

# Sermon.

By REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. “Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. “Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel” – Isaiah 41:14-16.

This chapter begins by the Lord calling upon the isles, whose inhabitants were Gentiles and idolaters, to “keep silence” till He would speak to them by way of rebuking them for their idolatry. When the Lord spoke to them they were dismayed and afraid that their false gods would fall at the voice of the Lord, and they diligently set to work and helped one another, to keep up idolatry in defiance of God; “the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote the anvil, saying it is ready for the soldering, and he that fastened it with the nails that it should not be moved” (verse 6). Idolaters are afraid of the Word of the living and true God, and the more He speaks to them, the more diligent they are to strengthen and establish their superstition. Then the Lord speaks to His own people, who were better taught of the privileges which He conferred upon them – “But thou Israel art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham, my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away” (verses 8-9). In speaking from the words of our text, We shall notice –

- I. The name by which God calls His people here – “A worm.”
- II. The promise He gives them to encourage and strengthen them against their enemies and
- III. The result of their victory – “They shall rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.”

## I. The name, “worm.”

When the Lord speaks comfort to His people, He names them according to their condition. They were now weak and oppressed, and He calls them “a worm.”

(1) A worm is a very weak creature; so are the Lord’s people; they are weak in themselves, and sometimes weaker than other people. Without Christ they can do nothing, as He told them. They are sometimes weaker than at other times, and are brought very low in their own experience. In themselves they are helpless creatures, but their God says, “In me is thine help.”

(2) A worm is exposed to many dangers. A worm crawling on the road is in danger of being crushed to death by the feet of men or animals; and by the wheels of all sorts of vehicles. If you saw a worm live from year to year in the midst of such dangers, you would say it was a miracle it was still living, but God, who is the protector of life, cares even for the life of the worm. The Lord’s people are exposed to many dangers from Satan and his host of persecutors, and it is a wonder to themselves that they have not been crushed to death by these enemies, but the Lord who undertook for them from all eternity, preserves them alive in the world, till they are ripe for heaven.

(3) A worm is a loathsome creature. If you saw a pretty bird lying on the road, you would take it up in your hand, but you would not take up a worm, because you consider it loathsome. The Lord’s people are loathsome in their own estimation, because sin dwells in them. As a plague, it makes them hateful to themselves. They are loathsome also in the

estimation of the world that hates them. They never take them up in their arms to show kindness to them; they hate them, avoid their company, and would put them to death if they could; but they are precious in the sight of God, and in the sight of one another.

(4) There are some worms that in winter can only crawl on the ground; but in summer they get wings, and you may see them flying in the air. So it is with the Lord's people. Sometimes they cleave to the dust, and cannot rise above the earth, but at other times, when by the wings of faith and hope they rise in their thoughts and affections above the things of time and sense towards things above, where Christ sitteth at the right-hand of God. We find this experience in the Psalms. The Psalmist is sometimes complaining that his soul cleaves to the dust, at other times he is spiritually minded, and one would think that he was like Paul in the third heavens, but this is not an ordinary worm, it is the "Worm Jacob." From Jacob descended the twelve tribes of Israel, who were a type of the Church of God. There are some generations in which the Lord's people are fewer than in other generations, and then on many accounts they may be called worms. Have you ever considered yourself a worm, helpless and surrounded by enemies who seek to crush you to death, and yet preserved by Him who preserves man and beast, and have you been thankful to the God of providence for your preservation? This much at present on the first head.

## II. The promise.

The Lord prefaces the promise by a word of encouragement. He says: – "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." This was a word in season, for His people on that occasion did fear. "Fear thou not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel," because you are few in number. In times of persecution they are liable to many fears, and for fear of their enemies they had to hide themselves in dens and caves of the earth. Even Elijah, though a giant in faith, fled to hide himself from Jezebel, who threatened his life, but the Lord's almighty hands were about him to protect him from his enemy; and He came to him in his hiding-place, and spoke a word of encouragement to him, and told him that his enemies would be destroyed, as we are told they were; and Jezebel, who threatened his life, had a miserable death. Satan is busy in every age, harassing the Lord's people, while he leaves alone those who are his own children. He lulls these asleep, and is afraid that if he trouble them in the least they shall begin to cry to God for deliverance. There were others in the land in which Job lived, but Satan passed by these without disturbing them; but he did not deal with Job in that manner, and the reason was that Job was a true worshipper of God. The child of God has many fears, but God says – "Fear not." There is nothing that gives true comfort to one in trouble like the Word of the Lord. One may fear that God is not his God, but He that comforts says: "I am thy God." Are you afraid that He is not your covenant God? Many are not troubled about this important matter, because they are dead, but the Lord's people are not so. Some of His people have many other troubles and trials, but their hope that God is their God is not interfered with. This is a great blessing, and supports them to bear the trial, however severe. Job was tried to the quick, yet he did not doubt his interest in God as his Redeemer, so that he was able to say "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." He had troubles in connection with his body, but he was sure of the salvation of his soul. If you are sure of the salvation of your soul, why are you afraid of what will become of your body? for Christ said: "Fear not them that kill the body." The answer to this is that man is weak like a worm, and is liable to many doubts and fears, some of which are groundless, and are the result of distrust in God as the God of providence. Such fears are permitted as a trial, like the trial the Apostle Paul had when he got a thorn in the flesh as a messenger of Satan to buffet him.

