

A Sermon.

By REV. THOMAS HALYBURTON,

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

(Continued from April 1923)

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 gave 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.

[May 1923]

Notes of a Sermon

By REV. MALCOLM GILLIES, Halkirk.

Preached at Halkirk on Sabbath, 31st December 1922.

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” – Hebrews 11:5.

The Apostle has showed in the foregoing chapters of this epistle that the way of salvation spoken of and typified under the Old Testament dispensation has been fully displayed in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this chapter he deals with the reception accorded to God’s revelation by the Old Testament saints, and shows that the faith of His people under both dispensations was the same. Faith, he says, has had for its basis, from the beginning of time, the word of God’s revelation. That word was concerning things not yet seen, but to faith, they had all reality and sureness, because God who cannot lie, has spoken. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.” Faith lays hold on the faithfulness of God to His word; His ability to perform what He has said, rests in the reality and certainty of what God has revealed. Faith moved Abel to offer up the only sacrifice which God would accept. He believed the promise of the “Seed.” He gave due obedience in worshipping God according to the pattern which, in all probability, was shown in the Garden of Eden.

The Apostle passes by a few generations whose names are mentioned in Genesis, and takes up the name of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, as an example showing forth the faith of Gods elect: – “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

In endeavouring to speak a little on these words, as I may be helped, let us notice: –

- I. The life of Enoch.
- II. The comfort of Enoch.
- III. The translation of Enoch.

I. The life of Enoch. His life is set before us in the words – “By faith Enoch was translated,” and again in Genesis 5:24 – “And Enoch walked with God.” The Apostle does not confine Enoch’s faith merely to his translation. He means that Enoch so walked with God that it pleased the Lord to put this honour on Enoch, even that he should not see death, but be translated. As Romain so scripturally puts it, there is the life, walk, and triumph of faith. Enoch and every other child of God received a living faith from the fountain of life which will manifest itself in a godly walk and conversation, and which will finally triumph over all the opposition that meets it in this world.

God is the author of all life. “He gives to all, life and breath and all things.” He “breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” It is He who quickens the soul of man dead in trespasses and sins, and plants the seed of living faith within. Enoch came to live unto God when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in law and gospel shone into his soul. He came to know sin, and himself a sinner, lost and undone. He was brought to know God in covenant as reconciled to Him through blood. “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Enoch came to full agreement that God is just in His anger and wrath against sin. The only resting-place for him as a sinner was in the revelation and promise given in Eden, and this became all his hope in view of eternity. He was reconciled in love to the Lord, and found peace for his soul by trusting in His word. Life, wherever it is, makes itself manifest by activity. It is impossible to have the life of faith and not to bear the fruits of it in walk and conversation. “Faith without works is dead.” Enoch’s living faith was proved by his close walk with God. He walked with God:

- (1) in his acceptance of all the doctrines of truth;
- (2) in his obedience to all God’s commandments. He walked with him

(3) in daily worship, approaching God through the appointed sacrifice which prefigured Him of whom the Eden promise spake. His constant aim was to have near fellowship and communion with the Lord, and that he might attain his desire, he endeavoured through grace to be conformed to God's will in all things.

(4) He walked with God in holding the truth intact when the generation in which he lived had almost wholly departed from the faith.

We read in Jude the character of that generation, and it is summed up in one word – “Ungodly.” It would seem that the fearful declension spoken of in Genesis 6:1-6, had already begun when the wickedness of man was great in the earth. The two families which had till then kept separate, the one called the sons of God, the other, the children of men, were amalgamated, and the result, as has been well observed, was a union of the Church and the World. There is no new thing under the sun, and the above event has occurred in the church in every age, and more than once in our own land. When the Church is loyal to her Head, she keeps herself pure and unspotted in doctrine, worship, and practice, and refuses to compromise with the World by changing her attitude about its condition and ways. In Scotland, in our own day, we see the barriers, which once existed between the Church and the World, broken down, so that one needs not to go to the World for its pleasures and amusements; these can be had within the Church and among professors of religion. This state of affairs is denominated as modern and progressive, but the keeping to the rule of God's word is styled old-fashioned and bigoted. The truth is that this generation has gone back to the sixth or seventh generation from Adam, and to almost all the apostacies from scriptural doctrine, worship, and practice which have taken place since then. Enoch, it seems, stood alone in that day maintaining God's truth, and it mattered little to him that practically all the religious people of that generation were against him. He walked with God in this matter, and the worldly-wise people of his day walked away from God till the Flood came and utterly destroyed them.

Enoch walked with God in bearing testimony by his public preaching against the ungodliness of those around him. He was a faithful prophet, denouncing the wickedness of the age, and declaring that “the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his 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.” Alone, he contended against their grievous departure from the truth till he probably became the most hated man of his day. But though hated by man, he was beloved of God, and that did more than make up for his trials. It is wonderful that the only two who went to heaven without dying, Enoch and Elijah, were men who stood alone and made themselves obnoxious by their stern, unflinching attitude in defending the truth against the corruptions of men. It is evident from all scripture that God has a special delight in such a witness. It is not the man who temporises and compromises for the sake of outward peace that is pleasing to the Most High, but rather he who will not give up any fundamental truth, no matter what it costs.

II. The comfort of Enoch.

(1) He was persuaded that he lived according to God's word. To the single eye, to him who serves the Lord with a whole heart, the will of God is not difficult to find and follow. His words “are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.” It is when the effort is made to serve two masters, God and Mammon, that one loses the plain path and begins to call light, darkness. It was clear to Enoch that his faith, life, and walk were in accordance with God's word, and this was strength and comfort to his soul.

(2) To Enoch, who did not hide iniquity in his heart, but who shunned it in all its forms, and gave all diligence to make his calling and election sure, was given the Spirit of adoption whereby he cried, Abba, Father. In common with the people of God, the Spirit of God bore

witness with his spirit that he was a child of God, and this caused that the peace of God kept his heart and mind.

(3) He did not seek the fellowship of the Most High in vain. The Lord answered his petitions and cries with words of comfort, giving him the sure testimony that he pleased God. It was shown to him that the Lord whom he served was on his side, and would never forsake him, no matter what he would have to meet. When one has such a testimony as this, he can well afford to ignore and deem lightly all the hatred and malice of man.

III. The translation of Enoch. "He was not found." This seems to infer that search was made for him. It is very probable that few in that generation would make any search for him out of love. It is more than likely that they hated him for his godly life and faithful testimony, and would search to see if he who condemned their wicked lives still lived. They would be glad to hear and know of his death. We are not without warrant to think this, for this is the spirit shown by wicked men in all ages to the confessors of truth. But he was not found by friend or foe. His place was empty; even the house of clay was absent, "for God took him." He was translated from a world of sin to the habitations of glory; from all his griefs and troubles, to the eternal solace of the presence of God.

By his translation, a proof was given to that generation of the existence of man in the world to come, of the resurrection, of the eternal happiness of God's people, and of the truth of Enoch's own prophecy. By it, God testified to man of the delight He had in Enoch's godly life, and in the faithful, uncompromising testimony he bore to the truth, in the midst of a declining age.

[June 1923]

Synod Sermon.

Preached at Opening of Synod, 22nd May 1923

by REV. MALCOLM GILLIES, Moderator.

"Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait for the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him" – Isaiah 8:16,17.

We see from the beginning of this book that it was the portion of the prophet Isaiah to prophesy in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Kings of Judah. In the opening chapters of this prophecy, and also in the Books of Hosea, Amos, and other portions of Scripture, we find that there was a general declension from the true worship of God, even in Judah. This departure was somewhat restrained by the piety of some of the Kings of David's line, and by the faithfulness of God's prophets. With the exception of Ahaz, the Kings of Judah in Isaiah's time were God-fearing men. "Uzziah sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper" (2 Chronicles 26:5). Jotham also "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord," and his ways were established. King Ahaz, however was of a different character altogether. He was about the worst king that ever disgraced the throne of David. He set up an idolatrous altar in the very Temple of God, and burned his own children in the fire to Moloch. He was sorely chastised by the sword of Syria and Israel, but the more he was punished, the more hardened he became, so that he is said to have wearied men and God with his impiety (Isaiah 7:13). This prophecy of which the text is a part was spoken against Ahaz, and those in Judah who looked to Assyria for succour from Syria and Ephraim. The Prophet was prepared for his duty by receiving a vision of the exalted Majesty of Heaven, and by the announcement that the people were and would be blinded and hardened in sin till they would be wasted and destroyed. He was assured, however, that there would be a tenth, a remnant who would cleave to the Lord, and who would be protected by Him in the evil day. He was given a message of comfort and direction to these. They were to rely upon the Lord, and He would be a sanctuary to them, only let them not follow the multitude to do evil, but rather let them be more diligent than ever to walk in His ways. In the words before us, we shall notice as we may be helped: –

- I. That to which the Church is directed – "The testimony" and "the law."
- II. Their duty in connection therewith – "Bind up," "seal."
- III. The prayerful attitude enjoined – "And I will wait upon the Lord."

I. The Church here is called upon to consider the testimony and the law.

1. I shall notice that the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation is called His testimony, the testimony of Christ, of the Spirit. God Himself is the great Witness to the whole truth. The Spirit testified beforehand in the Old Testament Scriptures, declaring the end from the beginning, so that men might know that He is God. Hence the emphatic, "Thus saith the Lord" so common in the writings of the prophets which is as forcibly implied throughout the rest of the Scripture. God, indeed, used human instruments to make known His witness to the truth; but nothing is clearer than that these were under the complete control of the Spirit of inspiration, and that what they said is the infallible Word of God. "There are three that bear witness in Heaven – the Father; the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One," and "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater" (1 John 5:7,9). We have then this solemn truth that in the Bible, God Himself is revealed as bearing testimony, and therefore, though men should turn their backs on any part or all the written Word, the truth of all Scripture will be fully admitted by all men either in time or in eternity.

The Bible contains the witness of God concerning His own Being and attributes. In it, He declares that He is Creator, Law-giver, Providential Ruler, Saviour, and Judge. Man's state, nature, practice, needs are set forth. God solemnly declares that He created man perfect, that he is now defiled, lost, dead; that nothing can deliver him from being undone eternally but the exceeding riches of His grace in Christ. We have God's testimony concerning His Son; who He is, and the work He accomplished in our nature,

the efficacy of His blood to atone, and His power to meet our utterly fallen and dead condition. All the doctrines of the Covenant of Grace are set forth in the witnessing of Him who cannot lie. All that pertains to the worship, government, and discipline of His Church under the Old and New dispensations are set down in the Oracles, God thus showing men what His Church must be to the end of time. He has also given us an account of the lives of the most eminent of His people, of the sojourn of His own Son among men in this world, so that by example, he would bear testimony as to the manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. A witness sets forth the truth, so that credence might be given to it. God has spoken in the Scriptures, not that we might deal with them according to the dictates of unbelief and carnal reason, but that through the Spirit's teaching, we might come to rest in faith on the Scriptures which cannot be broken.

The Bible is not only God's testimony; it is also God's law. As law, it sets forth the will of the King, Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, and binds every individual of Adam's race to whom it comes to give obedience or else to incur the displeasure of Him Who will in no wise clear the guilty. It deals with man as under the Covenant of Works, and says – "Thou shalt not," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die." It speaks to man in the terms of the Gospel Covenant, and commands – "Flee for thy life," "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," "Strive to enter in," "Make your calling and election sure," "Follow holiness," etc. The Bible as law is binding on the conscience of the individual, the family, the nation, and the professing Church, and none of these can ignore the least command with impunity. The Saviour has said: – "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). Men excuse themselves for shortcomings by belittling sin. "Is it not a little one," said Lot, but no sin is little, either as it is against the Majesty of Heaven or in its consequences to the creature.

