. This world for whom our Lord did not pray is lost for ever. So we beseech poor sinners to have nothing to do with its fellowship and ways.

We heard that a young man belonging to the congregation of the eminent Rev. John Kennedy, Redcastle, called on Mr. Kennedy before leaving for Glasgow to ask him who of the ministers of that city he should go to hear? Mr. Kennedy gave him the addresses of four or five ministers' churches, and told him to go to hear each one of them, and then to choose the one who made his tether shortest in sin. This was a good advice, and should be attended to by all who desire to be saved. For ministers, who lead their people into sin, and who encourage them, and by their example drive them from all seriousness about their need of forsaking sin, are not the ministers of Jesus Christ, but the servants of Satan. So, let poor sinners beware of the awfulness of living and dying in the ways and companionship of the world. For the wrath of God rests upon all who are yet in their sins, and there is only One who can deliver a poor sinner from being under it for ever; that One is Jesus Christ. "A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

[November 1922]

Sermon Preached by Dr Duncan.

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” – Ephesians 3:20,21.

Paul abounded in prayer, and one mean by which the grace of God wrought this on him was, not only his deep feeling of absolute dependence upon the God of all grace, but his enlarged apprehension, enlarged believing apprehension of God, as the God of all grace. Two things make us stinted in prayer, either little feeling of need, or little hope of supply. Two things make us very enlarged in prayer – deep feeling of need, and enlarged and strong hope of supply. Under the pressure of felt need many are still much straightened; they feel, indeed, that they want much, but they have no expectation, or no high or settled expectation of getting much. They are shut up, they do pray, they cannot help it – a feeling of need makes that they do ask, but they ask of God earnestly, but not amply earnestly, because they feel need, but not amply, because they think He is a niggard. They have not corresponded so faith to their feeling of want, they do not rightly believe in God, as giving to all liberally, and upbraiding not. They are indeed humbled, and are content to be glad to pick of the crumbs that fall from their Master’s table; but they are doubtful if they shall get a dog’s right to them. How much more is any measure of desire repressed by the thought why that they dare never ask? Now, dear friends, either we are to approach God on our own merits, or we are not. If we are to approach God on our own merits, I don’t know how little we should ask. I don’t know what we could pray for at all, unless to be cut off, and sent to hell very speedily. Either we are to ask on our own merits, and then we can ask nothing, unless we are to set about it; and pray down damnation on our heads; or we are not to ask on our own merits; but on God’s rich mercy, and Christ’s glorious merits; and if so, if I am not to ask anything but for that, why let me not disgrace that by asking little things upon it. I know not whether it be more dishonouring to disbelieve that He hears prayer at all, or to think that a little good may be extorted out of an unwilling God. Did you never thus pray, and do you never pray to God in the thought that He is very niggardly, and that you know that He has what you need, that it’s very good, and you being very unworthy, you don’t think He will give it to you. If He give it, it will be a very small portion, and that forced out by your importunity. Well, though no doubt it is better to deal with God as if He were the widow’s unjust Judge, than not to pray

at all, for then He will forgive and He will grant. But I think it a burning shame for all that, to think of Him as being the widow's unjust Judge. Now, Paul prayed, we have an example in the context; he was concerned about a certain matter, about the stability of the Ephesians, as it might be affected by the tribulation to which he, the Apostle of Christ, was subjected. He says – "Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you." This was his desire – a generous desire, you see. The tribulation did not trouble him much, so far as he had to bear it; but it gave him somewhat concern as regarded the Ephesians. The tribulation was nothing to Paul, but the effect the tribulation had upon their minds was a great deal. His anxiety then was that they might not faint. Now the Apostle did not think it was an easy thing to keep up the Ephesians under his tribulation. Many, in foolhardiness, are ready to make great martyr-boastings, and they will go through fire and water for Christ, and though all men forsake Him, they never will. They are ready to die for Him; but Paul knew by the grace of Christ what human nature is, a little better, and what human nature in the saints of God even is, and he knew that men were very ready to faint, not only when they feel the cross, but at the bare sight of it upon another man's shoulders. When they saw an Apostle who hath come with the unsearchable riches of Christ, poor, oppressed, persecuted, forsaken, they would be tempted to say – "Is this the blessedness whereof He speaks?" Now, the Apostle thought there was much here to make the Ephesians faint, and yet he did not think it was a necessary thing that they should faint. For all that, there was much to make them faint, and yet it was not absolutely necessary they should faint; there was something which could support them, could keep them from fainting; but it was no little thing; it was a great thing – a Divine thing, and therefore obtainable, for here is the difference between faith and unbelief. Whenever faith sees a thing in God's hands, faith says – I have it. Unbelief says – I cannot get it. Such is the different estimates of faith and unbelief. Paul hath a good hope that the Ephesians would be supported, because he saw that their support lay with God, and this led him to have a good hope towards God, and to be very prayerful; "Whereof I desire," etc., "for this cause to bow my knees." That was all Paul could do to hold up their hands, namely, to bow his knees; to keep them strong, all he could do was to go into a position of the greatest lowliness, and poverty and weakness, "I desire," etc.; and he bowed that they might get strength, but how much strength? "I bow my knees," etc. That they might not faint at his tribulation, he bowed his knees, that God would strengthen them with might, according to His glory, according to the riches of His glory: the Ephesians needed all that to keep them from fainting, not at their own cross, but even at Paul's; and he asks this; he did not think they needed little, and he did not expect God to give little. He felt need widely and deeply. He believed in grace as widely and deeply and somewhat more; he had not learned to look upon sin as a little thing, small and in petty quantity, but as abounding; but then he had learned to look upon grace as super-abounding; he had not conceived the Ephesians to be very strong people, but very weak people indeed; but then he bowed his knees in expectation of obtaining for them no less strength than according to the riches of his glory, etc. What this would work is described in the following verses on which we cannot enter. Through this strength he would be able to comprehend with all saints, etc., and so would not faint at his tribulation. Now, you say this man knows how to pray. I daresay he does, a little better than you or I, but he does not please himself. I daresay we wonder at what he thinks and asks; but is his thinking and asking the bounds of his desire? No, he grapples with something too great for even his comprehension, with the almighty power of God to give blessings, and, absorbed in this thought, concludes his prayer with the doxology, "Now unto Him," etc.; he has both thought and asked a great deal for them, "To Him that is able," etc. Let us attend: –

- I. To Him who is the object of this doxology: and then, if time permit,
- II. to the doxology itself.

I. "Unto Him," etc. You know who this is – the God of all grace and consolation. The God who says, "I know the thoughts that I think concerning you to give you an end and expectation, and an end beyond expectation." Now we, in relation to Him, ask and think; we ask of Him, and we think what we shall ask of Him; we put our ingenuity to ask, the ingenuity of a renewed and spiritual and Divinely instructed mind: we have got a *carte blanche*, a blank put into our hands by Christ – Ask what ye will. Now, we would think it a sad pity to get nothing, or to get little, when we have such a draft upon God, for all whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, we ask, and we not barely ask; we think, guided by the Word and Spirit of God; we think upon all things that could be good, good for us, good for others, good for our family, good for our congregation, good for our city and country, good for the Church, and good for the world, good for time and Eternity. We are always thinking, at least that is what we should be doing, when He says, "Ask what ye will." Thinking what good we shall ask, and then we ask up to the point of our thinking. Whatever we think we ask, no limit to our asking, but our thinking. The moment we discover anything to be bad, we ask God to put that thing away. As soon as we find anything to be good, we ask God to grant that good thing – yea, we study His very character, amongst other things and attributes, that we may learn how far we shall think that we shall be able to ask; but then, God pity us if that were all the good we were to get. It we were to get no more than we would get by that, poor would we be after all that He is able to do above – abundantly above – exceedingly abundantly above all, etc. When you go with all that you ask, and all that you think, God says – "Poor soul, is that all you want, is it only these trifles – would that please you? would you go away with that only?" That won't please God to give; you think He is not willing to give you so much. I tell you He is not willing to give you so little; above it all, some little addition. Ah, no, abundantly above. He not only hears and answers the prayer, whatsoever ye ask, and give a little more full measure, filled and running over. No, an abundance over and above the asking – abundantly above – an immense quantity more – not that only, not merely an abundance, but an exceeding abundance – an abundance that passes, that surpasses all ordinary idea of abundance. It is not the usual abundance, but it is an exceeding, a surpassing abundance. Now, remember, however, that we do ask, and we do think; we come with our poor, scrimp, narrow-hearted petitions; we would give so little ourselves that we think of others, and we would carry it on to the Great God Himself, to be poor, miserly, wretched creatures; and perhaps, if our hearts were opened by grace, we would give a little. If a man came and said, "Do this," we would say, "We cannot do all that, but we will do something for you." We would do not as we were asked, or thought of, but somewhat a great deal below it; and still we think we have some generosity. We would feel, and we would do something, and so we think of God. He is good and generous, and something may be got at His hands. The world will not believe that good is to be got at His hands at all. Believers, with their little faith, have rather better thoughts of God. He has some goodness, mercy, and grace. By importunity we shall get something out of Him. He will not disappoint the expectation of the poor entirely and for ever, and if we shall not get all we think and ask; still, we shall get something. So it is we expect, but when we come, what does He give? All that's asked? Of course, He is wise and good and kind, and He reserves in the answering whether it be for His glory and their good, which are indissolubly united together. But if it be really a good thing, they will get up to the asking and thinking; but God would be ashamed to stop there. They might say, "O how happy are we, and how much we have got! – everything we could ask or think." But while they would be filled with joy, God would be covered with shame. I use the language, "He is not ashamed," etc. God would be ashamed to let you away with that. "I am not a little God, poor, niggardly. I have great plenty, and a great heart. I am a bountiful Giver, I give liberally, and upbraid not. Here, take all this." What is it? Ah, poor thing. That transcends thine asking, and even thy thinking; but "Take it by me now, if I will