How is the Lord preparing the worm Jacob for this? By making it a new threshing instrument having teeth. Threshing instruments have teeth in order to thresh the corn.

When the Lord helps His people He will make them a new instrument. A new instrument can do better work than an old one. He promises to supply them with teeth to thresh the mountains. What are the teeth? The teeth mentioned here may be taken as the Scriptures, or to use the Scriptural figure, the sword of the Spirit, by which they are to fight with their enemies and overcome them. Christ used this sword in His combat with Satan in the wilderness. He gave him heavy blows by saying: "It is written." Satan cannot stand the Word of God, its edge is too sharp for him. Some have found, when much harassed by the Evil One when they were engaged in speaking from or writing of the Word of the Lord, Satan had to keep behind the wall, so that they would like to be always day and night engaged in that exercise. When the worm was to be made thus a new threshing instrument it was to do a great work in the hand of the Almighty God. "It was to thresh the mountains and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff." What are the mountains and the hills? Ungodly men in high positions in the world. Pharaoh was a great mountain, oppressing the Lord's people in Egypt, who were as helpless in themselves as worms. And what is a worm before this mountain? But when God took this worm in His own hand, it overcame and overthrew Pharaoh and his host, so that they were drowned in the Red Sea. Satan's kingdom is a great mountain, and is very strong in our day, but it shall be threshed down and beat small by the Church in the hand of God, the Church using the Sword of the Spirit to do this work. It is by the word of the Gospel the kingdom of Satan shall be destroyed. It was by the preaching of the Gospel that the kingdom of Satan in Europe was beat small at the time of the Reformation, and as this was so in the past, it shall be so in the future. We are sure of this, because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Christ must increase, but all who are opposed to Him shall decrease. This is an encouragement to preach the Gospel. Every individual to whom the Gospel is blessed diminishes the kingdom of Satan. The hills may be taken to mean ungodly men, who have less power to injure the Church than kings, but both are to be beaten to dust by the worm Jacob in the hand of God. When the mountains and hills are threshed, then the worm Jacob shall fan them. And in the process of fanning the wind shall carry them away.

Unbelief is a great mountain which often oppresses the Lord's people, though it gives no trouble to those who deceive themselves. Every time the Lord gives the victory to His people over it, that mountain is beat small, though it is not destroyed till the death of the believer. Have you ever stood at the foot of this great mountain, and were you afraid that you could never get over it to the rest that remains to the people of God? It stands before you daily till your death, and as you cannot remove it, you try to climb up to the top of it, "to see the King in His beauty and the land that is far off" (Isaiah 33:17). Sometimes you succeed in reaching the top, and see the object of your desire, but at other times, before you can climb up half-way, you fall to the bottom again, and you may expect these ups and downs during your time in the wilderness.

The carnal mind is another mountain. "It is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This mountain is so obstinate that the teeth of the worm, sharp as they are, cannot take an atom out of it, so that it confronts you daily, and the only way to escape its evil influence is to be delivered from its reigning power as believers are; but it shall at last be overthrown and left behind them. It shall perish suddenly in a day. Doubts and fears are mountains and hills which oppress the Lord's people, and against which they have to fight in the state of imperfection, but they shall get the victory at last from these oppressors, and then they shall express their thankfulness with the Apostle Paul, saying: "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

III. Their exercise after their victory over their enemies.

God, who addresses them in our text, foretells what their exercise shall be – “Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel.” They shall rejoice in the Lord. He is the fountain of their rejoicing and the cause of it. They could not rejoice when they were oppressed; they were sorrowful and mournful, but every time they get their victory over these enemies they are joyful, and they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and they shall ascribe all the glory to Him. They do this in the words of the Psalmist: –

Now blessed be the Lord our God,  
The God of Israel,  
For He alone doth wondrous works,  
In glory that excel.  
And blessed be His glorious name  
To all eternity;  
The whole earth let His glory fill,  
Amen, so let it be.