2. We notice that there were a special testimony and a law given to the Prophet and to the Church of God that they might be kept faithful when the forsaking of God was great in the land. He was told to take witnesses Zechariah, and Uriah the priest, who, it seems, aided Ahaz in setting up the Damascene altar in the House of God, for God will make backsliders contradict themselves, and "their folly shall be manifest to all men." The testimony was

(1) that the people were forsaking God's Word and worship and ways, and falling in with the ways of Ephraim and the idolators round about them.

(2) God would punish them by the very powers before which they bowed, and whose assistance they sought. If our nation bends to Prelacy and Popery, God will give us plenty of that bondage.

(3) They were great for uniting in confederacies to resist the common foe. They thought that this procedure would be their safety, but were told that no matter how they would be associated, they would be broken in pieces. It is our nature to look to an arm of flesh, forgetting that the sure and all-sufficient help is in Jehovah's Name, and that "it is nothing with Him to help, whether with many or with them that have no power" (2 Chronicles 14:11).

(4) The Church was commanded to fear none or nothing, but the Lord, for He would be with her as her sanctuary, her sure refuge and sufficiency, when others would be driven to anguish and darkness. God spake to the Prophet with a strong hand, and that alone will keep any person in the ways of truth. Unless God will hold up one's goings in the divine paths, his footsteps will certainly slide out of God's ways. The Lord instructed him and the Church with him not to walk in the way of the people, but to

serve Him with reverence and fear, taking the testimony and the law of Scripture as their rule.

II. The duty – “Bind up the testimony, seal the law.”

1. By this command, looseness and laxity in connection with the Word of God is absolutely forbidden. We have to view the testimony and the law as bound up and sealed infallibly by the Spirit of God, and to hold it as such. We have not to add to His words, neither must we take any jot or tittle therefrom, lest we bring His curse upon us.

2. We must receive His testimony with all our heart, and thus set to our seal that God is true. The Saviour must give us the Father’s word, before it will become the joy and rejoicing of our heart, and cause us rather to have the world’s hatred than to part with anything of revealed truth (John 17:14).

3. We bind up and seal the truth when we through grace hide it in our hearts. The Spirit of God takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the souls of His people. The word thus received will not be sold, but will be treasured and practised.

4. The Jews were commanded to bind God’s words for a sign upon their hand and as frontlets between their eyes. Hence they took a carnal view of this injunction, and made broad their phylacteries. The command set before them and us, constant regard to, and continued perseverance in living and acting, according to Scripture revelation that “What saith the Scripture?” should be the first and last question we should ask in connection with every duty.

There is more need in our day than ever, that we should cleave to the Word of God. We are living in a day in which denial and disregard of Biblical truth is very prevalent. Like the Church of Rome, which sets up tradition on an equality with the Word, many set up expediency and false charity at the expense of the testimony and the law. Our duty as a Church is plain – “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.” Let us “hold fast the form of sound words,” and “that good thing which was committed unto us, keep by the Holy Ghost.” “Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord” (2 Timothy 1:8). The outlook is very dark for the coming generation in Scotland. The rising generation to a great extent knows nothing of true godliness as it existed in this land. Whether the Lord will arise for the building up of His cause in our day or not, it is our duty to hand down that which we have, unimpaired and undefiled to the next generation. “That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children” (Psalm 78:6).

III. The prayerful attitude – “And I will wait upon the Lord.”

The Prophet hereby confesses that he is shut in to the Lord alone as the hope of Israel, the Saviour in the time of trouble. Unless He will arise and have mercy on Zion, all human efforts will be unavailing. But if He will cause His face to shine; if He will send the Rod of His Strength out of Zion and rule in the midst of His enemies, then the decayed face of the earth will be renewed, and the Church will once more put on her beautiful garments. He acknowledges the sovereignty of God, and that it becomes servants to wait their Master’s time, and to be faithful to their trust whether He smiles or frowns. He remembers that He has connected His glory with His purpose of salvation through the son of a virgin who shall be called Immanuel, God with us, and He knows that though the vision tarry, it shall come, and that it behoves the Church to wait prayerfully and patiently for the accomplishment of the sure word of prophecy. The Prophet mourns the lamentable condition into which the people had brought themselves through sin. God was hiding His face, not so much from himself and the remnant, as from the house of Jacob, both Judah and Ephraim. They had forsaken Him, and He had left them to find out by bitter experience that “the way of transgressors is hard.” It is a

mark of true piety in our day, as it has been from the beginning, for one to be grieved over the back-slidden condition of our nation from Reformation and Protestant principles, for the dishonour done to Christ and His Word, by false teaching, will-worship, and worldliness in the professing Church, and for the loose, sinful, carnal living in families and individuals. What need there is of fervent pleading at the Throne of Grace that the Lord would turn again and heal the hurt of His Cause in these Kingdoms. That He would turn to us as a people a pure language, that we might call upon the Name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent. To forsake in principle and practice the testimony and the law, and to deem these as no longer necessary and binding is to be guilty of making a dark day still darker. To cleave to our position and to every truth in faith and life, for which we take our stand as a Church; to be shut in to the Lord by patient waiting in prayer is the only hope that the Word of God and sound reason give, that the Sun of Righteousness will yet arise on Scotland, and that times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord.

[August 1923]

A Choice Drop of Honey from the Rock Christ.

By the REV. THOMAS WILCOX.

In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory (Isaiah 45:25). It is only the dying of that Just One for us, who are unjust, that can bring us to God. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we, who were nothing but sin, might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Christ is the Father's fulness of grace and glory. He must have the pre-eminence. He alone is worthy, who is to build the spiritual temple of the Lord, and to bear the glory. Every vessel of this temple, from the cups to the flagons, must all be hung upon Christ. He, by His Father's appointment, is the foundation-stone, corner-stone, top-stone.

Reader! dost thou profess the name of Christ, and partake of His ordinances? Thou doest well. They are glorious privileges; but if thou hast not the blood of Christ at the root of thy profession, it will wither, and prove unprofitable.

Many are tossed to and fro, ready to be carried away with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. There are many foundations to build upon that are false, upon which much labour is spent in vain. Some are not speaking the truth in love; neither are they growing up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ. There cannot be a growing in Christ without a union with Him. Without that union all that we do is accursed.

If thou retain guilt and self-righteousness under thy profession, those vipers will eat out all the vitals of it. Try, and examine what foundation thy profession and the hope of thy glory are built upon – whether it be laid by the hand of Christ; for if not, it will never be able to endure the storm which must come against it.

Consider, the greatest sins may be hid under the greatest duties and the greatest terrors. See that the wound which sin hath made in thy soul be perfectly cured by the “blood of Christ”; not skinned over with duties, tears, reformations, etc. Apply what thou wilt besides the “blood of Christ,” it will poison the sore. Thou wilt find that sin was never mortified truly, if thou hast not seen Christ bleeding for thee upon the cross. Nothing can kill it but a sight of Christ’s righteousness.

Nature can afford no balsam fit for soul-cure. Healing from duty, and not from Christ, is the most desperate disease. Poor ragged nature, with all its highest improvements, can never spin a garment fine enough (without spot) to cover the soul’s nakedness. Nothing can do it but Christ’s perfect righteousness.

Whatsoever is of nature’s spinning must be all unravelled before the righteousness of Christ can be put on. Whatsoever is of nature’s putting on, Satan will come and plunder, and leave the soul naked and open to the wrath of God. All that nature can do can never make up the least particle of grace, mortify sin, or look Christ in the face. Thou mayest hear, pray, receive the sacrament, and yet be miserable, unless thou seest Christ superior to all other excellency and righteousness in the world, and all these falling before the majesty of His love and grace.

If thou hast seen Christ truly, thou hast seen pure grace, pure righteousness in Him every way infinite, far exceeding all sin and misery. If thou hast seen Christ, thou wilt trample upon all the righteousness of men and angels, as to thine acceptance with God. If ever thou hast seen Christ, thou hast seen Him a rock higher than self-righteousness; and there will be a continual dropping of honey and grace out of that rock to satisfy thee. Examine if ever thou hast beheld Christ as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Stand upon the Rock of Ages.

Men talk much of believing, whilst whole and sound; few do it. Christ is the mystery of Scripture; grace is the mystery of Christ. Believing is the most wonderful thing in the world. Put anything of thine own to it, and thou spoilest it; Christ will not esteem it believing. When thou believest and comest to Christ, thou must leave behind thee thine own righteousness – all thy holiness, sanctification, duties, tears, humblings, etc., and bring nothing but thy sins, thy wants, and miseries; else Christ is not fit for thee, nor thou for Christ. Christ will be a perfect Redeemer and Mediator, and thou must be an undone sinner, or Christ and thou wilt never agree. It is the hardest thing in the world to take Christ alone for righteousness.

Whatever comes in, when thou goest to God for acceptance, besides Christ, call it anti-Christ; bid it be-gone; make only Christ’s righteousness triumphant. All besides that is Babylon, which must fall if Christ stand, and thou shalt rejoice in the day of the fall thereof. Christ alone did tread the wine-press, and there was none with Him. If thou join

anything to Christ, Christ will trample upon it in fury and anger, and stain His raiment with the blood thereof. Thou thinkest it easy to believe: was thy faith ever tried with an hour of temptation, and a thorough sight of sin? Was it ever put to resist Satan, and to feel the wrath of God lying upon thy conscience? When thou wert apprehensive of hell and the grave, then did God show thee Christ, a ransom, a righteousness? Then couldest thou say, "Oh! I see grace enough in Christ"? If so, thou mayest see that which is the greatest word in the world, I Believe. Untried faith is uncertain faith.

To believing there must go a clear conviction of sin and the merits of the blood of Christ, and of Christ's willingness to save a man, considered merely as a sinner. All the power in nature cannot get so high, in a storm of sin and guilt, as really to believe there is any grace, any willingness, in Christ to save. When Satan chargeth sin upon the conscience, then for the soul to charge it upon Christ is gospel-like; that is, to make him Christ. He serves for that use. To accept Christ's righteousness alone, his blood alone, for salvation, is the sum of the gospel. When the soul, in all duties and distresses, can say, "Nothing but Christ, Christ alone for righteousness, justification, sanctification, redemption – not humblings, not duties, not graces" – then the soul has got above the reach of the billows.

All temptations, Satan's advantages, and our complainings, are laid in self-righteousness and self-excellency. God pursueth these by many ways, as Laban pursued after Jacob for his images. These must be torn from thee, be as unwilling as thou wilt. With these Christ will not dwell; and till Christ come in, guilt will abide. Where guilt is, there is hardness of heart; therefore, much guilt argues little, if anything, of Christ.

When a sense of guilt is raised up, take heed of getting it allayed but by Christ's blood; all other ways tend to harden the conscience. Make Christ thy peace – not thy duties, thy tears, etc. Thou mayest oppose Christ by duties, as well as by sins. Look at Christ, and do as much as thou wilt. Stand with all thy weight upon Christ's righteousness. Take heed of having one foot on thine own righteousness, and another on Christ's. Until Christ come and sit upon a throne of grace in the conscience, there is nothing but guilt, terror, secret suspicions, the soul hanging between hope and fear, which is not a safe state. Whosoever is afraid to see sin's utmost vileness, and to confess the desperate wickedness of his own heart, suspects the merits of Christ.

How great soever a sinner thou art, make Christ thine advocate, and thou wilt find him Jesus Christ the righteous. In all doubtings, fears, storms of conscience, look at Christ only and continually: do not argue it with Satan, he desires no better; bid him go to Christ, and He will answer him. It is His office to be our Advocate, to answer the law as our Surety, and justice as our Mediator. If thou wilt do anything thyself as satisfaction for sin, thou renoucest Christ the righteous, who was made sin for thee.

Satan may quote and corrupt, but he cannot answer Scripture. It is Christ's word of mighty authority. Christ foiled Satan with it. In all the Scriptures there is not one hard word against a "poor sinner stript of self-righteousness. Nay, it plainly points him out to be the subject of the grace of the gospel, and none else. Believe but Christ's willingness, and that thou canst believe. Remember it is Christ's work to make thee believe. He works to will and do of His pleasure. By grace thou art saved, through faith, and that not of yourself; it is the gift of God. Plead with Him for that gift. Christ is the author and finisher of faith; put Him to it. Mourn for thine unbelief; which is setting up guilt in the conscience above Christ, undervaluing the merits of Christ, accounting His blood an unholy, a common and unsatisfying thing.