not open the window of Heaven,” etc. “But,” you will say, “What shall I do with the thing that I cannot think or ask if God will give it?” Why, so far as that may go, if He gives an additional power of mind to receive, I receive it; and if it transcend all communicated power of mind, I say, “Thank thee, my God, for it; I know it is exceeding good; but I cannot understand it; keep it among thy treasures; my blessedness rests not in my intellect, but in Thy favour, and if Thou hast mysterious good in store that I cannot understand, keep it, but keep it for me. It may come that I shall be able to appreciate it more, and understand it better. Meanwhile, as Thou dost not make my asking or thinking the bounds of Thy gifts, neither shall I make my understanding the bounds of my receiving.” Now, Paul, says on that he is able to do so – “Unto him that is able,” etc. But in respect of his ability, he glorifies him with the Doxology – “To Him be glory,” etc., and do you not think that it’s just as good when it is said that God is able, as if it had been said that God will? If that is doubted, whether we should not take the declaration that God is able, is just as good, and as importing that He will, let us turn and read together the 11th of Romans. The Apostle, speaking of the cut-off unbelieving Israelites under the present dispensation – “And they also if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able,” etc. Therefore they shall be. Mark the argument – He says, “They shall be, because God is able to do it,” and this implies that God is able to do that good He will do. “They shall be, for God,” etc. The force of the argument lies in the unenunciated thought, what God is able to do, that He will do. Now, God is able to do exceedingly abundantly, etc. And now, though you and I cannot reach it, we know what we are to aim at, we know where we are to point our desires and prayers and thoughts; and whether, since we cannot reach, we are ever more and more to approximate – and that’s God’s ability. I shall never have asked too much. I shall never have thought too much, till I have asked beyond God’s ability, till I have thought beyond God’s ability. I shall never have asked up to the point from which I expect my good to come, till I have asked up to, and even that I never shall do – till I have asked and thought, and thought and asked up to God’s ability; whatever God can do, that may I ask Him to do, that in the name of Christ may I ask Him to do, and depend that He will do it; and as I cannot reach that in my asking or thinking, what have I to do then? Why, when in explicit prayer I have prayed up to the asking and thinking, I must take to the implicit prayer, saying – “Lord, I cannot ask further,” but this is not the point. I would be at Thy power. Here is the point, here is my asking, my thinking, but answer me, Lord, not according to that I ask or think of, but according to that which transcends it, according to Thy power, Thine ability. O Lord Jehovah! do me all the good Thou canst, whatever blessings thou canst bestow, empty Thy goodness on me, on mine, on Thy Church, on the world. This ability is according to the power that worketh, etc. It is not a bare abstraction of the omnipotence of God, but it is the omnipotence of God as working in Church and people of God; it is not barely and simply extrinsic omnipotence. Mark what the Apostle had said – “That ye be strengthened,” etc. The Apostle speaketh of the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe. Now, we may be sure that the whole omnipotence of God was in that, it was all put out, greater act never was done; greater act (we speak reverentially) never could be done, it was on the footing of God’s omnipotence. The highest proof that He was able to subdue all things to Himself, “Now unto him,” etc. “The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward.” “Know ye not that your bodies are the temples?” etc. “The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God which is in you, crying out,” etc.; “Shout, thou inhabitant of Zion,” etc. It is the omnipotence of the indwelling God. Thou art poor and feeble, but the Eternal God is not only near thee, with thee; He is in them all, His Almightyness and the communion of the Holy Ghost, including in it from the unity of essence; indeed, from the Persons of the Godhead, as well as the unity of purpose in the economy of redemption. Thereby, truly and really the presence and indwelling of the Triune. All the grace of our Lord Jesus, and all the love of God, being wrapped up and contained in

the communion of the Holy Ghost. Now, God, working according to His power in us, is able to do, etc. The Apostle was asking and thinking about stability, not fainting – was then king of strength in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. He thinks of all that, because God is able to do it, according to the power wherewith He, the indwelling God, worketh. The Holy Ghost has not left his omnipotence behind; He is not omnipotence in Heaven, and impotent in thee, or particularly powerful in thee. When He comes to dwell in thy heart, He comes in all His omnipotence, and then He is as the spirit of grace and supplication, teaching thee both to think and ask; but then, even then thou art but an evil creature. There are two causes that keep down, – (1) We are sinful creatures, even believers; and, (2) We are but feeble creatures. Suppose there was no opposition in us to the work of the Holy Ghost, suppose we were passive, yea, most willing, active recipients of Divine grace; God is infinite in knowledge to teach. We are but of finite capacity to learn, and a believer at every step learns but as much; but it was not to do up to that point that the Spirit of God came; but to do all the mighty things that are to be done, and more than the man knows. He comes with all His omnipotence to you; therefore, He is able to do all this, not by anything more, but by the outputting, the exertion of the power that already worketh in us; but we see that God's greatest work for a man is His work in the man – His greatest work. I am not speaking antecedently, but I am comparing the internal good which God does to a man with all the external good He does to Him; and I say the internal good which God does to a man transcends the external good which (at least in this work) He does to him. The principal thing that God does for us is what he does *in* us, "According to the power," etc. There is a power beyond that worketh for us, and that power works the universe for us – "All things work together," etc. That's God's working the universe for us. But not less, in some respects greater, is God's work in us – "He is able to do exceedingly abundantly," etc. Now, what is due to Him who is able thus to do? What should be rendered to Him? Unto Him be glory." Is it not a glorious work? And in doing the glorious work, doth He not manifest the possession of glorious perfections? And for the glorious perfection possessed, and for the glorious work manifesting it and communicating holy blessedness to us in the manifestation, owe we not glory? Make Him glorious we cannot; but think how glorious He is, and tell how glorious he is. Show that forth in lip and life; by His gracious and mighty working we may. And surely His character as set forth thus ably demands it. Unto Him be glory. "Once I have heard, yea, twice, that glory belongs unto Jehovah." "Thine," said Christ, teaching His disciples to pray, "Thine is the Glory." Not only is God all glorious, but all glory belongs unto Him. No other has a right to glory. Were an archangel to glory in His presence the act would transmute him into a devil, and send him straight to hell. Glory is God's prerogative alone. Many things are glorious because God has given them glory and beauty. The sun is glorious, and the stars are glorious, and one star excelleth another star in glory; but they do not deck themselves with their own splendours; they do not feed their own fires. Glory belongeth unto Jehovah. When He has done exceedingly abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, how rich shall we be then, and how glorious! Our houses shall be full of all precious substance; but He did it. If thou hast received, why boastest thou as if thou hadst not received? If the King of Glory hath taken the beggar from the dunghill and exalted him to sit with princes, even with the Princes of the People. When we look on that exalted beggar, we stop not to say, "What a glorious man!" No, we dare not say that at all, unless in connection with – "How glorious the King of Glory who hath in the omnipotence of grace done this thing!" In short, when we are so enriched we are glorious. The Name of our Lord Jesus is glorified in us, and we in Him; but it is as the Name of the Lord Jesus glorified in us that we are glorified in Him, and it is when the glory that God reflects on the creature, is by the creature ascribed as due only to God when He is glorified as the Author of it – transcendentally and infinitely glorious. It is then that the glory rests. When it is appropriated it is lost; but it is possessed when it is as it were