If this be their exercise after minor victories, what shall we say about their exercise after their final victory? They shall then ascribe glory to God more perfectly than they could do in this world. Their joy shall be full in heaven, and their ascription of glory to God shall be perfect, and both shall continue without interruption throughout eternity. The worm Jacob shall be no more a worm, for He shall “raise up the poor out of the dust, and lift the needy out of the dunghill. That He may set them with princes, even with the princes of His people” (Psalm 113:7-8). If this be the happy end of the Lord’s people, is it not more desirable to be a worm than to be the potentates of the earth, who mind earthly things, and whose end shall, without repentance, be everlasting destruction? We are travelling on to eternity, and we are now on this Sabbath Day nearer death than we were last Sabbath. Are we more prepared to meet death now than we were then? Are we through grace overcoming the mountains and hills, or are these powerful enemies overcoming us? This is a question that concerns each and all of us; and it concerns especially the unconverted, who, if they die in that condition, must be lost for ever. The great majority in this generation are wholly engrossed with the things of the world, and neglect the things which pertain to their everlasting peace, but as Christ said – “What shall a man be profitted though he gain the whole world and lose his soul?” Be awakened out of your indifference, and give no rest to yourself till you find rest in Christ, who says – “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28). We leave these things with you, and knowing from God’s Word the terribleness of being lost, we beseech you in the name of Christ to be reconciled to God. Amen.

[May 1924]

## Sermon.

By REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.

“Because I live ye shall live also” – John 14:19.

Christ spoke the words we have in this chapter shortly before He suffered death. He tells that the world shall not see Him any more, but that His disciples would see Him. Accordingly, it is remarkable that none saw Him after His resurrection and during the forty days He remained on earth before His ascension to Heaven, except His own disciples – They saw Him by their bodily eyes after His resurrection, but they saw Him by the eye of faith after he had ascended to Heaven. He told them that they would live also in a manner in which the world could not live, and that because He lived. In speaking from the words of the text we shall notice: –

I. The life of Christ – He lives.

II. The benefit that flows to Christ’s people in consequence of His life – They shall live also.

I. The life of Christ, – “I live.”

Christ died to secure life to His people. He rose again to life, and He lives for evermore. Death has no more dominion over Him. He died a cursed death; He lives a glorious life with the Father. Christ lives from everlasting to everlasting

(1) as God, therefore He says – “I live.”

(2) Though He died as to the natural life of His human nature, yet He took that life to Himself again at His resurrection, and He lives to die no more.

(3) He lives as the Head of His Church, as the second Adam. Christ does not say – “Because I shall live,” but “because I live.”

He, the great I am – Jehovah – from everlasting to everlasting – without beginning or end – was living when He was hanging on the cross, when He was lying dead in the grave. He was then the living Shepherd of Israel, watching over His flock, leading and feeding them. As the eternal God He never sleeps nor slumbers, He never died. When Christ as the eternal and everlasting God combated with eternal death – the wages of sin – He swallowed it up in victory. Though He laid down His life as to His human nature, He was living when He did so, and because He was living He had power to take that life again. He rose from the dead, and He lives for ever more. He now lives in His glorified state, as the Head of His Church – a Head of power and life, having all power in heaven and earth, and all fulness of life for His Church.

II. The benefit that flows to His people because He lives, – they shall live also.

There is a union between them and Christ that makes it sure that they shall live. There is a federal union, and there is a vital union. In virtue of the former union, they shall live because He, their federal Head, shall not, like the first Adam, die. Their life depends on His living, and in virtue of the latter union they shall live – ever drawing supplies out of His fulness of life to maintain the eternal life He has imparted unto them. He is their covenant Head, and they are His covenant people by a vital relation. He is the vine and they are the branches – united to Him by the Spirit on the one hand and by faith on the other. Christ’s disciples are often tempted to think that all their hope is gone when they find that there is nothing in them (as to their experience), but death, forgetting that their life depends on Him – forgetting that He lives. The following anecdote may be useful to illustrate this: – There was a godly old man who had a little granddaughter living with him. He would be often speaking to the child about God – His love to sinners, His mercy, His goodness – and the little girl thought that there was none her grandfather loved so much as the God he so much recommended to her. On one occasion the old Christian fell into a very low state of mind through unbelief. He was in misery, and spoke nothing to the child for days. He was pacing up and down in his room, wringing his hands in agony. The child was observing him, and

pitying him, and as she thought that nothing would leave him so sad, but to hear that something happened to God, whom he so much loved, she asked her grandfather, "Did God die when you are in that sad state?" The question of his little grandchild was the means of relief to the good man. He remembered that his God was living, and he was comforted: "Because I live ye shall live also." Christian, do not conclude that you shall die so long as Christ lives, and remember He lives for ever more, and His cause in the world shall not die either, because He lives.

(1) The life of grace in them is everlasting. It will never die, however low it may come as to their experience, because Christ, the source from which that life proceeds, lives to give them additional supplies according to their needs during their time in the world.

(2) Though they must die the natural death, they shall be raised to life again to die no more, like their Head. Although all the human race will be in being after the resurrection, the wicked as well as the righteous, the latter shall live a life of holiness and happiness, because Christ, the second Adam, lives in human nature for ever. Death hath no dominion over Him. All their life depends upon the covenant head.