Thou complainest much of thyself; doth thy sin make thee look more at Christ, less at thyself? – that is right; otherwise complaining is but hypocrisy. To be looking at duties, graces, or feelings, when thou shouldest be looking at Christ, is self-righteousness.

Looking at Christ's grace will make thee humble. In all thy temptations be not discouraged. These surges may be, not to drown thee, but to heave thee off from thyself on the rock of Christ.

Remember all the patterns of grace that are in heaven. Thou thinkest, "Oh! what a monument of grace should I be!" There are many thousands as rich monuments as thou canst be. No guilt ever exceeded the merits of Christ's blood; no sin could ever conquer the invincible power of His grace. Do not despair; hope still. When the clouds are blackest, even then look towards Christ, the standing pillar of the Father's love and grace, set up in heaven for all sinners to gaze upon continually. Whatsoever Satan or conscience say, do not conclude against thyself. His blood speaks reconciliation, cleansing, purchase, redemption, remission, justification, nearness to God. He speaks grace, mercy, and peace. That is the language of the Father and of Christ. Wait for Christ's appearing as the Morning Star. He shall come as certainly as the morning, as refreshing as the rain.

The sun may as well be hindered from rising, as Christ the Sun of Righteousness. Look not a moment off Christ. Look not upon sin, but look upon Christ first. In every duty look at Christ; before duty, to pardon; in duty, to assist; after duty, to accept. Without this, it is but carnal, careless duty. Do not legalise the gospel, as if part remained for thee to do and suffer, and Christ were but a half Mediator, as if thou must bear part of thine own sin, and make some satisfaction. Let sin break thy heart, but not thy hope in the gospel.

When we come to God, we must bring nothing but Christ with us. Any ingredients, or any previous qualifications of our own, will poison and corrupt faith. He that builds upon duties and graces, knows not the merits of Christ. Thy workings, thy self-sufficiency, must be destroyed. Thou must receive all at God's hand. Christ is the gift of God. Faith is the gift of God. Pardon is a free gift. Ah! how nature storms, frets, rages at this, that all is gift, and it can purchase nothing with its works, and tears, and duties: that all works are excluded, and of no value in the justification of the soul.

If nature had been to contrive the way of salvation, it would rather have put it into the hands of saints and angels to sell it, than into the hands of Christ who gives freely, whom therefore it suspects. Nature would set up a way to purchase by doing; therefore it abominates the merits of Christ as the most destructive thing to it. Nature would do anything to be saved, rather than go to Christ, or close with Christ, and owe all to Him. Christ will have nothing; but the soul would thrust somewhat of its own upon Christ. Here is the great controversy. Consider: – didst thou ever yet see the merits of Christ, and the infinite satisfaction made by His death? Didst thou see this when the burden of sin and the wrath of God lay heavy on thy conscience? That is grace! The greatness of Christ's merits is not known but to a poor soul in deep distress. Slight convictions will have but a slight, low esteem of Christ's blood and merits.

Despairing sinner! thou lookest on thy right hand and on thy left, saying, "Who will show me any good?" thou art tumbling over all thy duties and professions, to patch up a righteousness to save thee. Look at Christ now; look to Him and be saved. There is none else. Look anywhere else, and thou art undone. God will look at nothing but Christ; and thou must look at nothing else. Christ is lifted up on high, as the brazen serpent in the wilderness, that sinners at the end of the earth – the greatest distance, may see Him and live. The least sight of Him will be saving; the least touch healing to thee. And God intends thou shouldest look on Him; for He hath set Him upon a high throne of glory, in the open view of all poor sinners.

Consider whilst Christ was upon the earth, He was more among publicans and sinners, than scribes and Pharisees, His professed adversaries, for they were righteous

ones. It is not as thou imaginest, that His state in glory makes Him neglectful, scornful to poor sinners. No; He hath the same heart now in heaven. He is God, and changeth not. He is “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” He went through all thy temptations, dejections, sorrows, desertions, rejections. He hath drunk the bitterest of the cup, and left thee the sweet; the condemnation is out. Christ drunk up all the Father’s wrath at one draught; and nothing but salvation is left for thee. Hast thou nothing but sin and misery? Go to Christ with all thy impenitency and unbelief, to get faith and repentance from Him; that is glorious. Tell Christ, “Lord, I have brought no righteousness, no grace to be accepted in, or justified by; I am come for thine, and must have it.” We would be bringing to Christ, and that must not be. Not a penny of nature’s highest improvements will pass in heaven. Grace will not stand with works.

Self-righteousness and self-sufficiency are the darlings of nature, which she preserves as her life. That makes Christ seem ugly to nature. Nature cannot desire Him. He is just opposite to all nature’s glorious interests. Let nature but make a gospel, and it would make it quite contrary to Christ. It would be the just, the innocent, the holy. Christ makes the gospel for thee; that is, for needy sinners – the ungodly, and the unrighteous.

Nature cannot endure to think the gospel is only for sinners; it will rather choose to despair than to go to Christ upon such terms. When nature is put to it by guilt or wrath, it will go to its old haunts of self-righteousness, self-goodness, etc. The Holy Spirit must cast down those strongholds. None but the self-justifier stands excluded by the gospel. Christ will sooner look at the most abominable sinner before Him; because to the former Christ cannot be made justification. He does not know nor confess his sin. To say in compliment, “I am a sinner,” is easy; but to pray with the publican, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,” is the hardest prayer in the world. It is easy to say, “I believe in Christ.” But to see Christ full of grace and truth, “of whose fulness thou mayest receive grace for grace”; that is saving. It is easy to profess Christ with the mouth. But to confess Him with the heart as Peter did, “to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” the alone Mediator, that is above flesh and blood. Many call Christ Saviour; few know Him to be so. To see grace and salvation in Christ is the greatest sight in the world. Men may be ashamed to think, in the midst of so much profusion, they have known so little of the blood of Christ, which is the main thing of the gospel. A Christless, formal profession, is the blackest sight next to hell. Thou mayest have many good things; and yet one thing may be wanting, that may make thee go away sorrowful from Christ. Thou hast never sold all that thou hast, never parted with all thine own righteousness. Thou mayest be high in duty, and yet a perfect enemy and adversary to Christ in every prayer, in every ordinance.

Labour after sanctification to thy utmost; but make not a Christ of it to save thee. If so, it must come down one way or other. Christ’s obedience and sufferings, not thy sanctification, must be thy justification before God. For if the Lord should appear terrible out of His holy place, fire would consume it as hay and stubble. This is religion: to build all upon the everlasting mountains of God’s love and grace in Christ; to look continually at Christ’s infinite righteousness and merits; to see the full guilt and defilement of sin pardoned and washed away, knowing thy polluted self, and all thy weak performances, accepted continually; in these views to trample upon all self-righteousness, and be found continually in the righteousness of Christ, only that Christ alone, as Mediator, may be exalted in His throne, mourning over all thy duties which thou hast not performed in the sight and sense of Christ’s love. Without the blood of Christ on the conscience, all is dead service.

Search the Scriptures daily, as mines of gold, wherein the heart of Christ is laid. Watch against constitutional sins, see them in their vileness, and they shall never break

out into act. Keep always a humble, empty, broken frame of heart, sensible of any spiritual miscarriage, observant of all inward workings, fit for the highest communications. Keep not guilt in the conscience, but apply the blood of Christ immediately. God chargeth sin and guilt upon thee, to make thee look to Christ, the brazen serpent.

Judge not Christ's love by providences, but by promises. Bless God for shaking off false foundations: and for any way whereby He keeps the soul awakened and looking after Christ. Better is sickness and temptation, than security and slightness. A slighting spirit will turn a profane spirit, and will sin and pray too. Slightness is the bane of profession. If it be not rooted out of the heart by constant and serious dealings with, and beholdings of, Christ in duties, it will grow more strong and more deadly by being under ordinances. Measure not thy graces by others' attainments, but by the Scripture. Be serious and exact in duty, having the weight of it upon thy heart; but be as much afraid of taking comfort from duties as from sins. Comfort from any hand but Christ's is deadly. Be much in prayer, or you will never keep up much communion with God. As you are in closet-prayer, so you will be in all other ordinances.

Remember Christ's time of love, when thou wast naked (Ezekiel 16:8) – then He chose thee. Remember thy sins, Christ's pardonings; thy deserts, Christ's merits; thy weakness, Christ's strength; thy pride, Christ's humility; thy many infirmities, Christ's restorings; thy guilt, Christ's new applications of His blood; thy failings, Christ's assistance; thy wants, Christ's fulness; thy temptations, Christ's tenderness; thy vileness, Christ's righteousness.

Blessed soul! whom Christ shall find, not having on his own righteousness, but having his robes washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

[September 1923]

A Sermon

By the REV. M. MORRISON, Lochinver.

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns so is my love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" – Song of Solomon 2:1-3.

There is such a wonderful connection between these three verses that we cannot very well take one verse singly, without marring the relation which subsists between the parties, speaking in them. The figures made use of are significant. The realm of nature is a wide field of rich and beautiful variety, whence the Holy Spirit is pleased to borrow appropriate metaphors to set forth truths of deep spiritual meaning. Of such a character is the figurative language here employed; and may the Holy Spirit help us to understand, and speak upon these words.

It will be noticed that the person speaking in the first and second verses is the Lord Jesus the Saviour of Sinners. In the first, He speaks and describes Himself under the

figure of a rose and a lily. In the second verse He gives a description of His Spouse, the Church, by comparing her to a lily among thorns. His loved one among the daughters is as the lily among thorns. In the third verse, we have the Church, which Christ loved and gave Himself for, commending with all her might the Lord Jesus as her beloved, by resembling Him to an apple tree among the trees of the wood; and, further, adding her solemn confession of faith working by great love and great delight in the shelter and refuge afforded by His merit and righteousness, and in the fruit and nourishment yielded by His death and resurrection.

Let me endeavour for the present to say something on Christ as “the rose of Sharon.” There is a striking similarity between some of the expressions of the Old Testament and the New, in which the character of the Redeemer and the relation He sustained to His people are set forth. In the Gospel of John, for instance, He says: – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman,” and the mutual relation between Him and His people is declared by the relation subsisting between “the branches and the vine.” We discover the like beautiful idea in these words of the Song. When He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and commissioned him to go to deliver the children of Israel it was by the name of “Jehovah,” the “I am that I am” He revealed Himself. And while He reveals Himself here as the same “I am,” the same unchangeable, self-existent Being, He is pleased to predicate of Himself by the figure, “the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valleys,” something which at once suggests to us His marvellous condescension in coming to be a Saviour and Redeemer to sinful men.

1. “I am the rose of Sharon.” This rose would appear to excel all other roses in nature and qualities. It was particularly noted for its natural beauty and glory; its sweet-scented perfume and fragrance; its attractive appearance; its rich and luxurious growth; the consoling and beneficial uses to which it was put; the desire it excited in one’s mind to have it in possession; and, finally, its free and easy accessibility. The word “Sharon” means in Greek, open spaces, as fields, etc., which are common to all. “The rose of Sharon,” therefore, is the rose of the fields. The fields of Palestine were fruitful in roses. This rose was not confined to gardens, as if it were the property of a few; it grew by nature without the toil of human hands; it was the work of God. What a combination of qualities is in the rose of the field!