tossed back and fore between God and the creature. When the creature gives it to God, God of His rich grace sends it back in greater measure. But the humble creature, emulous of God's glory, sends it all back again to him, and as it reciprocates, so it increases; "Unto Him be glory." Dear friends, these are very instructive words of the Apostle, that "No flesh should glory in His Presence." Mark the connection – no flesh must glory before Him: he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. The only way not to glory before Him, is to glory in him. Israel durst not say, "We are a better people than other people," richer or more learned, warlike, or moral; Israel had but one glory legitimately. "Their rock is not as our rock." Might they not say to all the nations, "Their rock," etc., "our enemies themselves being judges. The gods of the nations are dumb idols. Yea, there was no hurt in the Jews saying to all the nations in the world (I speak under that economy) – "Ah, you may be a far better people than us in every way, but our God is a far better God than all your gods put together." He did not glory before God; he gloried in God. He only announced God's glory, and so the people of Christ. Their profession is not of betterness, save of betterness bound upon them, desired and aimed at; little, and clothed with humility, a little unto the praise of Divine grace. They may acknowledge sometimes that they differ, having been made to differ; but of this they can glory. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a better God than all the worldlings know. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a glorious Lord, "The Chief among ten thousand." Whatever I be, my Saviour is a glorious one. Thus may we glory, "He that glorifieth," etc. Not even in his relation to God, but secondarily – "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us," etc. God was before the relation, for God constituted that relation. It is therefore not glorifying in our relation, for He made that. His relation is glorious, simply in Himself giving unto the Lord the kingdom and the dominion and the glory and the power, for they are His – "Unto him be glory." All should glorify God, all will not. In the Church alone will God get glory. Most true it is that there is no salvation out of the Church; most true it is that there is no God known out of the Church, however men may have construed that, and defines that wrong, constituting human and even corrupted societies as the Church. Yet, taking Scripture definition of the Church, the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. There is no salvation but in the Church, and no glory given to God, but in the Church; and if we pray that all nations and all individuals of the human race may glorify God, this is not praying that God's glory may go beyond the Church, but that the bounds of God's Church might be mightily enlarged; for all glory is in the Church to God's, because it is by Christ Jesus, "Unto him," etc. It is through Christ Jesus that He is able and that He is willing to do exceedingly abundantly above. It is through Christ Jesus that He manifests all the glory of His perfections in the highest degree. All the glory of His perfections as the God of grace and salvation, with all the reflected glory of the ministration of the government of nature in subordination to grace. It is through Christ Jesus that He shines in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. Gifts of exceedingly transcendent abundance come through Christ, and consequently what comes is in the Church, for it is through Christ; by the Spirit of Christ to the ministers of Christ, the law of the Spirit of Christ, etc., lying at the very foundation of all these blessings. Through Christ, therefore, is all the glory to ascend to Him. He is the Mediator, and as all Heaven's bounties pass through the Father's hands into His, so all earth service, all the Church's service, for none on earth but the Church ever do or will serve Him. All the Church's service goes up to God through the hands of Christ. He, receiving of the Father, showers down the blessings; He, receiving the thanksgiving from man, presents them to the Father, and so through Christ Jesus is kept up through the spirit of prayer, keeping us asking and thinking, and the grace of God doing exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think; this in the reception of blessings the glory of God as well as His goodness. The glory of His goodness being seen, we ascribe honour and glory and blessing, with warm adoring, grateful hearts to the glorious God manifested by the glorious

blessings He confers on us by Jesus Christ, and thus Divine adoration, Divine gratitude, unitedly ascend through Christ Jesus, and thus God keeps up by Christ Jesus in the world a Church, and a glorifying of Himself in the Church, "Unto him be glory," etc. It was not in the days of the primitive Church only that God was able and God was willing to do, etc. The arm of the Lord is not shortened since Pentecost that it cannot save. It was not then and then only the same glory is to God, and the same glory can go up by the same riches of blessing down on the Church. The called, according to God's purpose, both Jews and Gentiles, throughout all ages. The stream of time rolls on, world without end, throughout all the ages of time, not terminating there – "World without end." For shall the communion with God of blessing and praising only run on, while this globe runs round its axis, or whilst the days and nights are measured by the rising and setting of the sun? Throughout all it shall extend, "His name will endure for ever." "I will make thy name to be remembered throughout all generations." But that song of glory is only sung now as preparatory. The redeemed among men are but learning to sing it. Many a false note they admingle with their melody, now poor and puny, for they are but learning the song. But, then, as it shall be perpetuated in this school, on this earth, which Christ hath visited, and hath rendered a school of Heaven. When this school of earth shall end, then as adepts into the choir around the throne of God shall the redeemed among men enter, to sing for ever with perfection of celestial music the song of thousands of the Lamb – "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power," etc. Amen, so let it be, so it shall be, so let it be. God's Amen declares it shall be, but our Amen says, "So let it be." Praise ye the Lord. Do you set to your seal that God is true? Is your heart Amen from a heart filled with admiration, adoring admiration, and gratitude? Or is your heart hard pressed down with darkness, with care, and with anxiety? Hold an Amen which would burst forth, with which you are pent up, a silent Amen, which your consciousness can scarcely hear, yet an Amen God hears. God will bring it forth into distinctness. And, now, in conclusion, what can we say, friends, but that the whole subject should teach us, as the whole service of the day, that we should ask and think, and think and ask, and press on to the exceeding greatness of the ability. Let us be ashamed of our stunted prayers, with which we dishonour God's rich grace. Let us ask that we may receive, that our joy may be full; for God gives not to end by enriching. No, that's an immediate end; but the ultimate end is that He may be glorified; and let us not stop short of the ultimate end, when enriched; but let us see that when we have all sufficiency in all things, thanksgiving may abound, "Unto him be glory," etc. To conclude, what wretched creatures are they who are far from the Lord Jehovah, who know not this God, who do not ask, who do not think, who know nothing of communion with Him, who get no blessings of salvation from Him, who give no ascription of glory to Him. Believers! you see you have a struggle to maintain with your sinful nature and with your feebleness, which can ask no more and think no more. You have a strife to maintain with that, maintain it in the view of His power, of His ability to do exceedingly abundantly. And now, if you can look beyond your power of asking and thinking, surely you know there lies an infinity beyond that, and that filled with God's, to you, unknown goodness. Now, thank Him not only for what you see, but give thanks, because beyond your power to ask or think there lies an infinity of power to bestow; yea, and that power worketh in you, believer. Be ashamed to get little, get all things; don't be poor any more; don't be poor when you have to do with Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly. Get out of your poverty, not by fancying you are rich, but by coming and getting. "Ask and ye shall receive," etc. Now, you know yourselves that your joy is not full yet. Well, if your joy is not full, your Saviour is not pleased. He is not satisfied, that is not satisfaction to Him. He wishes that your joy may be full. Now, why is it not full? What are you doing? Ask, even in this world, with all your asking. It won't be full, but it will be filling, and still Christ saying, "Ask and ye shall receive." He never sets a bound till your joy be full. Nay, He says you have not asked enough if your joy be not full. Now,

you are conscious that it is not full; then take your Saviour's directions, "Ask," etc. But give thanks, in everything give thanks; that's one cause also why we get so little good. The prayers of the people of God are often of that kind, just extorted by feeling want, or mostly so. If God is very gracious, and He gives; but they were pressed on by want. It was spiritual selfishness, religious selfishness. Their souls were selfish about salvation. You may know, or do you know, that there is such a thing as spiritual selfishness about one's soul? That is always in a man when he thinks more of his salvation than of the great end of salvation, the glory of God in Christ thereby. However he has asked (and is a bountiful giver), and though the prayer is very selfish, God gives good. Thus the man is relieved; but when he asks for good, it's not so much for God's glory as for his own comfort. He comes and begs and begs, and he gets. He is always begging from God, and always getting, and never says, "Thank you." God will never put away His suppliants. He gives them more than they ask; but that's one cause why they get so little. Would they not get a great deal more if they were thankful for what they get? Now, if I had a good friend who did me some good when I was in distress, and I fell into another, and go to him, and say, "Sir, I am in misery again; you will need to help me again," and never thank him for what he did before. Why, suppose he did relieve me, I never would be a happy man; besides, there is not a right moral relation between giver and receiver, when there is no gratitude. So, dear friends, whatever God gives, if it should be a very little thing, we are heirs of hell, and should say, "Oh, Lord! I thank Thee for that, give me more"; and the more you get, always give glory, and come and ask and receive, and this prayer, mixed with thanksgiving, thanksgiving with prayer, I cannot tell into what intimacy your communion with God might grow.

[December 1922]

A Sermon.

By the REV. DONALD MACFARLANE, Dingwall.
Preached 23rd September 1917.

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” – Matthew 5:4.

In this chapter we have the beginning of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. It begins with this chapter, and ends with the 7th chapter. As He went up to the Mount a great multitude followed Him, for various reasons. Some because He healed many that were suffering from many diseases. Others because they heard of His fame as a worker of miracles, and as a great preacher; but His own disciples followed Him, because they loved Him, and were fed and edified by the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth. It is remarkable that notwithstanding the hatred of the world against Him, wherever He preached in the synagogue or in the open air, the people flocked to hear Him, for He taught with authority, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees. On this occasion His audience was composed of a mixed multitude, His own disciples and those who were still in a state of nature. He preached to both classes, saints and sinners, setting an example before ministers when preaching to mixed congregations. While He began by speaking a word to His own disciples, who, no doubt, sat nearer Him than the rest, He did not neglect to speak to those outside, as we see He did in the 7th chapter, 13th verse – “Enter ye in at the strait gate,” or as we have it in another place, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate,” or agonise to enter in, to use the utmost effort, to struggle as between life and death in order to be saved. But as already mentioned, He gave the first part of His discourse to His own disciples. He calls them several times blessed, and addresses them in the third personal pronoun – “Blessed are they”; but latterly He speaks to them more directly – “Blessed are ye.” He calls them blessed several times, because they were blessed with perfect and manifold blessings. The description He gives of them as poor in spirit, as mourning, as meek, etc., does not mean that some are poor in spirit, others mourn, and so on, but that this is true of each individual of them.