(3) They shall live a life of glory in heaven for evermore. All this results from the fact that Christ lives. The state of the human race when God created man was mutable – all depended on the human side, in the first man, who was the representative head of all his ordinary posterity. If he stood, they would stand, but if he fell, they would fall. Adam sinned and fell, and died. But Christ, the second Adam, having secured eternal life for His people, shall never forfeit that life, and as their continuance of that blessing depends on their representative Head, they shall never loose it. Because He lives, they shall live also. A great element in the state of glory is its everlastingness. The redeemed shall never fall from that state; for Christ shall never fall from it. They are wholly indebted to Christ for bringing them to that state, and for keeping them in it.

This is a most comforting doctrine. Christ preached it to His disciples in the time of need. He told them He was leaving them as to His bodily presence, and they were filled with sorrow. They felt themselves like orphans, destitute of a father to care for them, exposed to the malice of the world, they saw nothing before them but death. But He comforts them, and tells them that there was no real ground for their fear and misgivings: "Ye shall not die; because I live ye shall live also." How much comfort we might have if we looked to Christ more than we look to ourselves and to other men, and remember His gracious words. Through unbelief we often consider our own weakness and the dangers to which we are exposed in a world of sin and trouble; we feel disheartened, and ready to perish. How seasonable in such circumstances are all the inspiring words of the Saviour – "Because I live, ye shall live also." But of ourselves we cannot remember His words so as to derive comfort from them. We need to pray – "Remember the word of thy servant, upon which thou hast caused him to hope." The Lord, however, considers our weakness, and comes to us, and speaks a word in season to our troubled souls.

In the midst of all troubles that meet the Lord's people in the wilderness there is enough in Christ to comfort and support them, enough in His fulness, enough in His promise, and it is their duty to look to Him, to take hold of His promises, and to trust Him. Christ in the text set an example before ministers of the Gospel how they should feed His flock. They should not leave them on the bare hill, but lead them to the green pastures of the Gospel; they should open the gates of the parks of His rich promises, and allow the poor creatures to take their fill there. The ministers themselves would get enough for their own hungry souls, too. In the midst of all the changes that take place in the world, and in the experience of the flock, there is no change in Christ. He lives, and, therefore, His people, individually and collectively, are safe. They shall not die, but

live, and it is their duty to declare the works of God. They are reconciled through His death, they are saved by His life, they shall live on and with Christ for ever. They have their natural life from Christ, and they shall live in the world till the time appointed come, notwithstanding the devices of Satan and his children to get them out of the world. At the resurrection their natural life shall be restored to them, and they shall live that life for ever. They shall glorify God with their bodies and spirits, which are now His by redemption as well as by creation. They live a life of grace on earth, they live a life of glory in heaven.

The text is a window of heaven, which Christ opened before He left the world, that His poor people might see Him in His exalted state, as their living Saviour, and also see their own safety in Him. It was originally spoken to the few disciples He had in His state of humiliation, but it is written for the comfort of all His people to the end of time. His Word is the channel through which He yet speaks, and when He gives comfort through the written Word to His people in the time of need it seems to them as if He spake with the freshness and life that accompanied His Word when He spoke on earth. Christ, the Speaker, seems to be present. We cannot be too thankful for the Scriptures. They are, so to speak, the telephone through which Christ speaks to His people on earth. When He speaks through this telephone to them while yet on earth He seems to be present with them. There was a man in the telephone service in London, who, when on holiday at a place far away from London, was telephoned to by his next-door neighbour, asking information about some particular business. In the reply the voice was so audible that the inquirer thought the speaker had returned to his office, and asked him when had he come back. The man answered – “I have not come back at all. I am still away on holiday.” As already stated, when Christ speaks to His people on earth through the medium of His Word, they think that He is still with them on earth.

In conclusion, what unspeakable privileges the Lord’s people have. Among these is the life eternal spoken of in our text. This life they have in Christ and the union with Him. Their natural life shall be taken from them, but this life none can take away; it is insured and secured, it is hid in Christ with God. How miserable must be the case of all who die without Christ. They lose their life, which is the most precious thing man has in this life. Sinner! are you in this sad condition? Think of it before it is too late. Cry to Him who saved His people from sin and eternal death. He is the hearer and answerer of prayer. He may hear your prayer, and say to you before you leave this world – “Because I live you shall live also.” So may it be. Amen.

[June 1924]

## Notes of a Sermon.

By the REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.

“But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them” – Luke 24:29.