The Lord Jesus possessed a beauty and glory which was natural to Him as the eternal Son. The glory which is essential to Him as a divine person is a glory that cannot be known by angels or men. But He was pleased to give glimpses of His glory unto men, in stooping so low as to take our nature unto Himself and in what He did in that nature. He is elsewhere described as “the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His Person.” If the rose is regarded as an emblem of glory or majesty, how much of glorious majesty shone forth in this stupendous stoop of the Eternal Son? That glory which He had with the Father was by His incarnation veiled to human eyes, so that when He appeared in the form of Man He was regarded by Jew and Gentile alike as no higher than a mere creature. Christ Himself was fully conscious that by humbling Himself there was no diminishing of His natural and essential glory and majesty, but a veiling of it; the glory of His deity was hid from human sight by the covering over it of a true body and a reasonable soul. Just like the sun, when it is hid from our gaze by gathering and overcast clouds, but there is not on that account the least diminishing of its essential light and natural glory. The Lord Jesus as the “Rose of Sharon” at the marriage in Cana turned the water into wine, and “this beginning of miracles did Jesus . . . and manifested forth his glory.” Every miracle He wrought afterwards was an emanation of His divine glory, calculated to overawe the spirit of men and to make them whole-heartedly accede to His claims as the eternal Son and the Messiah that they expected. The words of His mouth,

His dealings with people of varied conditions and character, were likewise reflecting heavenly glory. And what a lovely and glorious “rose” He was in His death. The rose combines deep-crimsoned hue and soft, lovely whiteness. This was true of Christ our blessed “rose of Sharon.” He combined in Himself the guilt of His people’s sin and perfect personal innocence, the curse of the law and infinite heavenly blessedness. He bore the wrath of God as the righteous Judge, while He was His beloved Son. He took the likeness of man while He was in the form of God. He became the servant of sinful men, while He was Lord of all. He, as man had nowhere to lay His head, and was nevertheless the High and the Lofty One inhabiting eternity. He tasted death in soul and body, and yet as God neither suffering nor death could have any power over Him. He shed His blood in the amazing agony of Gethsemane and upon the accursed tree, and yet it was as the eternal Son He offered the sacrifice. Therefore it is called elsewhere in the Word the blood of God (Acts 20:28).

Consider the sweet-scented fragrance arising from the “rose of Sharon” to heaven. In all the steps of His humiliation this sweet perfume was felt by His Father and by His angels in heaven. He was well pleased with His beloved Son in all He said and did. His Father bore testimony to His pleasure in Him when He was baptised by John on the banks of Jordan, and the Holy Spirit alighted on Him in the form of a dove – “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.” Christ’s obedience to the holy law of God in our room; His zeal for the honour of the Deity; His hatred of sin and whatsoever was contrary to His holy nature exhaled a sweet odour which reached the very heavens. He spoke as never man spoke, and His words were full of heavenly grace, which was felt by many that heard Him. The wonderful graces He exhibited had this heavenly perfume – His patience under suffering, His meekness in the presence of accusers, His lowliness of mind in all His exercises, His pity towards the miserable, His love for righteousness as well as for penitent sinners. It is, however, as we approach Gethsemane and as we come to behold Him dying on the cross when He offers Himself a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour to God that we have an illustration of the significance of the sweet-scented “rose of Sharon.” This sweet savour filled the throne of God, and filled the Church to which His Name is as ointment poured forth. It is so felt in the experience of every one who believes in the Lord Jesus. The sweet odour they inhaled from this sacrifice delighted and rejoiced all their spiritual senses.

2. We come now to consider the attractive appearance of the “rose of the field.” It drew one’s eye towards it; and so a person was sweetly and delightfully compelled when in sight of the rose to yield attention. To blind people the rose of Sharon is nothing. They see no more beauty in it than in the thorn bush, because they are not able to make any distinction for the want of sight. Christ Jesus was and is to the unregenerate world as a rose is to a blind man. Isaiah tells us that “He shall grow up before him as a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.” But those whose eyes are opened like the man who said – “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see,” see somewhat of the beauty and glory of Christ. They beheld in some measure “His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Their minds are enlightened in the knowledge of Christ as the “rose of Sharon.” They behold Him as suitable to their case as sinners, as all-sufficient to pay all their debt and meet all divine claims in their room. They were drawn sweetly by the cords of love and by the hands of a man. And “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” The eye of faith looks wistfully towards this “rose of Sharon” for pardon for the sinner through His blood, for acceptance of his person and duties, for the grace of sanctification, for the supply of all his wants for time and eternity.

3. We come now to consider the rich and luxurious growth of the “rose of Sharon.” The whole world, the heathen nations, are a howling wilderness and a desolate waste. There was nothing to be seen but thorns, thistles, and briars. But when the gospel came to them and the Holy Spirit breathed on them, the thorns and the thistles were uprooted and the “rose of Sharon” was planted among them until they were made in some measure “to rejoice and blossom as the rose.” The religion of Christ spread mightily in the first centuries, and it has prevailed powerfully and effectually ever since, and shall continue to do so until the whole earth, as is predicted in the Seventy-second Psalm, will be filled with His glory. Thus John’s words are fulfilled – “He must increase, but I must decrease.”

4. Then there is the consoling and beneficial uses to which the “rose” is put. There is a healing and mollifying virtue in the sap of the rose. So the Lord Jesus healed every manner of physical and spiritual disease. He quickens the dead, He gives life, He fills the soul with His grace, He gives happiness and contentment. There is a balm in Gilead and there is a physician there, He heals all the spiritual distempers and disorders under which poor sinners labour; He melts the heart and sheds His love abroad in it; He dispels the darkness of the mind, and removes hardness of heart; He makes sinners smart under a sense of their sins in order to their spiritual recovery; He renews and enlarges them inwardly, so that the spices thereof may flow out. He cheers their hope and strengthens their faith.

5. Further, the fragrance and the beauty of the “rose of Sharon” awakens a desire to have it in one’s possession. Thus Christ is said to be “the desire of all nations.” When a soul gets a saving view of the “rose of Sharon,” it excites a great desire to have this “rose” for himself, in order to satisfy him within and to adorn him without. “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

But, lastly, there is free and easy access to Christ as to the “rose of the field.” There are no intermediaries between us and Him. Whatever there was of this in ancient times, under the Gospel dispensation we have boldness to come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy. There is none excluded, all are alike welcome to come. Christ is freely offered in the Gospel to all who hear it. No matter how great a sinner you are, and it is as such you must come to Christ, you have every warrant to take Him as your personal Saviour. He is for all who will have Him on His own free and gracious terms.

[October 1923]

The Lily of the Valleys.

By REV. M. MORRISON, Lochinver,

As the “rose of Sharon” is an emblem of glory and majesty, so the “lily” is an emblem of love. The “lily” is pure white in colour, and is as renowned as the “rose” itself. This represents the spotless purity, the perfect holiness of the Saviour’s nature, and the righteousness of His conduct. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. This “lily” grew in the valley, and is an appropriate figure to set forth the humiliation of the Son of God in our nature, His acquaintance with grief and sorrow, His taking our law-place and bearing the awful penalty due to our sins. He who was in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant.

But taking it as an emblem of love, we notice that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. The love wherewith He loved them is an eternal love. It is one of the moral attributes of His Deity. It is said that God is love. When we read in the Word of one, or of more than one, divine perfection, such as His power or His power and wisdom, we may say that it is God Himself in these attributes. So that when it is said, “God is love,” it is God Himself in this attribute of His Being. He loved Himself, His own Being, His own perfections, and it is the same love wherewith He loved Himself that He loves sinners. Thus Christ says – “For thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” And as it is an eternal love, it is an unchangeable love. It is not like the affection of the creature, which cannot be relied on because of its varying and changeable character. God’s love cannot change inasmuch as He

Himself is unchangeable, and whatever happens, even with regard to the objects of His love, His electing and saving love cannot and will not change toward them. It is said – “Having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” And as Christ’s love is unchangeable, so it passeth all understanding. The understanding of angels, of men, cannot comprehend it. It will not fail of its objects. However deep His people are by nature in sin and enmity, the love will triumph and draw them to Himself.

The objects He loved deserved, instead of being loved, condemnation and wrath. They hated Him without a cause. There was such enmity in the heart, rebellion in the will, guilt on the conscience, ignorance in the understanding, and depravity in the affections of every one of them that it is a marvel of marvels that the Persons of the Trinity ever loved them. Love in the creature is excited and attracted by qualities and conditions it discovers in its object, but all that is in those whom Christ loved is sin, pollution, hatred to good, love to all manner of evil; they were all debtors to His law and prisoners to His justice and slaves to Satan. He loved them as they were fallen in Adam, not as righteous, for there is none such. He loved their persons, not their sins, which He could not otherwise than hate.

Christ commends the Church, or the individual believer under the figure of a lily among thorns. The young bride exchanges her maiden name for that of the bridegroom. She is henceforth known by his name. So it is with the Church of the first-born written in heaven. While Christ the bridegroom says of Himself that He is the “lily,” He says of her that she is as the lily among thorns. In this comparison you will notice her state and standing before Him. In the day when the Holy Spirit visited her to apply to her for the first time the fruits of Christ’s purchase, He found her dead in trespasses and sin, very dark and black in respect both to her state and nature. He revealed her state to her, and she became alarmed, and her relief came when He pardoned her sins through His blood, bringing her out of her condemned state, and accepting of her as righteous by the imputed righteousness of the “lily of the valleys.” Thus they are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ, and there is no spot upon their justified state – they are as the “lily.” But as sure as there is a relative change of their state before God whereby they are compared to the “lily,” so there is an inward change of their nature. The seed of God, the word of truth wherein Christ as a quickening spirit is conveyed into their hearts by the Holy Ghost and is formed in them as the hope of glory, brings about this sudden change in their souls, and it is otherwise spoken of as being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, of the Word of God that liveth and abideth for ever. There is a principle of heavenly light infused into their minds, whereby they behold His glory and His suitableness, and a principle of righteousness implanted in their wills, and a principle of holiness impressed on their hearts, a habit of gracious tenderness put into their conscience, and their memory strengthened to take delight in and retain the law of the Lord as never before. Thus God’s image they had lost in the fall is restored in some measure. Therefore, the true believer is compared to a lily, but it is to a lily among thorns.

The grace of God thus planted in the soul is like a lily among thorns. There is so much of sinful-self and self-righteousness yet to be subdued. The wilderness has yet to be run its course. Ah! what discovery the Lord is pleased to give to His people of their abounding heart-sinfulness and corruption. They seem betimes to be amazed at what they find in themselves of provoking lusts and evil thoughts of every description. Satan casts thoughts of atheism, of blasphemy through their minds, and taunting them afterwards that to have such thoughts is not consistent with a state of grace. Unbelief rears its head, casting doubt upon all God’s word and work with reference to the soul. Evil passions begin to assail the new-born child of God, and between darkness of mind and hardness of heart, abatement of his first love and zeal, the grace of God in his soul is like a lily among thorns.

Further, the believer in the world is like a lily among thorns. The world derides and mocks and does all in its power to inflict trouble upon these lilies. The thorn pierces and pricks the “lily.” It is of an opposite nature to the lily, and cannot bear it. Thus the world and self-righteous professors who know nothing of the nature of the lily, persecute the Church of God, look upon them as the off-scouring of all things. Ishmael persecuted Isaac and Esau, Jacob. They possess different natures and characters, just like the lily and the thorn. Many a sting the tender and gracious soul receives while he is in the world. Satan harasses and tempts and hurls his fiery darts upon him. The conduct of God’s people under these trials and temptations must also resemble the lily, for the more it is pierced and stung by the thorns the more it exhales its fragrance, and makes it felt all round. This should be the way with you who tasted that the Lord is gracious. All your trials, temptations, the workings of the flesh, the cold hatred and persecutions of the world should make you look more to the Lord Jesus, and let the sweet incense of your broken heart and contrite spirit ascend to His throne. It will be like the precious box of ointment which the woman in the gospel broke and poured upon Christ’s head and filled the house with sweet odour. So when our prayers, our groanings, and our spiritual complaints are uttered and offered to Him, they are like the sweet perfume of the lily when stung with thorns, which is pleasing and delightful to Christ, as the Head of the Church, and is also sweetly felt by the members of the household of faith.

[November 1923]

Moses’ Choice.

A Sermon.