In addressing you from the words of our text, we shall speak –

- (1) Of the mourners;
- (2) Of the promise given to them – “They shall be comforted”; and
- (3) Of their blessedness.

I. *The mourners.* Although the Lord’s people have a joy of which the world is ignorant, yet they mourn, for several reasons –

(1) They have what may be called personal mourning, because the reason of their mourning is in themselves. They mourn because of indwelling sin, and because of their imperfections and shortcomings in everything they endeavour to do in serving the Lord. They are imperfect in their prayers, and those who have to preach are imperfect in their preaching, and all this causes them mourning. They began to mourn in a legal sense when God by His Spirit convinced them of their sin and misery. They mourn for the misery they brought upon themselves by sin; but not until they believed in Christ did they mourn with the mourning that is blessed. “Then they shall look to Him whom they had pierced, and mourn.” They mourn

now for being the cause of His death. Though forgiven their sins, they still mourn for them every time they remember them, and pray with the Psalmist – “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions, according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness’ sake, O Lord” (Psalm 25:7). They shall continue to mourn for causes in themselves, so long as they are in the valley of tears, but not afterwards. The Apostle Paul mourned for his persecution all the days of his life, after his conversion, though all his sins were blotted out as a thick cloud, and covered by God’s pardoning mercy. Mourning is more lasting than weeping. Sometimes they weep, but when they do not weep they mourn. In weeping they shed tears, but in mourning they shed what may be called dry tears, which are more painful than wet tears.

(2) They mourn with what may be called sympathetic mourning. They are in sympathy with their brethren who mourn. When one member of the body suffers, the other members feel it, and are in sympathy with it. In like manner, when one member of Christ’s mystical body suffers all the other members are affected by it, and those who are not so are like an artificial leg, that does not feel any pain though all the living members of the body would be pierced through by a knife. This is a test by which you may know whether you are a living member that can have sympathy with the Lord’s people in their sufferings. When the Lord’s cause is low they mourn, as Nehemiah did when he heard that the remnant that was left of the Captivity were in great affliction and reproach, and the walls of Jerusalem also broken down, and the gates thereof burned with fire. When he heard these words he sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven – (Nehemiah 1:3,4). He not only mourned, but he made an effort to do all he could to help the cause which he had so much at heart. If you mourn when the Lord’s cause is low, you will do all you can to raise it up and cause it to prosper.

They mourn in sympathy with their fellow-creatures, though these might not be the Lord’s people. Many are suffering bereavement in these days by the loss of near relatives who have been killed in the present terrible war. We feel deeply for parents whose sons have been killed on the field of battle, and as we feel for them we pray for them that God’s dealings with them in His holy providence might be sanctified, and might work for good to their souls.

(3) They mourn when they see sinners transgressing God’s laws, like the Psalmist, who said – “I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved because they kept not thy word (or law),” and in the present day there is much cause of mourning on this account, and unless the transgressors of God’s law repent and forsake their evil ways they shall mourn for ever in eternity.

(4) They mourn when the Lord’s people are removed from this world, and so few of them left, as the Prophet Micah did – “Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men; they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly (Micah 7:1,3). Oh, how much we would rejoice if we saw the Lord’s people so numerous now as we have seen in our younger days, and we cannot help mourning because they are so few in this evil generation.

(5) They mourn when Christ is absent from their souls, and they must continue to mourn till He comes again, according to His promise – “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come unto you” John 14:18. Other causes of mourning might be mentioned, but we proceed to consider –

II. *The Promise* – “They shall be comforted.” It is comfort that the mourners need, and who will comfort them?

(1) God the Father will comfort them – “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you” (Isaiah 66:13). A loving mother will do all she can to comfort her weeping child; much more will the Heavenly Father, who loves His children, comfort them. Christ will comfort them, as He comforted His disciples when they were sorrowful. “And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16:22).

(2) The Holy Spirit will comfort them. He is called the Comforter, because it is part of His work to comfort those that mourn. Christ promised to send them this Comforter. He was to convince the world of sin, but He was to be a Comforter to God’s people. The means by which they are comforted is the word of the Gospel. The Gospel is full of comfort. Ministers of the Gospel are instruments of comforting those that mourn in Zion. It is part of their work to do so, and they are commanded to do it – “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God” (Isaiah 40:1). The Apostles needed comfort themselves, and they comforted God’s people with the same comfort wherewith they were comforted themselves (2 Corinthians 1:4). Sometimes they are comforted before they meet with trouble, in order that they might be supported in the time of trial, as Christ comforted His disciples – “These things I have spoken unto you that ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Some have been accustomed to receive comfort beforehand, so that when they get great comfort they look forward for a great trial; but if they do not receive comfort before hand, they shall receive it when in trouble, the time they need it most, or after the trials. When they are long without comfort they are apt to come to dark conclusions concerning themselves, and like the Church of old who said – “The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me” (Isaiah 49:14), but it was not so, for the Lord said – “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me” (verses 15 and 16). Or, like the Psalmist who said – “Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail forever more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?” (Psalm 76:7,9), but he found out he had spoken this in his infirmity, and then he remembered God’s gracious dealings with him in the past – “I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old” (verses 10, 11).

They shall be comforted when they see the Lord’s cause prospering, sinners awakened and coming to the means of grace, desiring, like the Greeks of old, to see Jesus, and it will be a comfort to them to see their fellow-sinners mourning for their sins.

III. *Their blessedness* – “Blessed are they that mourn.” By nature they were cursed; cursed in their persons, cursed in their basket and their store, in their going in and out, wherever they were in the world, but now the curse is removed, and they are blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings. They are blessed with the forgiveness of sin; their sins are put away far from them, “as far as the east is from the west.” They shall never meet them again to condemn them. They are blessed with a new nature that hates sin and loves holiness. They are blessed with the privilege of adoption, and they are heirs of the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them (1 Peter 1:4). They are blessed by having Christ as their Saviour and portion, and as Christ is theirs, all things are theirs. They are so blessed that they cannot be cursed. Balaam was employed by Balak to curse the people of Israel, and was promised a reward for his evil work, and although he tried to curse them, he could not do it, and instead of cursing them he pronounced them blessed – “How shall I curse whom the Lord hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? . . . Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number

of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” (Numbers 23:8,10). Wicked people curse the Lord’s people, but their cursing is of as little effect as the curse of Balaam, and their blessing shall do no good to themselves or to others.

In a world of sin and misery you cannot escape mourning; but there are two kinds of mourning – a godly sorrow that worketh repentance which is not to be repented of, and the sorrow of the world which worketh death – which of these have you? The rich man who came to Jesus asking Him what he should do in order to obtain eternal life, when he was told that he had to part with his riches, went away sorrowful, for he preferred his riches to eternal life. Many prefer the world and the things thereof to eternal life. As there is a great difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world that worketh death, there is a great difference between the subjects of these sorrows.

There are times when the Lord’s people feel in such bondage, and are so mournful that they cannot sing the songs of Zion, like the people of Israel in Babylon, when taunted by their enemies, answered – “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” (Psalm 137:4). They had their harps hung up on the willow trees. They did not throw away their harps, but preserved them there in the hope of using them when God in His good time would bring them back from captivity. There are some who can sing the songs of Zion when they like themselves, but the Lord’s people cannot sing till their hearts are attuned by the Holy Spirit. There is a difference in singing by art and singing by the heart. Singing by art is the rule in many churches in our day, and singing by the heart is the exception. The singing of the former class shall cease at death, and that of the latter shall continue throughout eternity. When the Lord’s people who now mourn shall be brought home to heaven, after they finish their course in this world, who can express their comfort and fulness of joy there, without any mixture of mourning. The days of their mourning are ended at death, and nothing can deprive them of their comfort throughout eternity.

[February 1923]

A Sermon.

By the REV. EWEN MACQUEEN, Inverness.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” – 2 Corinthians 5:10.

The Apostle in this chapter states –

- (1) what is true of all men as sinners, they live here in a tabernacle, the body will be taken down at death.
- (2) He states what was true of them as Christians – they groaned in this tabernacle, desiring to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven.
- (3) Then he states, Who had wrought them to that same thing and
- (4) that God had given them the earnest of the Spirit, who made them confident, and gave them the knowledge that while they were at home in the body they were absent from the Lord. For as long as God’s people are in this world, they walk by faith, not by sight, and if they had their choice they would rather be absent from the body and present with the Lord. This, he says, made them labour that whether present or absent they might be accepted of Him: and he gives the text as one of the reasons why they did this – For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

In these words let us observe three things: –

- I. Those about whom the Apostle here writes – “All.”
- II. The place at which all must appear – The Judgment Seat of Christ.
- III. What all must appear there for – That every one may be judged.