The two disciples on their way to Emmaus, which was sixty furlongs, or about seven and a-half miles from Jerusalem, met with Jesus, who conversed with them about the

important matters which occupied their minds, and they desired to have more of His company, when they came to the end of their journey that day. “And when they drew nigh unto the village whither they went, He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them.” From these words we may notice –

- I. That those who have derived benefit from Christ’s teaching, and enjoyed His sweet fellowship, desire more of this.
- II. That they use words and arguments to obtain the privilege; and
- III. Christ’s willingness and readiness to grant them their desire.

I. The two disciples spoken of here, one of whom was Cleopas, derived much benefit from the company of Christ: He made their hearts burn within them with joy. He did this by expounding the Scriptures to them, the Scriptures concerning Himself. Christ is the sum and substance of the Scriptures; they testify of Him. The books of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms testify of Him, and He opened up to them the Scriptures. The Word of God properly expounded is the means in the hand of the Spirit to convince and to convert sinners, and to edify, sanctify, and comfort believers. In preaching, the work of ministers is to expound the Scriptures and to apply them, so far as teaching is concerned, to the various conditions and cases of their hearers. Christ, in His discourse here as well as elsewhere, has set an example before us which we ought to follow.

II. Means are to be used to keep up fellowship with Christ when He condescends to visit us. One of these means is prayer – “Abide with us.” Christ’s fellowship is so sweet and beneficial that it awakens the spirit of prayer in His people to constrain Him to abide with them. Although He is willing to be with them, and has promised to be with them, yet He will be enquired of by prayer to vouchsafe this benefit to them. If you would have Christ to abide with you, pray without ceasing. Be diligent in the use of the other means of grace, but be often at the throne of grace, and cherish the spirit of prayer, and exercise it, even when you are not on your knees in the attitude of prayer.

The argument the disciples used was – “It is towards evening, and the day is far spent.” By this they seemed to have respect to the comfort of the wonderful friend that had met them; but there is no doubt that their own comfort and happiness were also kept in view. Little was the comfort their entertainment of Christ would afford Him compared with the entertainment He would give them by His presence and conversation. Though they did not yet know of a certainty – though they may have had some idea of it – that He was the One they mourned after, yet the effect of His discourse on the subject, on which their mind was set and exercised, endeared Him to them so much that they desired more of His company. “It is toward evening and the day is far spent” is an argument well fitted for us to employ at this season of the year, and should remind us of the end of our life in this world. We have, therefore, more need to constrain Christ to abide with us.

III. Christ’s willingness and readiness to hear the prayer of His people, and to grant them the blessing they want – “And He went in to tarry with them.” It is now He makes Himself known to them as He who was dead, and is alive again, to die no more. They entertain Him to food. The three of them sat at meat. Christ, no doubt, at the head of the table. He blessed the food and brake it, and gave to them, “and their eyes were opened and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight.” This food was not a sacrament, but a common meal, so if we have Christ with us at our common food, it will make us truly happy, and enable us to eat and drink to His glory.

We are not quite sure that Christ actually ate any of this food, though it is evident that “He ate food afterwards with His disciples” (verse 42), and we are not sure that the two disciples ate either, for we read that they rose the same hour, and that Christ vanished out of their sight, and returned to Jerusalem. They were so overjoyed that they might have forgotten that food was before them on the table. They talked to each other of how their hearts burned with love and joy, while Christ talked with them by the way, and while He opened the Scriptures to them. The spiritual feast they got for their souls would have a great effect on their bodies, so that, though they were living without food in search of Christ before returning home from Jerusalem, they could make the journey back to that city again without food for their bodies, while their souls were so richly supplied with the true bread that came down from heaven. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

It may be remarked that this gracious manifestation of Christ to the two disciples was preceded by a darkness, which seemed to deprive them of all hope – “But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” When the natural night has reached the point of time when it is darkest, then the light of day is not far off. So it is spiritually. When the believer comes to the darkest pitch of night, then Christ, the Son of Righteousness, will appear to him to dispel his darkness, and to give him comfort that will surprise him, and make him truly happy – make his heart burn within him with joy unspeakable and full of glory! He shall then know that it is Jesus, his own Saviour. The manifestation is so sweet and precious that he cannot but pray, “Abide with me.”

Another thing worthy of note is that when Christ makes Himself known to the believer, he is enabled to recall to his mind past experiences of the Lord’s loving-kindness to him. He remembers the days of old – “Did not our hearts burn within us when He talked with us by the way?” It is to be observed also that the two disciples made no delay in going to give the news of Jesus to others, especially to His disciples. Those to whom Jesus makes Himself known cannot but proclaim His praise to their fellowmen. The love of Christ constraineth them. It is to be noticed, moreover, that though the Saviour vanished out of their sight, as to His bodily presence, He left so much of His spiritual presence with them that they had His fellowship still with them, giving them at this early stage of their experience to learn to live by faith and not by sight, and also to show them that He can and will manifest Himself to His people on earth when He is, as to His bodily presence, in heaven. We may enjoy His communion now. He is nigh by His spirit in His Word and ordinances, though He is personally in heaven.