By the REV. R. MACKENZIE, M.A., Gairloch.

“By faith Moses, when he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” – Hebrews 11:24-26.

The Apostle Paul has devoted this remarkable chapter to a consideration of the general subject of faith.

He starts off with a kind of formal definition, which you will find in verse 1. I shall not take up time by way of examining this definition in detail. Merely let me remark, in the first place, that, according to it, the subject-matter of faith is something lying beyond the reach of the senses, “things hoped for” and “things not seen.” Faith penetrates beyond the sphere of physical experience; leads where reason fails; and ushers us into the presence of great spiritual realities to which the senses can never attain. It opens up to the mind’s eye a glorious vista which hitherto remained unexplored and unknown, and extends the interests to a new world whose boundaries coincide with those of eternity.

And notice, in the second place, how faith acts. It is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” In other words, it gives to that which otherwise

cannot be experienced here on earth a substantial objective reality which enables the mind to apprehend it, and so illumines its existence that the evidence of it becomes assured. To the true believer, in the lively exercise of faith, nothing is more real and nothing more confirmed than that which he knows only by faith. Indeed, the unseen, the spiritual, the eternal is more truly the world he moves in and communes with than that upon which his bodily eyes open, and to which his physical experience extends. And again, "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Alas, that all have not this gift of faith, for gift it is! Oh, what glorious and soul absorbing discoveries it would bring us! You can scarcely imagine with what feelings of delightful bewilderment the good man of old, who had been born blind and whose eyes had been opened, looked for the first time upon the glories of the physical universe, of the ornate, beauty-clad earth, and of the sun-lit and star-spangled heavens. Yet such a discovery, the thought of which so out-reaches conceptual resource, cannot for a moment compare with a faith's experience of the spiritual world, of the new heavens and the new earth in which dwells righteousness, and where glory shines for evermore.

Having thus indicated the scope of his thesis, the Apostle occupies the remaining part of the chapter with a number of concrete instances derived from Old Testament history, in which faith appears to outstanding advantage as tried and triumphant. One of these instances comes under our notice in the words of our text, namely, the case of Moses, for "by faith Moses, when he had come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, etc. . . . for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." You have here indicated, first of all, the appeal that had been made to the natural and carnal element in Moses. There had been presented to him a principedom with all its attendant honours, riches inestimable, opportunity to indulge in almost any kind of sin that he fancied, and the enjoyment of the particular kind of pleasure in connection therewith that would prove most congenial to, and that would the more thoroughly gratify, his sensuous nature. One would think, on the face of it, that such an appeal was overwhelming, particularly when one remembers that the "old man" in Moses was simply hungering and thirsting for just such fare as had been offered, and that the devil was doubtlessly using every ounce of energy and every method of hellish craft to influence him in the direction of accepting it, promising him every happiness he could desire if he would but give way to present-world and sinful tendencies, and yield himself to the allurements of sense gratification. Yet Moses, we gather, chose it not. As against all that the world could offer, and all that perverted nature desired, and as against every subtle argument that the devil could advance, faith in Moses placed "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and the odds herein presented decided Moses. Having his eyes opened upon the facts of the eternal world, the deception underlying the fascinations of this became apparent, so that the most tempting bait could no longer seduce him. Sense was thwarted, and faith triumphed. And the triumph of faith blessed Moses. This becomes abundantly evident when we read the account of his subsequent life, of the vicissitudes and responsibilities of it, and on the other hand of the success which attended it and the glory in which it issued. Who, reading the biography, can but admire the personality and applaud the achievements of Moses, the man of God? And we recognise that, in all their greatness and fulness and worth, they have their inception at the very point under observation where Moses chose to renounce the world, to forfeit the best it could offer him, and to cast in his lot with the despised and persecuted people of God. "for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

With these few prefatory remarks we proceed to a fuller consideration of what the choice of Moses involved, and of how it lives for ever as an example which those who would do well should follow. In dependence upon the guidance, and with a view to the blessing of the Holy Spirit, therefore, I shall call attention to these four things in particular: –

- I. Moses' faith;
- II. Moses' self-denial;
- III. Moses' choice;
- IV. The recompense of the reward.

I. Moses faith.

I have already, in introducing the subject, dwelt upon the general aspect of faith as it is presented in the definition of verse 1, and as it concerns things, unseen to the natural eye, but which the true believer perceives and to which his hope extends. It remains for me now to direct your minds to a particular aspect which represents faith as related to a Person unseen, whose existence and some, at least, of whose attributes the believer apprehends and upon whom his hope is fixed. In the case of Moses, this particular aspect of his faith seems to be clearly enough indicated in the words of verse 27 – “For he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.”

Before proceeding, however, let me address a word of warning. We are here dealing with faith in the Scriptural sense, namely, as the gift of God, and of the operation of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, many have “erred, not knowing the Scriptures,” and have debased the idea of saving faith to that of a mere natural instinct or of a mere act of human intelligence. Than this view of faith, none could be more dishonouring to God, none more subversive of the principles of vital religion, and none better calculated to put sinners astray for eternity. Let us, then, immediately dispossess our minds of such a notion, and let us wait upon God to initiate us into the mystery of saving faith by the effectual working in us of the Holy Spirit. That which God wrought in Moses, He can accomplish in us also, nay, He will accomplish, if we prayerfully apply to Him and diligently employ the means He appointed to this end, as it is written, “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Now, to return to our subject, it is evident from the whole context that the faith of Moses was of a kind with that which the Apostle inculcates in all his writings. In a word, it was faith in God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, “whom” says the Apostle Peter, “having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” I do not deem it necessary to take up time by way of showing that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the saints of the Old Testament as of the New. Merely let me suite the fact in evidence of the wonderful efficacy of the Atonement. The cross of Christ is the centre upon which the destinies of His world-church turns. So is it the point upon which the faith of all believers converges, that of the former ages from one direction in prospect, and that of latter times from another direction in retrospect. Here all the lines of spiritual vision, separated at their outset by the breadth of continents and by the interval of ages, meet in focus; here, in spirit, as in person upon the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias, Peter, James, and John, come together to view the person, to contemplate the work, and to adore the glory of the Saviour. The redeeming and saving efficacy of Christ's atonement transcends time, as does the person and activities of the Holy Spirit who applies it. And, therefore, as Abraham desired to see Christ's day, he saw it and rejoiced; and, therefore, also, did Moses see “Him who is invisible,” and seeing, believed in Him to the saving of his soul.

We sometimes distinguish between the initial act of faith and its subsequent progressive exercise in the soul. There must have been a time in Moses' life, as, generally speaking, there is in the life of every believer, when, sensibly, he first appreciated and first appropriated the salvation of God as wrought out by Christ, and as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the promise – a time when, as a lost sinner, and, as the ninetieth Psalm suggests, terrified by the wrath of God on account of his “iniquities” and “secret sins,” he appealed to God's mercy and fled to the institution of it in the Gospel. This faith in act was but the manifestation of spiritual life. And the spiritual life which thus directed him to Christ to be reconciled to God through Him, and to breathe in the free atmosphere of His atonement, that same spiritual life was responsible for the habit of faith to which thenceforward he was given over, and which is indicated in the words, “He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” Moses' after-life was one of great stress, of manifold temptations, of hardships and responsibilities and trials such as have seldom fallen to the lot of one man. Yet he endured, he persevered, not perfectly, perhaps, but in a manner never the less creditable to the work of grace wrought in him in conflict with the powers of a corrupt nature and of a tempting devil. Being once and for all vitally united by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ in all the consummate fulness of His saving resources, he was accustomed ever afterwards to draw by faith out of His fulness grace for grace. Here is the secret of his success, the spring of his power, and the glory of his example. After all, Moses was nothing and had nothing beyond his fellows but by the grace of God, and He who made him what he was and gave him what he had says to us, “Ask, and it shall be given you.”

II. Moses' self-denial.

The believer's life in this world is, under one aspect, a life of self-denial throughout. “Whosoever will come after me,” says Christ, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” Our forsaking all must precede the entrance upon our spiritual inheritance. We must be completely weaned from the enjoyment of the present corrupt order of things, or otherwise we shall never taste of the fruit of the heavenly Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey. This fact, just as though Christ had spoken to him the very words quoted above, must have been clearly before the mind of Moses when he reckoned and acted as he did. At any rate, he denied himself, took up his cross, not an inconsiderable one, too, and followed Christ, His cause, and people. My friends, if we are to be blessed with Moses, if we are not to perish with his Egyptian associates of former days, we must do likewise.

There are several particulars mentioned in the passage before us in which the self-denial of Moses is evidenced.

Firstly, he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.” The way to the crown of Egypt had been laid open to him, but he declined to embrace it.

Secondly, the “treasures of Egypt” were placed at his disposal, for had he consented to become Pharaoh's heir, he would in time have succeeded to the wealth as well as to the throne of Egypt. Nor were these treasures inconsiderable. Egypt was at this time in a flourishing condition, the envy of the nations. But he spurned it all. Greater to him were the riches of Christian poverty, greater the honour of Christ's reproach.

It may not be, my friends, that a crown or coronet forms the particular bait with which the adversary seeks to captivate you. It may not be that he will offer you wealth corresponding to the “treasures of Egypt.” He knows full well that less than all these may suffice to serve his turn and your ruin. You may be tempted with only a modicum, comparatively speaking, of worldly honour, a mere pittance of worldly wealth, but, unless

like Moses, you learn to weigh against these the spiritual odds involved, you will probably barter your soul for even that.

The particulars that correspond more nearly to those with which the majority of us are conversant are included in the words, "the pleasures of sin." The devil knew that there was something fascinating in sin that would be sure to exert a powerful attractive influence on Moses in common with all others of the fallen race of Adam. And in his ranging before him the glories of the kingdoms of the world, he took care to give due prominence to this. I think this is a favourite method of Satan. Touching the tenderest part of the perverse natural constitution, he excites it with inordinate emotions, over against which he presents ample prospects of gratifying them. Searching out our special weaknesses, he provides occasions to bring them into play, knowing how lust is always ready to burn, he collects fuel for it, aware of how we incline to evil continually, he busies himself in catering to this inclination. Is it not the case that this is a preponderating influence in the course that your nature prefers and that the world offers you? Is not that the path of least resistance which leads you to forget God, and to take pleasure in sin? For one to forsake sin and to live opposite to the bias of his nature, is self-denial; self-denial, to say "No" to the tempter and to flee the lust. So says the Apostle – "Resist the devil," and again, "Flee youthful lusts." I know I am talking to some here to-day who, whether they appreciate the prominence I give to this point or the emphasis I lay upon it, are at least able to identify it. To such I would say, You must learn to deny yourself, to mortify every sinful tendency, and to avoid every sinful occasion, or you will surely fall into the snare of the devil, and there is nothing will help you in so doing but that grace of God, which, by faith wrought in his soul, enabled Moses to choose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season."