I.– Those about whom the Apostle here writes: –

It is clear that he is treating in this place about all men as responsible beings, for in the next verse he goes on to state that because they know the terrors of the Lord they were persuading men, which shows that such men as needed persuading were at last to be before the judgment seat of Christ. The Spirit of God through the Apostle John in Revelation shows us that he saw the dead, small and great, stand before God at the great White Throne, and that they were all judged according to what was written in the books (Revelation 20:11-13) – “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isaiah 45:23). “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). In Matthew 25:3, Christ shows that all nations shall be gathered before Him. Therefore, we see that the “all” here stated means all the children of the first Adam, the wicked as well as the righteous. Many in our day do not like to think of this, the spirit of infidelity has taken such a hold of sinners that they want to drive all serious thoughts as far from them as they can: but here it stands, and here it will stand, and we all shall find out the truth of it. Paul found this out for himself in time, and all the Lord’s people have been taught this in mercy. They found themselves before this Seat in the day God, by His Spirit, convinced them of the reality of His own being and attributes, as Creator, Law-giver, and Judge. They were also taught by the Holy Spirit that the Father had given all judgment to the Son. About this they doubt not that all must appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Psalmist, in Psalm 116, shows clearly that he felt that judgment was passed upon him, and that hell was his portion. The pains of hell got hold on him. Poor sinners, unawakened, unjustified, unsanctified, dream of heaven, but theirs are dreams which

a sight of the Judge will banish away eternally. Every awakened man or woman feels that this must be so. That their very condition as responsible human beings demands it: hence many of them desired that they had been of the lower animals, a dog or cat, even a frog, rather than a human being who had fallen so low by sin. Self-destroyed, but responsible beings, therefore; who must appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. That was what kept Paul three days and three nights in the City of Damascus, without eating or drinking anything, and if all do not realise this, it is not because all will not have to stand there, but because all are dead in sin by nature. All must appear – some who will not be willing, who would rather that their bodies would not rise for their souls to enter into them again to be judged, must appear. All must be there.

II. Let us notice the place where all must appear – the Judgment Seat of Christ.

(1) Let us notice the Person at whose Judgment Seat they appear. The Person is the promised Messiah, whom the Father had promised, and for whom the twelve tribes were looking – Immanuel, God with us, the Anointed One as Prophet, Priest, and King, about whom the prophets prophesied, He whose praises the heavenly host sang, on the heights of Bethlehem, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. The God-man, having two distinct natures, in one Person for ever. He, who as Prophet reveals to us by His Word and Spirit the will of God for our salvation. He, who as Priest, offered up Himself without spot to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of His people, making peace by the blood of His cross. For by one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, and who continually makes intercession for His people. He, who as the King, spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross. The cross was made by Him the weapon for battering down the ramparts which the devil had raised about the whole elect. He, who as King, took the sting out of death, and the victory from the grave. The King who went up with a shout to the Father's right hand. The King to whom the Psalmist refers when he writes: – "Lift up your heads, ye gates, and the King of Glory shall come in." He is the Person to whom the Father has given this Seat. He glorified the Father upon the earth as the Redeemer and Saviour of His people: the Father has now glorified Him with Himself. For God has highly exalted Him, and has given Him a Name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Him has God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. He is offered to us now as our Saviour, to save us from all sin. His blood cleanses from all sin; those who betake themselves to Him, lost and ruined, no matter how lost, they are welcomed by Him. His name is the only name given under heaven, whereby we must be saved. Our prayers will not save us, our tears will not do it, although we should give our bodies to be burned, that will profit us nothing in this matter. Christ is able to save to the uttermost as long as soul and body are yet together. For He is now offering Himself to us to be our Advocate. But if we refuse Him now to be our Advocate, when we will go to this Judgment Seat we will have to meet Him as our Judge.

(2) Let us notice the Seat on which He is said to be seated. The Seat is called also a Throne (Revelation 20:11) – a Great White Throne – great because of the great One who sits upon it, and of the great numbers who are to be gathered to it, and of the great decisions to be given from it, sealing the eternal destinies of all created mortal beings; white because He who sits on it is the Righteous One. The Throne is founded on Righteousness. All the judgments from this Throne are righteous. There are four thrones brought before us in God's Word as belonging to God –

- (1) The Throne of Grace,
- (2) the Throne of Mercy,
- (3) the Throne of Judgment,

(4) the Throne of Glory (Hebrews 4:16; Exodus 25:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11; 22:3).

To the throne of grace and mercy we are freely called in the Gospel now, “that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need”. All to whom the Gospel comes are called (Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:17), and it is the rejection of God’s call in the Gospel that will make the Throne or Seat of Judgment so dreadful in the extreme. Death will call the soul to this Seat, and the last trumpet will call both soul and body to it. The dead in Christ shall rise first, to appear there. Then the wicked, however unwilling, shall appear. They mock the Lord’s people now for their long faces, but we may be sure that a child of God never in this world had such a long face as they will have in that day. They often call this superstition now, but then it will be a most solemn reality to them. This is also called the Judgment Seat, from this the final judgment will proceed, and from the decision there will be no appeal. Oh! friends, make your peace with Christ now: now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Today, if ye hear His voice calling to save you, harden not your hearts. For once before this Throne our fate is sealed for ever. This will be the most galling thing to His enemies, that the very Person who had been stretching forth His hands to them, while in time, to save them, will then be the Judge to judge them. Today He is pointed out to us as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. But in that day He will be the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5,6). We must appear before this Seat, which means that we are not to be there always. There for a purpose, once, and never to appear there again, for it is appointed unto men once to die, and after death the judgment. Consider this at the end of another year, for you have done more than enough in the time that is past of your lives to dread this Seat. He that believeth not is condemned already. Oh! flee to Him now, that you may not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

III. The reason why we are to appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ – that everyone may receive the things done in his body.

In the body we act in a threefold manner –

- (1) in thought,
- (2) in word,
- (3) in deed.

(1) In our thoughts we hate God and the things of God: enemies in our mind. Young, unchanged friends, is not this the case with you? Your friends do not see your thoughts now, but all will see them then, if they are not washed away in the merits of the atoning blood of Christ. “The thoughts of the hearts of many shall be revealed.” How often God’s children feel afraid of their thoughts in this world! The very idea of them being revealed often fills them with dismay. They are judged already and washed, therefore their sins are blotted out, never to appear again. Poor, unforgiven sinner, what a stand it will be for you when the books are opened, and your thoughts are read out. Angels, evil spirits, and all men seeing them as you appear at this Seat.

(2) As to the words. Oh! how vile the tongues are often with the name of the Blessed Judge in mockery. How their own words will appear like balls of fire to them then, to burn them eternally. You who never said a word on Christ’s side, whose lips were never imploring His mercy, never praising Him for His goodness, how will your words appear to you? He gave you that tongue to glorify Him. What are you doing with it? Is it not time for you, like David, to call it to wake up to praise Him, “That they may receive the things done in the body?”

(3) Let us now come to the deeds. According to the Word of God, the first act that is accounted before God is the act of saving faith. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Have you done that, friend. If not you are still under condemnation.

Without faith it is impossible to please God. “Faith in Jesus Christ purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world.” It is time for us to consider our ways. Many think if they hide their actions from parents and ministers all is well. Do you hide them from Christ, who searcheth the hearts? May the Lord in His mercy bless His word to us, and enable us to live in the world as those who believed His Word in the past did. Consider the text, and may God bless it to you. Let us not be like the foolish bird we read of, which if it hides its head in the sand thinks that all is well. Let us seek a hiding place in Christ Jesus, who alone is a “hiding place from the storm.” May He bless His Word!

[March 1923]

A Sermon.

By REV. THOMAS HALYBURTON.

“I ask therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?” – Acts 10:29.

Waiving the formality of an introduction I shall lay before you a few remarks for clearing the occasion of the apostle's using this question, and the reason why we have made choice of this text at this time, for the subject of this discourse.

1. This chapter contains a large and particular account of one Cornelius, a Roman centurion, or captain of a hundred soldiers – his conversion to Christianity.

2. Cornelius, though by birth a Roman, was of the Jewish religion, a proselyte. Those who of other nations embraced the true religion, associating themselves to the Jews, were called proselytes; and they were either such as joined with the Jews in the whole rites of their religion, being circumcised as were the Jews; or such as adhered to the substantial of their religion, but remained uncircumcised. The former sort were called proselytes of righteousness, or of the covenant; the latter, proselytes of the gate. Interpreters seem to agree that Cornelius was a proselyte of the gate, one who owned the substance of religion, but remained uncircumcised, and did not join in the whole of their worship.

3. This captain was a true convert before this discovery of the gospel came to him by the apostle: he was accepted of God, and therefore was not to be accounted unclean. Now, none save those who are converted can be accepted: for “they that are in the flesh cannot please God; and without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that comes to him must believe that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” Hebrews 11:6. Wherefore,

4. He, no doubt, leaned upon the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, for his acceptance with God; since “none can come to the Father but by him,” who is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and who only can guide sinners in their approaches to God.

5. God being a rewarder of such as diligently seek Him, did reward this man's faith and obedience with the gospel-revelation of His Son Jesus Christ, whence he came to understand, that the Messiah he looked for was already come. His prayers and alms-deeds are said to come up for a memorial before God; not as if there had been any thing of merit in what was done or attained to, but to encourage others, and to discover the riches of God's bounty, in rewarding freely, according to His rich grace, the diligent improvement of light with greater degrees of light and life; and this reward is not of debt, but of rich and sovereign grace.