When Christ comes to a poor soul that is truly seeking and needing Him, He makes up all his needs and wants, raises his mind from all things that are not worthy of his attention, and sets it upon Himself as the all in all. Christ heals all his diseases, dispels his darkness, removes his unbelief, solves his perplexities, rescues him from the entanglements of his temptations, and gives him true liberty of soul, yea, and of body also. If he is old, he feels himself young; if he is weak he feels himself strong; if he is in poor circumstances he considers himself as possessing all things – “All things are yours.” Christ meets all his needs. Without Him he can do nothing; having Him he can do all things. This is really the case with the believer to whom Christ reveals Himself, and whom He favours with His sweet fellowship. And though these sweet manifestations of Christ to His poor people are not frequent and long continued, yet they are means of making them go from strength to strength, till they appear at last in the heavenly Zion, to be for ever with the Lord. They are stepping-stones on the way, and Ebenezers they set up in the wilderness with the inscription – “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.” They are an earnest of the inheritance in the state of their minority, and pledges to assure them that when they shall have finished their pilgrimage in the

wilderness of this world, they shall be put in possession of the glorious inheritance prepared for them in heaven.

[August 1924]

## Notes of a Sermon.

By the LATE REV. DUNCAN CAMPBELL, Kiltearn.

[This sermon was preached at Rosskeen at the close of the Communion Sabbath (20th June 1858). It was felt by not a few to be singularly powerful and solemn. An aged Christian remarked that with the exception of a sermon preached by Mr Campbell at Tarbat, during the revival time, it was the most solemn he had heard from him. The Rev. John H. Fraser, Rosskeen, says: – “I can yet recall the appearance of the vast crowd, as in his closing appeals he became most pathetic, and the echo from the gable of our church seemed to second him” (Campbell of Kiltearn, pp. 67, 68).]

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” – 2 Timothy 4:8.

After reviewing the period of his life which had passed since Christ met him, the Apostle alludes to the comfortable frame of mind which he then enjoyed. As if he had said, I have

wrestled and pressed toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and in all my difficulties, trials, and temptations, I have by grace been able to keep the faith. In the text we have the glorious prospect which the Apostle had before him – “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” I am now ready to be offered up – the time of my departure is nigh. My fightings and my wrestlings with enemies from within and without will soon be at an end; I am ready to enter the eternal world, into the joy of my Lord. Let us now consider the following points: –

- I. The crown here spoken of;
- II. The Person by whom this crown will be bestowed;
- III. The time when it shall be given;
- IV. The character of those who shall receive it.

I. The crown here spoken of, which the Christian warrior has in view, and shall attain.

This is a crown of righteousness. You know that a crown is the symbol of power and dignity, and those who wear earthly crowns are raised to the very summit of earthly power and glory – to the place where all earthly happiness and power are supposed to centre. What an idea this gives of the heavenly mansions, where every saint wears an immortal, unfading, everlasting crown. The crown here mentioned signifies the whole happiness of heaven, a crown purchased by the blood of Christ; attained by the Christian warrior in the way of holiness. This crown signifies perfect and eternal conformity to the law of God. The gems of it are perfect holiness.

II. The Person by whom the crown shall be bestowed.

Who shall give it? – “The Lord, the Judge.” This illustrious person is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the righteous Judge, and is well fitted for this great and important work. He knoweth all the actions of men, and sees the motives from which they all proceed. He can distinguish the least spark of grace from the fairest profession of the hypocrite. He shall be righteous in dooming the wicked to eternal misery, and in awarding to the righteous life eternal.

III. The time when it shall be given.

“On that day,” that is, the day of His appearing, when in a particular sense He will place the crown of eternal glory on the head of all His followers. That, however, does not mean that they shall remain in a state of inactivity from the day of death till that of the judgment; nor that there is an intermediate state between death and judgment, to prepare for heaven. No! for no sooner is the soul of the believer released from his body, than he is with God. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” “On that day” – a day pregnant with happiness and misery; terror and joy. The last day when Christ shall raise the bodies of His saints, and fashion them like His own glorious body. That day when the elements shall melt with fervent heat. That day when Christ shall separate between the righteous and the wicked. On which hand will you be in that day? What will be the words that will be addressed to you?

IV. The character of those who shall receive this crown.

“They who love His appearing.” Paul loved and longed for the second coming of Christ. He knew that though his head might be cut off, and his body burnt, and his ashes cast to the four winds of heaven, nothing could separate him from his Saviour and crown. But Paul is not the only one who shall receive this crown, “but also all who love His appearing.” Believers, all of them, love and long for the appearing of Jesus. For, on that day, all their enemies will be subdued; Satan shall no longer tempt, and secret sins shall no longer harass

them. Death as a handkerchief shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and they will be for ever with the Lord.