One more consideration and I pass on to the next general head. It is not said that Moses denied himself merely the indulgence of sin, but the pleasures of sin, which are for a season. For the most part, the pleasures that worldlings indulge in are the pleasures of sin. We do hear, of a truth, about innocent and desirable pleasures. All I shall say about these is that whatever they be, we as fallen creatures, apart from the sanctifying influence of grace, will find little in them to attract us. Blessed be God, there are such, and more such than the world dreams of, else it would not confine itself to those hollow, sensational pleasures which it so assiduously pursues. As for the latter, such, for example, as the pleasures of the ballroom, the theatre, the card-table, the drinking-cup, the gambling-board, the horse race, the football match, and those others too grossly impure to even mention by name, they are but the baits of the devil to seduce, to prostitute, and to ruin. Those who desire to indulge in them, and, if anything, lack only the occasion, the means, or the courage, are the dupes of Satan, led captive by him at his will. My dear young friends, be sure that Satan will tempt you sore with the pleasures of sin, if indeed he has not already done so. He will tickle your palate and represent to you the sweetness of the fruit which God has forbidden you to eat, and which, however sweet in the mouth, carries death within. Be warned, be on your guard. Be suspicious of every form of pleasure that affects you agreeably, while it helps you to forget that you have a soul, that there is a God, and that you are on your way to His Judgment-seat. Like Moses, deny yourself such pleasure, however your deceitful heart may yearn after it. Seek to stamp out the smouldering lust that only needs the oil of sinful indulgence to set it ablaze. After all, pleasure in the worldly sense is but a successful illusion. At the best it is short-lived, lasting only "for a season" and giving place to multiple sorrows. Take, for example, the case of the drunkard. He thinks nothing in the world is more pleasurable than the foaming cup while he looks upon it and again while its alcoholism is stultifying his brain. But after his bout, when he has cooled down and begins to recollect himself, his sense of pleasure

has vanished, and in its place a feeling of guilt, of misery, and of physical degeneracy pains him all over. Nor is that all. He finds himself wedded to his vice, more closely after every successive indulgence, and, unless grace intervene, is doomed to fill a drunkard's grave and to suffer a drunkard's hell. "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long a the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder." As with this, so with all forms of sinful pleasure. Below a gilding of sensational pleasantness, there is the crude material of unalloyed woe. Behind the moment of passionate enjoyment, there is an eternity of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Wise man Moses to have preferred to do without both. Oh, my friends, one and all, let me commend to you his example! Flee from the pleasures of sin, of godlessness, of the present evil world as you would from poison. Sell not your birthright for a mess of pottage, for, believe me, if you do, you shall rue it where you shall find no place of repentance though you seek it earnestly with the tears of ages.

III. Moses' choice.

Under the preceding head, we have in effect stated what Moses did not choose. Here we are concerned with what he did choose. If we follow it closely, we shall find that the antithesis between the two is very strongly marked. The choice lay, not between things in themselves equal or, similar – that is to say, not between the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of God's people, or between the glory and wealth of Pharaoh's kingdom and the glory and wealth of Christ's kingdom. On the contrary, the words of our text represent the minimum in one direction as against the maximum in the other – that least calculated to attract from the point of view of the Christian life, as against that most powerful to attract from the point of view of a worldly estate. And the effect is to impress us directly with the finality of Moses' choice. It was Christ and His people that Moses chose, and his preference for them was based upon such an estimate of them that, placed in the most disadvantageous circumstances, they outclassed in his mind everything and everybody besides. So dear to him was Christ, as the object of his faith and hope and love, that he accounted it greater gain to be reviled in association with Him than to be loaded with wealth and honour in association with the world – so dear, that he shrunk not from espousing His cause and from befriending His people at a time when his doing so was sure to bring himself anxiety and trouble.

The Church of Christ has its periods of sore adversity in this world. Nor is this out of keeping with the prestige of its glorious Head. His life in this world was one of tribulation, culminating in an ignominious death as the prevenient condition of a glorious resurrection, and in the course of it He foretold that in this world His people should have tribulation also, that they should drink of the cup of which He drank, and should be baptised with the baptism with which he was baptised. He bore a cross, so must they; He suffered for them, so must they suffer for Him; He braved their reproach, so must they brave His. Perhaps nothing within the compass of their outward relations is more truly characteristic of the followers of Christ in this world than their being thus conformed to the likeness of Him who "was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Certainly it provides a surer criterion, a clearer mark of grace within, when such is the trend of circumstances from without. Any worldling might well follow a miracle-working Jesus, and the voice of nature might well shout "Hosanna" in the ears of a triumphing Christ, but it required grace to watch for an hour with the "Man of Sorrows" in the gloom of Gethsemane, to espouse the cause of the divine Saviour upon whom the Roman world had frowned, and to take charge of His body after wicked men had done with it – of the pierced hands and feet, of

the bleeding, broken heart, and of the head which the “beloved people” had crowned with thorns, and marred with spittle. And no more then than when Moses made his choice and stood by the cross and the persecuted “little ones.” And no less now when irreligion is the fashion, and when, in the case of the vast majority, the world has eclipsed the glory of Christ and His cross.

“The reproach of Christ,” “the afflictions of His people” – these were in substance what Moses chose in preference to the power and pomp, to the treasures and pleasures of Egypt. Christ was then represented in the world by a mere handful of men and women within a maligned and persecuted community in the “house of bondage.” Their ancestry, their traditions had been forgotten by their cruel taskmasters, or at least passed over in the silence of contempt. The name of Joseph was now as little honoured as his bones, and as for the Lord God of Israel, who was He that He should be obeyed? The whole cause was but a mark for ridicule, and, an occasion for brutal oppression. Yet, in very truth, it was the cause of Christ, that same cause which originally emerged by the Word of God from the darkness which shrouded humanity when our first parents fell, and afterwards from the darkness which clothed heaven and earth when the Saviour bowed His head in death, to raise it again before daybreak on the third day; and it was in very truth that same cause which in its ascendancy shall yet fill heaven and earth with glory. By faith Moses recognised it as such. By faith he saw that aspect and phase of it which were then unseen but hoped for, which Pharaoh and his Egyptians, nay, which many of his Hebrew kinsmen could not see – he saw dignity behind its poverty, the honour of its relation to a risen and exalted Christ behind the ignominy of its cross. He believed the promise of God concerning Israel, both in its literal and in its spiritual sense, and, although denied the realisation of the former in full, yet, while the promise was still at a distance and Israel still wandering in the track of the mysterious presence, he gave to the world an abiding testimony to his faith in these oft-quoted words, “Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!”

My friends, the cause which Moses espoused still abides. It is represented still in the world, in Scotland, it may be in obscurity, in affliction, in comparative disrepute, but, we believe, nonetheless faithfully. There is still a reproached remnant gathered around the cross, seeking, in the midst of gross spiritual darkness and in view of mighty signs of judgment, more ominous even than those that afflicted the land of Egypt, to proclaim the name and glory and salvation of the great I AM to a frenzied world. And this being so, we, too, as we trace out the future of Moses’ example at a distance of thousands of years, have a present duty of a similar kind, a choice to make between similar alternatives. To us now, as to Hobab then, by virtue of that inspiration which makes his words reverberate broadcast with more than human authority across the intervening ages, Moses says – “We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.” This leads me on to consider in the last place –

IV. “The recompense of the reward.”

And having dwelt so long on the several other heads, I must content myself at present with merely touching upon this part of the subject.

The service of Christ, dear friends, is no empty service, as the enemy would represent it. True, it is essentially a devotional service, a labour of love, the life-expression of hearts bound with the weightiest obligations and free only to pulsate gratitude into every circumstance and relation and act. True, again, the followers of Christ, to whatever extent they may deny themselves, or exert or expose themselves in loyalty to truth and in pursuit of holiness, will always know themselves to be unprofitable servants, deserving neither recognition nor reward, and therefore claiming

none on the basis of their service. Nevertheless, it has pleased the Lord in infinite condescension to allocate a reward where it can never be merited, and to hold it aloft for the inducement and encouragement of His Church struggling in the world below, as though her winning through should qualify her for its attainment – a reward, which, as it is not conditioned, is consequently not proportioned, and not limited by the comparative value of her service – a “blood-bought, free reward”; – in a word, the reward of His service in whom the Church is complete, and on account of whom she is accepted of God. “Ye are they,” said Christ to His disciples, “which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.”

When we come to discuss what this reward is, we are at a loss, unless we can resort to the method of that faith of which we have been speaking, which looks at the unseen and apprehends the incomprehensible. Otherwise, it is unspeakable. “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him!” It pertains to heaven, that region of bliss which transcends the loftiest flight of human imagination. It is incorruptible, eternal, “a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” It is so considerable and weighty that the very greatest afflictions endured in prospect of it become light and momentary in comparison. It is withal such a happy consummation as will swallow up death in victory, will transmute shame to honour, sorrow to joy, will replace a cross by a crown, will exchange a humble, unnamed, unknown station in this sin-stricken, doomed world for an eminence second only to the throne of God and of the Lamb in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Such, then, in scant, feeble terms, is the destination of the life of faith, such “the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.” This Moses had in view when, by faith, he let fall all the glistening baubles of earth, and embraced the cross and its thorns. “He had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” Recompense! Why, he lost nothing but in respect of which he should be compensated a hundred-fold in this present age, and in the world to come have eternal life. It were more than sufficient compensation for all the discomfort and reproach involved to have fellowship with Christ in a consecrated sphere in the world, and the witness of a good conscience in the hour of extreme trial and weakness, but there was something infinitely more and surpassingly greater in Moses’ eye than even that. Heaven appeared to him as it did to Stephen when men stoned him and his eyes were uplifted in adoring resignation. The vision of the Right-Hand, the prospect of a place there – all, as it related itself to and centred upon the person and glory of the Redeemer, embracing likeness to Him, intimate association and communion with Him, participation in His life, a part and lot in His inheritance, in the joy of the Lord – all this weighed with him so that all else, of gain or of pain, fell short of significance. And when Satan ranged before him the glories of the kingdoms of the world, and when the world-whore displayed her blandishments and proffered her cup, it was all in vain. May it be our happy experience to be thus taught of God, thus enlightened, and thus enabled by faith to “choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. . . having respect unto the recompense of the reward.”

[December 1923 and January 1924]

The Infallibility of Scripture.

A Sermon by PASTOR C. H. SPURGEON.

“The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” – Isaiah 1:20.

What Isaiah said was, therefore, spoken by Jehovah. It was audibly the utterance of a man; but, really, it was the utterance of the Lord himself. The lips which delivered the words were those of Isaiah, but yet it was the very truth that “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” All Scripture, being inspired of the Spirit, is spoken by the mouth of God. However this sacred Book may be treated nowadays, it was not treated contemptuously, nor negligently, nor questioningly by the Lord Jesus Christ, our Master and Lord. It is noteworthy how He revered the written Word. The Spirit of God rested upon Him personally, without measure, and He could speak out of His own mind the revelation of God, and yet He continually quoted the law and the prophets, and the Psalms; and always He treated the sacred writings with intense reverence, strongly in contrast with the irreverence of “modern thought.” I am sure, brethren, we cannot be wrong in imitating the example of our divine Lord in our reverence for that Scripture, which cannot be broken. I say, if He, the anointed of the Spirit, and able to speak Himself as God’s mouth, yet quoted the sacred writings, and used the holy Book in His teachings, how much more should we, who have no spirit of prophecy resting upon us, and are not able to speak new revelations, come back to the law and to the testimony, and value every single word which “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken”? The like valuation of the Word of the Lord is seen in our Lord’s apostles; for they treated the ancient Scriptures as supreme in authority, and supported their statements with passages from Holy Writ. The utmost degree of deference and homage is paid to the Old Testament by the writers of the New. We never find an apostle raising a question about the degree of inspiration in this book or that. No disciple of Jesus questions the authority of the books of Moses, or of the prophets. If you want to cavil or suspect, you find no sympathy in the teaching of Jesus, or any one of His apostles. The New Testament writers sit reverently down before the Old Testament and receive God’s words as such, without any question whatever. You and I belong to a school which will

continue to do the same, let others adopt what behaviour they please. As for us and for our house, this priceless Book shall remain the standard of our faith and the ground of our hope so long as we live. Others may choose what gods they will, and follow what authorities they prefer; but, as for us, the glorious Jehovah is our God, and we believe concerning each doctrine of the entire Bible, that “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

I. Coming closely, then, to our text, “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” our first head shall be – This is our warrant for teaching the Scriptural truth. We preach because “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” It would not be worth our while to speak what Isaiah had spoken, if in it there was nothing more than Isaiah’s thought; neither should we care to meditate hour after hour upon the writings of Paul, if there was nothing more than Paul in them. We feel no imperative call to expound and to enforce what has been spoken by men; but, since “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” it is woe unto us if we preach not the Gospel! We come to you with, “Thus saith the Lord,” and we should have no justifiable motive for preaching our lives away, if we have not this message.