6. This saint, waiting for the consolation of Israel, has a vision from God, bidding him send for the apostle Peter; whence we may learn, that God has a great respect for His own institutions. The gospel-ministry is of divine appointment; and therefore the Lord refers Cornelius to it, though it had been no less easy to have discovered Christ to him in the vision.

7. Peter had a vision to the same purpose, removing such objections as might make him scruple: whence we may remark, that when the Lord designs good to a people, by a minister, He gives both the people clearness to call and the minister clearness to come; though not in such an extraordinary manner as this here made use of.

8. When the apostle, in compliance with Cornelius's call, and God's call, or rather the Lord's joining in the same call with him, comes to the place where he was, the first question he puts to him is that which we have read to you. “I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?” and this he doth, notwithstanding he had got some account of this from the servants who were sent for him by Cornelius.

The words are in themselves plain; and therefore we shall not offer any explication of them, but lay before you this doctrine, which is palpably contained in them.

Doctrine. – “A faithful gospel-minister, coming among a people upon their call will be very desirous to know what their designs for calling him were:” “I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?”

In discoursing this point, we shall inquire –

I. What designs a people should have in calling a gospel-minister.

- II. What way they should evidence these to be their designs.
- III. Make some inquiry into the reasons of the doctrine.
- IV. And, lastly, apply the whole.

I. To begin with the first of these. The designs a people should have in calling a gospel-minister; they are many. We shall endeavour to reduce them to a few.

(1.) A people should, in calling a gospel-minister, design to hear from him the whole counsel of God, in reference to their eternal salvation. This is the great business of gospel-ministers, to declare the whole counsel of God to those to whom they come, to keep nothing back from them that may be of use to them, So their commission runs, Matthew 28:19,20. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen." And the great apostle of the Gentiles in that famous farewell sermon of his to the church of Ephesus, which we have recorded, Acts 20:17 seq. appeals to the conscience of that people as to his faithfulness in fulfilling his commission in declaring to them the whole counsel of God, verse 27. And in keeping back nothing that could be profitable to them, verse 20. Whoever would approve himself a faithful gospel-minister, must take care faithfully to discover to his hearers their lost and undone state by nature; that they are all become guilty before God; and that there is no other way of their obtaining access to him but through Jesus Christ, who is made of God to them who believe, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." To these two doth the apostle refer the whole of that counsel of God, he shunned not to declare to the Ephesians, in that forecited scripture, Acts 20:21. He testified to all persons, Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God (*i.e.* that they were guilty of such offences against God, as called for deep humiliation), and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, that there was no way of escaping the wrath of God, but that of closing with Christ by faith. This is the matter of the Gospel: and Christ's servants are to make it their business faithfully to unfold the mind of God in reference to these two, man's state by nature, and what he may by grace be advanced to. This is called a "labouring in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:7).

This preaching of the gospel takes in three things.

1. A full proposal of the doctrine just now mentioned. Ministers must, without mincing the matter, plainly discover to men their lost state, and the impossibility of recovery any other way than by the gospel method, through Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

2. They must discover these things, not as their private sentiments, built upon some rational conclusions of their own drawing and framing, but as the word of God. It is the word of God they are to propose, and not their own private opinions; and it is the word of God hearers are to receive from them. "For this cause also thank we God," saith the apostle, "without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

3. This preaching of the word takes in not only a proposal of the word of God, but an authoritative declaration of it by virtue of a commission derived from God. "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15). The word, in the first language may be rendered *command*, with all command. Ministers are clothed with authority from God; and in his name, by virtue of a commission received from him, they are to preach the gospel, and to speak the counsel of God, as being his mouth to the people (1 Peter 4:11). This is the principal part of the minister's work; and therefore to hear the word of God from them in this manner should be the great design of those who call a gospel-minister, that they may hear from them as the mouth of God, what by nature they are, and what through the grace of God in Christ Jesus they may be.

(2.) When a people call a gospel-minister, they should design the regular and orderly performance of the worship of God. This worship of God, as it is contradistinguished from the doctrine of the gospel, of which under the former head, consists principally in the administration of the sacraments and prayer; public prayer, I mean, under which praises are comprehended, as belonging to, and always to be joined with it, according to our blessed Lord's appointment in that form, commonly called the Lord's prayer, which concludes with thanksgiving. In Acts 2:42, we have an account of the public worship of the church which consists in preaching, there expressed by doctrine, and breaking of bread, that is, administering the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and prayers and praises. "And they," saith the Spirit of God, speaking of the church, "continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"; and, in verse 47, "praising God." The celebration of the sacraments, public prayers and praises, are divine institutions for the salvation and edification of the church, which cannot be gone about, or orderly performed, without a gospel-ministry, who only have commission to celebrate the sacraments, and to be the mouth of the people to God in their public assemblies, being furnished with spiritual gifts for the work (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23; 14:16). And therefore, when a people call a gospel-minister they should have this in view, as one great design, that thereby they may have the gospel-worship celebrated among them in all its parts, according to Christ's institution, to their spiritual advantage and His glory.

(3.) They should call a gospel-minister to rule over them. This is one part of the minister's work, to rule over his flock, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17). This superiority which gospel-ministers have is not a lordly dominion over either the persons or faith of their flock. No, anything of this sort that ever crept into the church had its rise from the subtilty of Satan, who envied its peace; and is directly opposite to the gospel, which forbids lordly dominion, the gospel-minister's authority being given only for "edification, and not for destruction" (2 Corinthians 10:8), as the apostle has it. And it consists

(1) in an authoritative publication of the laws of Christ's house.

(2) In an authoritative enforcement of them, by a ministerial offer of the gospel-privileges as the rewards of obedience. And

(3) In a power to inflict, according to Christ's appointment, the gospel-punishments upon the disobedient, the highest whereof is excommunication, whereby, as the apostle has it, the disobedient are "delivered over to Satan, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5).

And to one of these three ends might all be reduced according to the common distinction of gospel-ordinances, in doctrine, worship, and government. But that you may the better understand this matter, we shall name some more particular designs: and therefore we say,

(4.) A people, in calling a gospel-minister, should design the closing of a bargain, and making a match with Christ upon His own terms. It is the work and business they are sent out for, to espouse sinners to Christ, to woo a bride for the Lamb (2 Corinthians 11: 2). They have a commission, as Abraham's servant had, to go and seek a wife for their master's son; and those who call them should do it in order to the conclusion of this happy match; that from them they may hear the terms whereon they are to be admitted into this near relation, the advantages that shall accrue to them by it, the inconveniences they will run themselves into by a refusal, and the warrant they have to enter into so high and honourable a relation.

(5.) They should design their own furtherance in acquaintance with Christ. They should, "as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2), that they may be furthered in their joy and faith, "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ."

(6.) They should design their own establishment in the ways of God, that they may not be “tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,” but that, “being rooted and grounded in the faith, they may grow up in all things to him who is the head and Saviour of the body.”

This is expressly declared to be the design of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11). The apostle, having spoken of Christ’s exaltation, and His having received gifts for men, tells us of Him, in this verse and the following, “That he gave some apostles, some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive,” etc. And to the same purpose speaks the Spirit of God, frequently elsewhere, of the design of the ministry. Paul expresseth his earnest desire to see them, and to “impart some spiritual gift” unto them, to the end “they may be established” (Romans 1:11). Those who are already engaged in God’s ways should design their own establishment in them, in their calling a gospel-minister.

(7.) They should design their direction through all the difficulties of religion. The Lord’s people have many dark steps in their way; sometimes they are under temptation, and know not how to carry; sometimes they are engaged in a close fight with their adversaries, and know not how to wield their spiritual armour to advantage; sometimes they are out of the way, and know not how to get into it again; and therefore they need some to guide them into the meaning of God’s word; for how can they understand, unless they be taught? (Acts 8:31). “How can I understand,” says the Ethiopian eunuch, “unless some man should guide me?” and who should guide them but those who are guides by office, as the word may be rendered, “Consider them who have the rule over you” (Hebrews 13:7), or who are your guides. This, as the end of a gospel-ministry, is promised in Isaiah 30:20,21 – “And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into corners any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers; And thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” It is impossible we should condescend on all the particular intentions or ends a people should propose to themselves in calling a gospel-minister; and therefore we shall conclude all this in one, which is sure to comprehend them.

(8.) They should seek to have one who may answer in some measure Timothy’s character, with respect to the Church of the Philippians, (Philippians 2:20) – One who may naturally take care of them, that is, one who may, out of love to their souls, affectionately, prudently, carefully, add with impartial boldness, open and apply the word, dispense the sacraments, and administer discipline, for the instruction of the ignorant, strengthening the weak, comforting the disconsolate, affecting the impenitent, reproving the faulty, recovering wanderers, directing and helping forward those who doubt and halt; that he may both save himself and them, to the praise and glory of God’s grace. We shall not insist upon each of these particulars, which would require not one or two, but many sermons, which suits not our present design. We shall therefore proceed, in the

II. Second place, to inquire, How a people should make it appear that they were acting upon these designs in their calling a gospel-minister. This inquiry might be understood, either to respect their own satisfaction, or the satisfaction of the word, or if the minister himself as to this matter; but time not allowing us to be so particular, we shall hold the inquiry in the general; and in answer to it we say,

(1) A people should discover their designs to be such as we have mentioned, by a punctual attendance upon all the ordinances, to be by him dispensed in public or private.