In conclusion:

(1) See here the blessed and happy end of believers. At the latter end they shall attain to perfect deliverance from sin, and perfect knowledge of their God and Saviour.

(2) There is a reality in religion. It is no fancy – no imaginary dream – but a spiritual, substantial reality. It supports and comforts the Christian under the trials and bereavements of this world. At the moment of dissolution it sweetly calms the mind, and supports the soul. At that dread hour, which no child of Adam can avoid, when all earthly things fly away, and eternity opens to view in all its solemnity, it assuages his fears and raises his hopes, leading him through Jordan's waters, till it conducts him safely to Immanuel's land. Friend, what think you of this? What have you been doing since you had a being? Adding actual transgressions to original sin? What have you been doing here to-day? You are journeying to eternity, you know not when you may be called to enter it. Oh! have you entered on the Christian course? Take these things to heart. Where shall this great multitude before me now be in thirty years? The greater number in heaven or hell. What a thought! Ross-shire hearers – after all your privileges, will the greater number remain despisers of the precious Saviour, and rejecters of the great salvation? Better that you had never had a being than that from listening to the voice of mercy, you harden your hearts, and delay coming to Christ. All things are ready. Yet there is room. Hear, and your soul shall live.

[September 1924]

## Sermon.

By the late REV. ALEXANDER MACLEOD, Rogart  
(formerly Uig, Lewis.)

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” – John 3:16.

In these blessed words of our Lord we have the sum of the whole volume of inspiration, a most wonderful display of divine love, a most glorious intelligence and glad tidings of joy to all people. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, struck with the indications of supernatural powers and authority which were manifested in our Saviour's miracles, acknowledged his conviction of His divine mission, and immediately came to

Him to receive instruction, and there are two things on which our Lord chiefly insists, in this discourse on this interesting occasion. He first teaches him the necessity of regeneration, next the medium through which salvation was to be accomplished, and the indispensable necessity of believing in Him in order to eternal life, and as He was discoursing with a master in Israel, He illustrates this great subject by a fact recorded in their law, and which prefigured the Redeemer's death, viz., that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up on the cross, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life, and that He might divest Him of that self-righteousness so peculiar to the Jewish people and so congenial to the human mind, and on which he so much founded his salvation. Our Lord further shows him that in the economy of grace every thing of this kind is superseded for that, as the mission of the Eternal Son of God into this world had for its object to bestow eternal life upon those who were ready to perish. So the only way of enjoying the blessing was by faith in the testimony that God has given of His Son. As this faith is not of ourselves but the free gift of God, so the bestowment of it on men of every character and description corresponds with the grace which appeared in the Father's sending His only begotten Son into the world that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life.

In discoursing from these words, I propose to consider:

- I. The properties of God's love to a guilty and lost world;
- II. The evidence He gave of His love, He gave His only begotten Son;
- III. The end or design of this unspeakable gift of love, viz., that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life; and lastly,
- IV. To conclude with a short application.

I. The love of God is the brightest beam of divinity that ever illuminated the creation. There is an unfathomable depth in it which even the penetration of angels cannot reach, an ineffable excellence which even celestial eloquence cannot fully express.

(1) It is pure, unmixed love in its nature, object, and operation. It comprehends the various forms of divine beneficence – *goodness*, that extends its bounties to innumerable ranks of creatures, and diffuses happiness through the various regions of the universe – *grace*, which so richly showers its blessings upon the undeserving without past merit or further compensation. *Mercy*, that commiserates and relieves the miserable; and *peace*, and *long-suffering* which so long tolerates insolent and provoking offenders. All this divine beneficence in its different forms towards indifferent objects shows the greatness of divine love under various names. It is gracious, merciful, patient, and long-suffering love – love variegated, overflowing, and unbounded. Is not divine love, displayed in the creation of this world, so well accommodated and so richly furnished for the sustenance and comfort of its inhabitants, and in rendering them capable of receiving streams of happiness from the immense fountain of divine goodness? It is by the love of God that this universe is preserved in order and harmony from age to age, and its numerous inhabitants supplied with every good thing. But is it not most conspicuously displayed as an unspeakably great, rich, free, and unmerited love in the gift of His Son to a guilty world? Almighty love, which brought the Lord of Glory from the celestial throne to die upon a cross, an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, in order to fit us for the incorruptible inheritance, and then to perpetuate our bliss through an eternal duration. Behold, then, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God, a subject so very grand and so elevating that our limited capacities are quite inadequate to comprehend it. Who can by searching find it out? Who can trace it