The true preacher, the man whom God has commissioned, delivers his message with awe and trembling, because “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” He bears the burden of the Lord and bows under it. Ours is no trifling theme, but one which moves our whole soul. They called George Fox a Quaker, because when he spoke he would quake exceedingly through the force of the truth which he so thoroughly apprehended. Perhaps, if you and I had a clearer sight and a closer grip of God’s Word, and felt more of its majesty, we should quake also. Martin Luther, who never feared the face of man, yet declared that when he stood up to preach he often felt his knees knock together under a sense of his great responsibility. Woe unto us if we dare to speak the Word of the Lord with less than our whole heart, and soul, and strength! Woe unto us if we handle the Word as if it were an occasion for display! If it were our own word, we might be studious of the graces of oratory; but if it be God’s Word, we cannot afford to think of ourselves: we are bound to speak it, “not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” If we reverence the Word, it will not occur to us that we can improve upon it by our own skill in language. Oh, it were far better to break stones on the road than to be a preacher, unless one had God’s Holy Spirit to sustain him; for our charge is solemn and our burden is heavy. The heart and soul of the man who speaks for God will know no ease, for he hears in his ears that warning admonition: “If the watchman warn them not they shall perish; but their blood will I require at the watchman’s hands.” If we were commissioned to repeat the language of a king, we should be bound to do it decorously lest the king suffer damage; but if we rehearse the revelation of God, a profound awe should take hold upon us, and a godly fear lest we mar the message of God in the telling of it. No work is so important or honourable as the proclamation of the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and for that very reason it is weighted with a responsibility so solemn that none may venture upon it lightly, nor proceed in it without an overwhelming sense of his need of great grace to perform his office aright. We live under intense pressure who preach a gospel of which we can assuredly say, “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” We live rather in eternity than in time: we speak to you as though we saw the great white throne and the divine Judge before whom we must give in our account, not only for what we say, but for how we say it.

Dear brethren, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken the truth of God, we therefore endeavour to preach it with absolute fidelity. We repeat the word as a child repeats his lesson. It is not ours to correct the divine revelation, but simply to echo it. I do

not take it to be my office to bring you new and original thoughts of my own; but rather to say, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." Believing that "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," it is my duty to repeat it to you as correctly as I can after having heard it and felt it in my own soul. It is not mine to amend or adapt the gospel. What! Shall we attempt to improve upon what God has revealed? The Infinitely Wise – is He to be corrected by creatures of a day? Is the infallible revelation of the infallible Jehovah to be shaped, moderated, and toned down to the fashions and fancies of the hour? God forgive us if we have ever altered His Word unwittingly; wittingly we have not done so, nor will we. His children sit at His feet, and receive of His words, and then they rise up in the power of His Spirit to publish far and near the Word which the Lord has given. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully," is the Lord's injunction to us. If we could abide with the Father, according to our measure, after the manner of the Lord Jesus, and then come forth from communion with Him to tell what He has taught us in His Word, we should be accepted of the Lord, as preachers, and accepted also of His living people far more than if we were to dive into the profound depths of science, or rise to the loftiest flights of rhetoric. What is the chaff to the wheat! What are man's discoveries to the teachings of the Lord! "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"; therefore, O man of God, add not to His words lest He add to thee the plagues which are written in His Book, and take not from them, lest He take thy name out of the Book of Life!

Again, dear friends, as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we speak the divine truth with courage and full assurance. Modesty is a virtue; but hesitancy when we are speaking for the Lord is a great fault. If an ambassador sent by a great king to represent his majesty at a foreign court, should forget his office and only think of himself, he might be so humble as to lower the dignity of his prince, so timid as to betray his country's honour. He is bound to remember not so much what he is in himself, but whom he represents; therefore, he must speak boldly and with the dignity which befits his office and the court he represents. It was the custom with certain Oriental despots to require ambassadors of foreign powers to lie in the dust before them. Some Europeans, for the sake of trade interests, submitted to the degrading ceremony; but when it was demanded of the representative of England, he scorned thus to lower his country. God forbid that he who speaks for God should dishonour the King of kings by a pliant subservience. We preach not the gospel by your leave; we do not ask tolerance, nor court applause. We preach Christ crucified, and we speak boldly as we ought to speak, because it is God's Word, and not our own. We are accused of dogmatism; but we are bound to dogmatise when we repeat that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. We cannot use "ifs" and "buts," for we are dealing with God's "shalls" and "wills." If He says it is so, it is so; and there is an end of it. Controversy ceases when Jehovah speaks.

Those who fling aside our Master's authority may very well reject our testimony; we are content they should do so. But, if we speak that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, those who hear His Word and refuse it, do so at their own peril. The wrong is done, not to the ambassador, but to the King; not to our mouth, but to the mouth of God, from whom the truth has proceeded.

We are urged to be charitable. We are charitable; but it is with our own money. We have no right to give away what is put into our trust and is not at our disposal. When we have to do with the truth of God we are stewards, and must deal with our Lord's exchequer, not on the lines of charity to human opinions, but by the rule of fidelity to the God of truth. We are bold to declare with full assurance that which the Lord reveals. That memorable word of the Lord to Jeremiah is needed by the servants of the Lord in these days: "Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I

command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.” When we speak for the Lord against error, we do not soften our tones; but we speak thunderbolts. When we come across false science, we do not lower our flag; we give place by subjection – no, not for an hour. One word of God is worth more than libraries of human lore. “It is written” is the great gun which silences all the batteries of man’s thought. They should speak courageously who speak in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel.

I will also add, under this head, that, because “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” therefore we feel bound to speak His Word with diligence, as often as ever we can, and with perseverance, as long as ever we live. Surely, it would be a blessed thing to die in the pulpit; spending one’s last breath in acting as the Lord’s mouth. Dumb Sabbaths are fierce trials to true preachers. Remember how John Newton, when he was quite unfit to preach, and even wandered a bit by reason of his infirmities and age, yet persisted in preaching; and when they dissuaded him, he answered with warmth, “What! Shall the old African blasphemer leave off preaching Jesus Christ while there is breath in his body?” So they helped the old man into the pulpit again, that he might once more speak of free grace and dying love. If we had common themes to speak about, we might leave the pulpit as a weary pleader quits the forum; but as “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” we feel His Word to be as fire in our bones, and we grow more weary with refraining than with testifying. O my brethren, the Word of the Lord is so precious that we must in the morning sow this blessed seed, and in the evening we must not withhold our hands. It is a living seed and the seed of life, and therefore we must diligently scatter it.

Brethren, if we get a right apprehension concerning gospel truth – that “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” – it will move us to tell it out with great ardour and zeal. We shall not drone the gospel to a slumbering handful. Many of you are not preachers, but you are teachers of the young, or in some other way you try to publish the Word of the Lord – do it, I pray you, with much fervour of Spirit. Enthusiasm should be conspicuous in every servant of the Lord. Let those who hear you know that you are all there; that you are not merely speaking from the lips outwardly; but that from the depths of your soul, your very heart is welling up with a good matter when you speak of things which you have made, touching the King. The everlasting gospel is worth preaching, even if one stood on a burning faggot and addressed the crowd from a pulpit of flames. The truths revealed in Scripture are worth living for and dying for. I count myself thrice happy to bear reproach for the sake of the old faith. It is an honour of which I feel myself to be unworthy; and yet most truly can I use the words –

“Shall I, to soothe th’ unholy throng,
Softener thy truths and smooth my tongue?
To gain earth’s gilded toys, or flee
The cross endured, my God, by thee?

“The love of Christ doth me constrain
To seek the wandering souls of men;
With cries, entreaties, tears, to save,
To snatch them from the fiery wave.

“My life, my blood I here present,
If for thy truth they may be spent:
Fulfil thy sovereign counsel, Lord!

Thy will be done, thy name adored!"

I cannot speak out my whole heart upon this theme which is so dear to me, but I would stir you all up to be instant in season and out of season in telling out the gospel message. Specially repeat such a word as this – “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” And this: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Tell it out boldly, tell it out in every place, tell it out to every creature, “For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” How can you keep back the heavenly news? “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” – shall not your mouth rejoice to repeat it? Whisper it in the ear of the sick; shout it in the corner of the streets; write it on your tablets; send it forth from the press; but everywhere let this be your great motive and warrant – you preach the gospel because “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Let nothing be silent that hath a voice when the Lord hath given the Word by His own dear Son.

“Waft, waft, ye winds his story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
it spreads from pole to pole.”

II. Let us now row in another direction for a moment or two. In the second place, “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” This is the claim of God’s Word upon your attention.

Every word which God has given us in this Book claims our attention, because of the infinite majesty of Him that spake it. I see before me a Parliament of kings and princes, sages and senators. I hear one after another of the gifted Chrysostoms pour forth eloquence like the “Golden-mouthed.” They speak, and they speak well. Suddenly, there is a solemn hush. What a stillness! Who is now to speak? They are silent, because the God the Lord is about to lift up his voice. Is it not right that they should be so? Doth He not say, “Keep silence before me, O islands”? What voice is like His voice? “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.” See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. O my hearer, let it not be said of you that you went through this life, God speaking to you in His Book, and you refusing to hear! It matters very little whether you listen to me or not; but it matters a very great deal whether you listen to God or not. It is He that made you; in His hands your breath is; and if He speaks, I implore you, open your ear, and be not rebellious. There is an infinite majesty about every line of Scripture, but especially about that part of Scripture in which the Lord reveals Himself and His glorious plan of saving grace, in the person of His dear Son Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ hath a great claim upon you. Hear what Jesus preaches from the tree. He says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live.”

God’s claim to be heard lies, also, in the condescension which has led Him to speak to us. It was something for God to have made the world and bid us look at the work of His hands. Creation is a picture book for children. But for God to speak in the language of mortal men is still more marvellous, if you come to think of it. I wonder that God spoke by the prophets; but I admire still more that He should have written down His Word in black and white, in unmistakable language, which can be translated into all tongues, so that we may all see and read for ourselves what God the Lord has spoken to us; and what, indeed, He continues to speak; for what He has spoken He still speaks to us, as freshly as if He spake it for the first time. O glorious Jehovah; dost thou speak to mortal man? Can there be any that neglect to hear Thee? If Thou art so full of loving

kindness and tenderness that thou wilt stoop out of heaven to converse with Thy sinful creatures, none but those who are more brutal than the ox and the ass will turn a deaf ear to Thee!

God's Word has a claim, then, upon your attention because of its majesty and its condescension; but yet, further, it should win your ear because of its intrinsic importance. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" – then it is no trifle. God never speaks vanity. No line of His writing treats of the frivolous themes of a day. That which may be forgotten in an hour is for mortal man, and not for the eternal God. When the Lord speaks, His speech is God-like, and its themes are worthy of one whose dwelling is infinity and eternity. God does not play with thee, man: wilt thou trifle with Him? Wilt thou treat Him as if He were altogether such a one as thyself? God is in earnest when He speaks to thee: wilt thou not in earnest listen? He speaks to thee of great things, which have to do with thy soul and its destiny. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life." Thy eternal existence, thy happiness or thy misery, hang on thy treatment of that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Concerning eternal realities He speaks to thee. I pray thee, be not so unwise as to turn away thine ear. Act not as if the Lord and His truth were nothing to you. Treat not the Word of the Lord as a secondary thing, which might wait thy leisure and receive attention when no other work was before thee: put all else aside, but hearken to thy God.