Thus we see it was with Cornelius; he not only waited on himself, but he called together those on whom he had any influence: “And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends” (Acts 10:24). Those who will not give attendance to the public dispensation of the Word, and the private instructions, either family or personal, but withdraw, we cannot think these persons had the right end before them in calling a gospel-minister; surely, had they been right in their aims, they would have been ready to say with Cornelius, “We are all here present,” etc.

(2) They should not only present their bodies upon such occasions, but they should sit themselves in God’s sight, to hear all things whatever are commanded of God by His servants. “We are all here present,” says Cornelius to Peter, “to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33). To give attendance to the ordinances either more public or private, or any other design than this, is to “offer the sacrifice of fools,” contrary to that injunction of the wise man (Ecclesiastes 5:1), “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools.” When we come to God’s ordinances, we must come to hear what He speaks to us.

(3) They should evidence the honesty of their designs, by obeying the Word which they hear at his mouth; they should comply with all the commands of God, and say to their minister, as the people of Israel said to Moses, (Deuteronomy 5:27) – “Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it”. For, as the Apostle James well observes – “It is not the hearer of the word, but the doer who is blessed of God” (James 1:25). As we must hear and do so our attendance must not be limited, but our ear must be opened to reproofs, and the most terrible denunciations of wrath from God, as well as to the sweet promises and charming discoveries of the glory of Christ, the beauties of religion, the surprising happiness of the saints in heaven; and there must not only be obedience to these commands, which may bring in honour, external gain, and pleasure, by our compliance, but these also must be obeyed, which may bring us under the lash of wicked men’s tongues, and expose us to reproach, hazard, and ignominy, in the world. All things whatsoever are commanded of God must be punctually obeyed without reserve.

(4) There must be a submitting to all the ordinances of God. Both this obedience and submission you will find spoken of in Hebrews 13:17 – “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves, for they watch for your souls, as those who must give an account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for this is unprofitable for you.” The word rendered “obey,” signifies properly a believing upon persuasion, and respects our belief of the truths proposed by them, and a compliance with our duty that way; and, on the other hand, this submission has a respect to the power they have over their people for edification, and not for destruction; that is, that authority they have for admonishing, reproving, rebuking, and censuring offenders; and by a submission to them in the dispensation of these ordinances of Christ, reproof and censure, I mean they are to evidence to all, the uprightness and Christian sincerity in their designs.

(5) They are to evince their designs to be justifiable, by a careful diligence in applying to their minister upon all occasions; when they are under difficulties, when they are in the dark as to duty, when they have to do with corruptions which they cannot get mastered, when under the Lord’s hand, and so of all other exigencies of the like nature. For as the “priest’s lips should preserve or keep knowledge, so the people should ask the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7). And those who are sick, are bid “send for the elders or ministers of the church to pray over them” (James 5:14). Those who have the advantage of a gospel minister are indispensably obliged to acquaint him with the state of their souls, when there is anything peculiar in it, and when they are reduced to any strait or extremity: and that,

1. Because God has laid it upon them as a duty, in that forecited Malachi 2:7, “The people should ask the law at his mouth.”

2. Because otherwise he will be at a loss in his bringing messages to you, if he mistake your case, or be unacquainted with it; how can he direct you, if he understand not your state and condition? The Lord gives no immediate revelation now, we have no warrant to expect any such thing; and therefore the way wherein ministers ordinarily come to understand their people’s condition is by themselves, who upon this ground are called to have recourse to their ministers.

3. They should acquaint their ministers with their circumstances, because they are the people’s mouth to God; and if they be not acquainted with the circumstances and condition of the flock, how shall they, according to their duty, hold up the case of their people to God, as they are indispensably obliged to do, and that in public, in secret, and in private?

(6) Once more, and we have done: A people may and should prove their intentions honest, by a diligent application to their own proper work and business, with respect to his furtherance in their designs. Every member of the congregation should be helpful to him, in contributing their utmost assistance to him in his work. A minister may spend his strength in vain, if elders in their place, masters of families in theirs, and every particular person in his station, do not join, by prayer and otherwise, in assisting their ministers. Then do men appear sincere in their designs, for the glory of God and their own salvation, when everyone puts his hand to the work, and endeavours the removal of what may retard and obstructs its progress and success; and likewise studies by all means to strengthen the minister’s hands, that he may not be discouraged, diverted, or taken off from his work.

III. Thirdly, To inquire into the reasons of the doctrine, why a faithful gospel-minister coming amongst a people, will be careful to understand their design or intent in calling him. And,

(1). This will be the desire of a gospel-minister, because a mistake in this matter will be of very dangerous consequence to the people. That people may be influenced by wrong and sinistrous ends and motives in this matter, is beyond all peradventure. They may design the “ratification of their itching ears” by the preacher’s gifts, as the prophet Ezekiel’s hearers did; they may seek the gospel-ordinances for a charm as it were, that they may sit down and rest upon them, as many people do, like those with whom the prophet Jeremiah had to do, who said, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” Or they may design the strengthening of factions and parties; or to get occasion to mock, as many do now in our days. These and the like sinistrous designs may a people go upon: and there can be nothing more prejudicial to a people than to be under the influence of such intentions; since, past all peradventure, God will not sit with such an affront as is done Him by this means, when that ordinance of the ministry, which he designed for the good of souls, and His glory, is prostitute, and made subservient to quite different, nay, opposite designs; and surely a faithful gospel-minister, who will have a tender regard to the salvation of his people, cannot choose but be solicitous to understand that they are not in so dangerous mistake.

(2). The knowledge of this will be of great use to clear his call. It is a great evidence that God designs good to a people when they call a gospel-minister upon such designs; and it cannot but go a great length towards his satisfaction as to God’s calling him to work among them, in order to the compassing the great designs of his ministry. When Peter got the account before spoken of from Cornelius, he is further confirmed as to the hand of God in his coming to him; in compliance with his desire.

(3). If upon inquiry they be found to be such as we have mentioned, it will be a great comfort to him, in grappling with the difficulties he may meet with in the discharge of his duty. It will give a great deal of satisfaction to him to know that those for whose sake he runs those hazards, and grapples with these difficulties, have the same aims, and are joining in the

same design with him. In fine, the right management of his whole work depends very much upon his knowledge of his people's intentions; and therefore it is no wonder to be inquisitive into them, since by his acquaintance with these he may be capacitated to further both his own and their salvation.

We might, for improvement of this point, discourse to you at length of the necessity of a gospel-minister's inquiring into his own designs in undertaking the charge of a people. The arguments made use of to discover the reasonableness of inquiring after the people's designs, conclude no less strongly with respect to the minister's. We might likewise discourse to you of the way how he is to manifest the integrity and sincerity of his aims; but time will not allow us to enter upon these things, and you heard the minister's duty so fully and largely discoursed of within these few days, namely, at the ordination, that we judge it needless to enter upon that subject; and therefore all the improvement we design, of what has been said, shall be despatched in a short address to you of this congregation.

You have called me to labour among you in the work of the gospel; upon your call I have come: I ask therefore to what intent sent ye for me? What did ye design in this matter? Was it to hear what God has to say to you, that God's worship may be ordered according to His own appointment, that you may be brought to acquaintance with Christ, or that you be established in His ways? Were these and the like the designs you had in view? Were these the motives influenced you? If you narrowly look into your own hearts, and make an impartial inquiry, you may readily come to understand what your aims have been; and for your help, I would only in God's name, pose your consciences with a question or two, that may be of use.

1. Dare you, without heart condemning, as in the sight of God, say, that in calling a minister you had respect to the command of God? Was it duty that moved you, or did custom and your own ease influence you?

2. Dare you hold up your face and say, that it was a taste of God's goodness in ordinances, that made you desire them, that you might grow thereby?

3. Did this desire lead you much to the throne of grace to pray for a minister, that God might send you one "according to his own heart, that might feed you with knowledge and understanding?"

4. When you saw any prospect of the return of your prayers, as to a gospel-ministry, were you careful to plead that the blessing might come along?

What say ye to these things? Give God, give conscience, justice; let conscience speak freely, and tell whether things be so or not. They must either own, that there was not a regard to the command, that there was not a desire after the sincere milk of the word, occasioned by a taste of the Lord's goodness, that there was not that serious application to God by prayer, either for a minister, or for the blessing of the ordinance; or that there was; and this will cast you all into two classes.

1st, Those who have not been so employed in this matter, and consequently have not been acting for right ends. And,

2nd. Those who have been busied in duty, in the way just now mentioned. To each of these a word. And,

1st, As for you who have not had a regard to your duty in this matter, who have not been wrestling with God in prayer, that God might send you a minister with the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, to you we say,

1. Your designs are not such as God will approve of. Had they been such as we mentioned in the former part of this discourse, then surely they would have led you to earnest wrestling with God, for his directions, who only can point to one that is meet to answer those blessed ends.

2. You are guilty of horrible wickedness. You have committed a great provocation, in calling a minister upon any other design. God designed them for the ends formerly mentioned, and no other; and your calling them upon other aims, is an endeavour to counteract God, prostitute His ordinance, and serve your lusts of that which God designed for His own glory.

3. Whatever good others may get by the gospel, you have no reason to look for any. God may answer you according to the idols of your own hearts: and when he satisfies the soul of the hungry with good things, he may send leanness to you. When he gives a commission to the word to enlighten, convert, confirm, and strengthen others, you have reason to fear that it may have a commission to make you blind, deaf, and dead.

4. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you; lie in the dust before God; endeavour to get your hearts affected with your guilt, that you may be deeply humbled and abased before him whom you have provoked to anger.

5. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Let us know by your carriage that you are really penitent, and that now you have got the right designs in view; and this you may do by a close attendance upon all the ordinances, by hearing and doing whatever is enjoined you of God, and by all the other ways mentioned in the doctrinal parts of this discourse.

6. And lastly. Whether you hear or forbear, yet we tell you, the Kingdom of God is come near unto you; whatever you design, the Lord has given you a gospel-day; and if our gospel be hid from you, it is because you are lost, the god of this world having blinded your eyes, that you should not discern the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.

As to the second sort of persons, those who have been importunate with God and have had an eye to His command in this work, to you we say,

1. This your conduct, past all peradventure, is no mean evidence of the sincerity of your good intentions; and this is certainly matter of thankfulness, and is moreover a ground to hope, that the Lord may not altogether frustrate your desires.

2. Do not think your work is over. Wrestle, plead strongly with God for the blessing of gospel-ordinances; whoever plants or waters, it is only God that gives the increase; and therefore if you mean to grow under the means, be instant in prayer for the blessing on them; plead that God may not send leanness to your souls, while he provides plenty of spiritual provision for you.

3. Beware of sitting down upon gospel privileges. You may, if you do so, lose what you have wrought, and justly bring the sincerity of your aims in question. There is nothing more ordinary, than up sitting of this sort. Persons, who it may be would say, O had they a gospel-dispensation! how glad would they be, how carefully would they improve it; and yet when they get what they seek, their improvement is in no measure answerable to their resolutions. Take heed of, and guard against this.

4. Let there be a suitable care to evidence your sincerity in this matter, by the whole of your deportment. If you turn careless in attending ordinances; if you hear, but do not; if you neglect your own work, and be wanting to yourselves in this matter, then who will believe your sincerity? who can believe it? your own consciences will accuse you: and "if your hearts condemn you, God is greater than your hearts, and knows all things" 1 John 3:20.

5. If you find that the Lord has made endeavours successful, take care that you sacrifice not to your own net, and burn incense to your drag. God is a holy and a jealous God, and will not be mocked; and if you begin to rob him of his glory, he will get him glory in such a way as may lay you low, and make you smart severely for your own folly.

6. If the Lord give you the gospel-light, then walk in the light while you have it. Carry like children of the light and of the day, work out the work of your salvation with fear and

trembling; for none of us can tell how soon our gospel-day may be gone, and the night succeed wherein none can work.

We shall conclude this discourse with a few general advices to all of you. Would you have our ministry made successful? Would you obtain the real advantage of gospel-ordinances, and have our meetings such as may be matter of rejoicing both to you and me in the day of the Lord? then we entreat, beseech, nay, and obtest you by the mercies of God, in the bowels of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you would have your own souls and ours to be saved.

1. Pray for us. As a minister is indispensably obliged to mind his people before God, and to carry them ever upon his heart, so are they obliged to pray for their minister: "Pray for us," says the apostle (Hebrews 13:18), "for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly." To give weight to this advice, I shall lay before you a few considerations.

(1.) Consider, ministers are not sufficient of themselves for this work: the work is great, weighty, and important, and the difficulties are many; and who is sufficient for it? Sure ministers are not, for if the apostle said with justice of himself, "That he was not of himself sufficient to think any thing as he ought," (2 Corinthians 3:5), then much more may gospel-ministers now-a-days own it to be so with them; and therefore all their sufficiency is only of God, from whom suitable and needful supplies should be sought.

(2.) Consider that in their plenty and fulness you shall have plenty. They are indispensably obliged to lay out what they receive for you, to spend and be spent in the work and service of your faith: and therefore it is your interest that they abound, since it is for your sake they labour; and the more so, if you be instrumental by your prayers, in procuring advantages and supplies for them.

(3.) Consider, that they are exposed to great hazards for your sake, and therefore you are to contribute your utmost to their assistance this way, wherein you may be most helpful to them. They being made watchmen, do thereby become the butt of Satan's malice; and the more faithful they are, the more will he oppose them, and seek their ruin. The enemy's principal design is sure to be against the watchman, because he prevents the surprising of his people by Satan, at least it is his business to do so; and therefore no stone will be left unturned, in order to his ruin.

1. Satan will endeavour to lay him asleep, and make him turn secure, that he may neglect his post.

2. If he miss of this, he will endeavour to fill him with disturbance and fear, that so he may be diverted from his duty, and made to quit his post. Or,

3. He will ply his corruptions, that he may, by attending to them, and striving against them, take him off from, or discourage him in his opposition to those of others.

4. He will endeavour to blind his eyes by false appearances that so he may give false alarms: and this will weaken his credit, and make people not believe his warnings.

5. He will endeavour to amuse him with great appearances of danger where there is none; that his eyes may turn off from those things which may really endanger his flock.

6. He will endeavour to beget and cherish jealousies betwixt his people and him, whereby his warnings will be less regarded, and his hands be weakened, and his heart be discouraged.

7. If these fail, he will endeavour to get him removed; if he see the gospel like to prove successful, then he will take care to find out ways to oblige the watchman to remove from his post. And,

8. If he fail of this, he will endeavour to kill him, either by multiplying troubles and griefs, or else by more direct methods, employing his emissaries and servants to take away his life; and this, by God's permission, for the punishment of a people's sins, has proven successful.

Surely these and a great many more methods, used by Satan, the wicked world, pretended friends, and their own corruptions, against the ministers of the gospel, and all upon the people's account, should make them careful in praying to God in their behalf, that they may be saved from the attempts of all their spiritual adversaries, and may be made to grow in graces and gifts. Pray for much grace to your minister, that he may persuade, as knowing the terrors of the Lord; that he may deal tenderly with you, as having himself had acquaintance with soul-sickness on account of sin; that he may take you to Jesus safely as having himself been with him; that he may comfort you with the consolations wherewith he has been comforted of God. In fine, that he may speak, because he himself had not only believed, but experienced the work of grace upon his own soul, as one that has tasted that sin is an evil and bitter thing, and has found that Christ is useful, is sufficient, is precious; and that he may pray acceptably for you, as one who has found acceptance in his own behalf. Pray likewise for gifts to him, knowledge in the mystery of God, and of Christ, and of faith: that he may have much spiritual wisdom, zeal, boldness, and courage, to fit him for his work; and withal, that the Lord may give a door of utterance.

(4.) Consider, that a careful attendance to your duty, in holding up your minister's case, will be a great mean to promote love, mutual love, betwixt you and him; and this will help to break Satan's engines. Nothing contributes more to the furtherance and success of one's ministry in a place, than much love, mutual kindness betwixt a minister and people; and no love so useful this way, as that which vents itself in prayer for one another, and is cherished by this means.

2. I entreat you may carefully attend ordinances, public, private, and secret; and catechising as the Lord shall give occasion. This will make us cheerfully go about these duties, if we see you studying to take advantage of them; this will be profitable to you; it will discourage our enemies; it will rejoice our heart, and be a credit to religion.

3. Any advantage you receive, be sure that ye attribute it entirely to God; beware of placing it to the minister's account, who is only the instrument; if you rob God of the glory, and give it to the instrument, you may by this provoke the Lord to blast your minister; and to withdraw from him His presence; which will soon make you see that it is not the minister that can do any thing. Give God His due, and so count of us as the servants of Christ, and the stewards of the mysteries of the gospel; and when ye get any good by it, put it all to God's account; bless Him for it; and let the instrument have an interest in your affections and prayers, that he may be further useful to you and others.

4. Once more, and we have done. Do not count us your enemies, if we tell you the truth; we must by any means be free, in laying open your sins, and in carrying home the conviction of them to your consciences; nor dare we gratify any, by holding our peace in this matter; for if we please men, then are we not the servants of Christ; and if any soul die in its sin by our silence, then we bring the blood of souls upon our own heads, and hazard our own souls. We are obliged, by the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to consciences; and if the more we love, the less we are loved, then God will require it at your hands. But whether you will hear, or whether you forbear, we must, as we shall give answer to the great Shepherd of the sheep, deal plainly with you. Consider but that one Scripture, Leviticus 19:17, and ye will see reproof to be an act of great love, and that the neglect of it in God's account is hatred: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him"; or, as the last clause may be rendered, That thou bear not sin for him. Now, if you follow these advices, and if there be a single eye to God, and close dependence upon Him, both in minister and people, mutual love and helpfulness, and a joint endeavour to promote the great design of the ministry, the glory of God in our own salvation, then our labour shall not be in vain, but shall be blessed with increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us.

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