Depend upon it, if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," there is an urgent, pressing necessity. God breaks not silence to say that which might as well have remained unsaid. His voice indicates great urgency. To-day, if ye will hear His voice, hear it; for He demands immediate attention. God does not speak without abundant reason; and, O my hearer, if He speaks to thee by His Word, I beseech thee, believe that there must be overwhelming cause for it! I know what Satan says: he tells thee that thou canst do very well without listening to God's Word. I know what thy carnal heart whispers: it says, "Listen to the voice of business, and of pleasure; but listen not to God." But, oh! if the Holy Spirit shall teach thy reason to be reasonable, and put thy mind in mind of true wisdom, thou wilt acknowledge that the first thing thou hast to do is to heed thy Maker. Thou canst hear the voices of others another time; but thine ear must hear God first, since He is first, and that which He speaks must be of first importance. Without delay do thou make haste to keep His commandments. Without reserve answer to His call, and say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." When I stand in this pulpit to preach the Gospel, I never feel that I may calmly invite you to attend to a subject which is one among many, and may very properly be let alone for a time should your minds be already occupied. No; you may be dead before I again speak with you, and so I beg for immediate attention. I do not fear that I may be taking you off from other important business by entreating you to attend to that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken; for no business has any importance in it compared with this; this is the master theme of all. It is your soul, your own soul, your ever-existing soul, which is concerned, and it is your God that is speaking to you. Do hear him, I beseech you. I am not asking a favour of you when I request you to hear the Word of the Lord: it is a debt to your Maker which you are bound to pay. Yea, it is, moreover, kindness to your own self. Even from a selfish point of view, I urge you to hear what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, for in His Word lies salvation. Hearken diligently to what your Maker, your Saviour, your best Friend, has to say to you. "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation," but "incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Thus I have handled my text in two ways: it is warrant and motive for the preacher; it is a demand upon the attention of the hearer.

III. And now, thirdly, this gives to God's Word a very special character. When we open this sacred Book, and say of that which is here recorded, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," then it gives to the teaching a special character.

In the Word of God the teaching has unique dignity. This Book is inspired as no other book is inspired, and it is time that all Christians avowed this conviction. I do not know whether you have seen Mr Smiles' life of our late friend, George Moore; but in it we read that, at a certain dinner-party, a learned man remarked that it would not be easy to find a person of intelligence who believed in the inspiration of the Bible. In an instant George Moore's voice was heard across the table, saying boldly, "I do, for one." Nothing more was said. My dear friend had a strong way of speaking, as I well remember; for we have upon occasions vied with each other in shouting when we were together at his Cumberland home. I think I can hear his emphatic way of putting it – "I do, for one." Let us not be backward to take the old-fashioned and unpopular side, and say outright, "I do, for one." Where are we if our Bibles are gone? Where are we if we are taught to distrust them? If we are left in doubt as to which part is inspired and which is not, we are as badly off as if we had no Bible at all. I hold no theory of inspiration; I accept the inspiration of the Scriptures as a fact. Those who thus view the Scriptures need not be ashamed of their company; for some of the best and most learned of men have been of the same mind. Locke, the great philosopher, spent the last fourteen years of his life in the study of the Bible, and when asked what was the shortest way for a young gentleman to understand the Christian religion, he bade him read the Bible, remarking: "Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any admixture of error, for its matter." There are those on the side of God's Word whom you need not be ashamed of in the matter of intelligence and learning; and if it were not so, it should not discourage you when you remember that the Lord has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. We believe with the apostle that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." It is better to believe what comes out of God's mouth, and be called a fool, than to believe what comes out of the mouth of philosophers, and be, therefore, esteemed a wise man.

There is also about that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken an absolute certainty. What man has said is unsubstantial, even when true. It is like grasping fog, there is nothing in it. But with God's Word you have something to grip at, something to have, and to hold. This is substance and reality; but of human opinions we may say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Though heaven and earth should pass away, yet not one jot or tittle of what God has spoken shall fail. We know that, and feel at rest. God cannot be mistaken. God cannot lie. These are postulates which no one can dispute. If "The mouth of God hath spoken it," this is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail; and henceforth we question no more.

Again: if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," we have in this utterance the special character of immutable fixedness. Once spoken by God, not only is it so now, but it always must be so. The Lord of Hosts hath spoken, and who shall disannul it? The rock of God's Word does not shift, like the quicksand of modern scientific theology. One said to his minister, "My dear sir, surely you ought to adjust your beliefs to the progress of science." "Yes," said he, "but I have not had time to do it to-day; for I have not yet read the morning papers." One would have need to read the morning papers and take in every new edition to know whereabouts scientific theology now stands; for it is always chopping and changing. The only thing that is certain about the false science of this age is that it will be soon disproved. Theories, vaunted to-day, will be scouted to-morrow. The great scientists live by killing those who went before them. They know nothing for certain,

except that their predecessors were wrong. Even in one short life we have seen system after system – the mushrooms, or rather the toadstools, of thought – rise and perish. We cannot adapt our religious belief to that which is more changeful than the moon. Try it who will: as for me, if “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” it is truth for me in this year of grace 1888; and if I stand amongst you a grey headed old man somewhere in 1908, you will find me making no advance upon the divine ultimatum. If “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” we behold in His revelation a gospel which is without variableness, revealing “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever.” Brothers and sisters, we hope to be together for ever before the eternal throne, where bow the blazing Seraphim, and even then we shall not be ashamed to avow that same truth which this day we feed upon from the hand of our God.

“For he’s the Lord, supremely good,
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth, which always firmly stood,
To endless ages shall endure.”

Here let me add that there is something unique about God’s Word, because of the almighty power which attends it. “Where the word of a king is, there is power”; where the word of a God is, there is omnipotence. If we dealt more largely in God’s own Word, as “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” we should see far greater results from our preaching. It is God’s Word, not our comment on God’s Word, that saves souls. Souls are slain by the sword, not by the scabbard, nor by the tassels which adorn the hilt of it. If God’s Word be brought forward in its native simplicity, no one can stand against it. The adversaries of God must fail before the Word as chaff perishes in the fire. Oh, for wisdom to keep closer and closer to that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken!

I will say no more on this point, although the theme is a very large and tempting one; especially if I were to dwell upon the depth, the height, the adaptation, the insight, and the self-proving power of that which “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken.”

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, this makes God’s Word a ground of great alarm to many. Shall I read you the whole verse? “But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Every threatening that God hath spoken, because He hath spoken it, has a tremendous dread about it. Whether God threateneth a man or a nation, or the whole class of the ungodly, if they are wise they will feel a trembling take hold upon them, because “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” God has never yet spoken a threatening that has fallen to the ground. When he told Pharaoh what He would do, He did it; the plagues came thick and heavy upon him. When the Lord at any time sent His prophets to denounce judgments on the nations, He carried out those judgments. Ask travellers concerning Babylon, and Nineveh, and Edom, and Moab, and Bashan; and they will tell you of the heaps of ruins, which prove how the Lord carried out His warnings to the letter. One of the most awful things recorded in history is the siege of Jerusalem. You have read it, I do not doubt, in Josephus, or elsewhere. It makes one’s blood run cold to think of it. Yet it was all foretold by the prophets, and their prophecies were fulfilled to the bitter end. You talk about God as being “love,” and, if you mean by this that He is not severe in the punishment of sin, I ask you what you make of the destruction of Jerusalem. Remember that the Jews were His chosen nation, and that the city of Jerusalem was the place where His temple had been glorified with His presence. Brethren, if you roam from Edom to Zion, and from Zion to Sidon, and from Sidon to Moab, you will find, amid ruined cities, the tokens that God’s words of judgment are sure. Depend on it, then, that when Jesus says, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment,” it will be so. When he says, “If ye believe not that I am

he, ye shall die in your sins," it will be so. The Lord never plays at frightening men. His Word is not an exaggeration to scare men with imaginary bugbears. There is emphatic truth in what the Lord says. He has always carried out His threatenings to the letter, and to the moment; and, depend upon it, He will continue to do so, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

It is of no avail to sit down, and draw inferences, from the nature of God, and to argue, "God is love, and therefore He will not execute the sentence upon the impenitent." He knows what He will do better than you can infer; He has not left us to inferences, for He has spoken pointedly and plainly. He says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and it will be so, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Infer what you like from His nature; but if you draw an inference contrary to what He has spoken, you have inferred a lie, and you will find it so.

"Alas," says one, "I shudder at the severity of the divine sentence." Do you? It is well! I can heartily sympathise with you. What must he be that does not tremble when he sees the great Jehovah taking vengeance upon iniquity! The terrors of the Lord might well turn steel to wax. Let us remember that the gauge of truth is not our pleasure nor our terror. It is not my shuddering which can disprove what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. It may even be a proof of its truth. Did not all the prophets tremble at manifestations of God? Remember how one of them cried, "When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones." One of the last of the anointed seers fell at the Lord's feet as dead. Yet all the shrinking of their nature was not used by them as an argument for doubt.

O my unconverted and unbelieving hearers, do remember that if you refuse Christ, and rush upon the keen edge of Jehovah's sword, your unbelief of eternal judgment will not alter it, nor save you from it. I know why you do not believe in the terrible threatenings. It is because you want to be easy in your sins. A certain sceptical writer, when in prison, was visited by a Christian man, who wished him well, but he refused to hear a word about religion. Seeing a Bible in the hand of his visitor, he made this remark, "You do not expect me to believe in that book, do you? Why, if that book is true, I am lost for ever." Just so. Therein lies the reason for half the infidelity in the world, and all the infidelity in our congregations. How can you believe that which condemns you? Ah! my friends, if you would believe it to be true and act accordingly, you would also find in that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken a way of escape from the wrath to come; for the Book is far more full of hope than of dread. This inspired volume flows with the milk of mercy, and the honey of grace. It is not a Doomsday Book of wrath, but a Testament of grace. Yet, if you do not believe its loving warnings, nor regard its just sentences, they are true all the same. If you dare its thunders, if you trample on its promises, and even if you burn it in your rage, the holy Book still stands unaltered and unalterable; for "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Therefore, I pray you, treat the sacred Scriptures with respect, and remember that "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

V. And so I must finish, for time fails, when I notice, in the fifth place, that this makes the Word of the Lord the reason and rest of our faith. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," is the foundation of our confidence. There is forgiveness; for God has said it. Look, friend; you are saying, "I cannot believe that my sins can be washed away, I feel so unworthy." Yes, but "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," Believe over the head of your unworthiness. "Ah," says one, "I feel so weak I can neither think, nor pray, nor anything else, as I should." Is it not written, "When we were yet without strength, in

due time Christ died for the ungodly?" "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it;" therefore, over the head of your inability still believe it, for it must be so.

I think I hear some child of God saying, "God has said, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' but I am in great trouble; all the circumstances of my life seem to contradict the promise:" yet, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and the promise must stand. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Believe God in the teeth of circumstances. If you cannot see a way of escape or a means of help, yet still believe in the unseen God, and in the truth of His presence; "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." I think I have come to this pass with myself, at any rate for the time present, that when circumstances deny the promise, I believe it none the less. When friends forsake me, and foes belie me, and my own spirit goes down below zero, and I am depressed almost to despair, I am resolved to hang to the bare Word of the Lord, and prove it to be in itself an all-sufficient stay and support. I will believe God against all the devils in hell, God against Ahithophel, and Judas, and Demas, and all the rest of the turncoats; yea, and God against my own evil heart. His purpose shall stand, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Away, ye that contradict it; ours is a well-grounded confidence, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

By-and-by we shall come to die. The death-sweat shall gather on our brow, and perhaps our tongue will scarcely serve us. Oh that then, like the grand old German Emperor, we may say, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation," and, "He hath helped me with His name." When we pass through the rivers He will be with us, the floods shall not overflow us; "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we shall fear no evil, for He will be with us; His rod and His staff shall comfort us. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Ah! what will it be to break loose from these bonds and rise into the glory? We shall soon see the King in His beauty; and be ourselves glorified in His glory; for "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." "He that believeth hath everlasting life;" therefore a glad eternity is ours.

Brethren, we have not followed cunningly devised fables. We are not "wanton boys that swim on bladders" which will soon burst under us; but we are resting on firm ground. We abide where heaven and earth are resting; where the whole universe depends; Where even eternal things have their foundation; we rest on God Himself. If God shall fail us, we gloriously fail with the whole universe. But there is no fear; therefore let us trust and not be afraid. His promise must stand; for "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." O Lord, it is enough. Glory be to Thy name, through Christ Jesus! Amen.

[March and April 1924]