to perfection? It is as high as heaven. What can we do? Deeper than hell. What can we know? Surely the measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea. But while this eternal love of God is an unfathomable ocean, we adore the God of our salvation, who sheds it abroad in the hearts of His people by the Holy Spirit, that they with all saints may be able to comprehend in some degree what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. For though creation be replete with evident traces of the goodness and love of God, yet it is the work of redemption that gives the most exalted display of this most animating and delightful truth. Accordingly, when the Lord promised to make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, He intimated that He would therein carry the demonstration of it far beyond whatever could be conceived of it either in creation or providence. I will make an everlasting covenant with them (says He) that I will not turn away from them, to do them good. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and will bring upon them all the good that I have promised them, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord. And He gives us this as the amount of the whole – “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” The highest possible display of His love was manifested when He gave His Son to die to procure our redemption, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. For in this He at once commended His love to us as unspeakable, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly, in order to redeem them from sin, death, and hell. To teach them the revelations of His will and the declaration of His promises, in His determination to sanctify and to glorify them, in supporting them through life, blessing them in death, and bringing them to glory. When we, therefore, consider the unspeakable highness and holiness of our heavenly Father, and the lowness and wretchedness of those on whom he conferred His unspeakable gift, we are constrained to exclaim with the inspired writer – “God is Love.”

(2) It is an everlasting love. “The Lord,” says the prophet Jeremiah, “appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” exclaimed the illustrious apostle, “who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” O the matchless love of our God to a whole world full of ignorance, carnality, and enmity against His holy perfections, in a state of actual rebellion against Him, and without the least desire ever to know, serve, or enjoy Him. Yet, hear, O! heavens, and be astonished O! earth, God loved this world of perishing sinners. But how much no tongue can tell, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things the Lord prepared for them that love Him. It is so unspeakable and so unlike anything in human affairs that our text makes no comparison in order to describe it. It has no parallel or similitude among men, and, therefore, it is only said – God so loved the world that He gave us His Son. In most cases human love is expressed by words more than by deeds, but the love of God is such that it cannot be fully expressed by words. It is a divine contrivance which we, while in this tabernacle, cannot fully comprehend.

(3) It is an immutable love, as in Malachi 3:6 – “For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” He will rest in His love towards His people, for His love is engaged for their everlasting security. Having made them the objects of His free love, a primary fruit of His eternal favour, this love must abate, and His purposes must be rendered void before they are left to themselves. But if the Lord of hosts has purposed, who shall disannul it? If His hands be stretched out to execute His designs, who shall turn them back, before He has accomplished the end He has determined. As He thought, so shall it come to pass. As He purposed, so shall it stand. He

has set His delight on the sons of men, and, therefore, He rests. He takes the highest complacency in the exercise of His love towards all His favourite objects. He rejoices over them with singing, and takes a divine pleasure in doing them good. So firmly did the illustrious Apostle believe this salutary truth that he exalted in the contemplation of God's immutable love, expressing himself in the following forcible and pathetic language: – "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(4) It is a free love, as nothing out of God Himself can be the cause of it, for then there would be a cause prior to Him. The misery of the creature is not the cause of it, for He is not wrought upon as creatures are, nor are the merits of the creature the cause. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is, therefore, free, as it arises from His sovereign will and pleasure through the merits of our Redeemer. Let us then consider the freeness of this love, and rejoice in the exercise of faith and lively hope that the most glorious day shall soon arrive when our happy anticipations of His immediate presence shall be unspeakably realised, and when we shall see Him as He is.

## II. The evidence of God's love to sinners – He gave us His only begotten Son.

(1) Then, we have the clearest evidence of this love in the Incarnation of our Lord. Here the unspeakable gift of God, manifested in the flesh, is most conspicuously displayed to a fallen race. Now, the original promise made to our first parents is fully realised. The God and Saviour of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the great astonishment of men and angels, condescended to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh, and now the divine predictions are amply fulfilled – "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." How clearly did He manifest His love to us in the humiliation and sufferings of our Lord, in the poverty of His birth, the reproach of His character, the pains of His body, the power of His enemies, the desertion of His friends, the weight of His people's sins, the slow, ignominious, and painful nature of His death, and the hiding of His Father's face, for He hath made Him sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. "And the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." Yet some have impiously asserted that the sufferings of Christ were only in appearance and not in reality. But if hunger and thirst, if revilings and contempt, if condemnation and crucifixion be sufferings, our Lord suffered; if the sinless infirmities of our nature, if the weight of our sins, if the malice of men, if the machinations of Satan, if the hand of God could make Him suffer, our Saviour suffered. If the annals of time, if the writings of His Apostles, if the death of His martyrs, if the confession of Gentiles, if the scoffs of the Jews be testimonies, our Lord suffered. He, therefore, that spared not His only begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him, also, freely give us all things. This great doctrine, therefore, of the remission of sins through the expiatory sacrifice of our Lord is that in which we can behold the great and mysterious love of God, and is the doctrine which stands as it were in the very face of the divine oracles, and claims our pre-eminent regard. It is this which impresses the Christian dispensation with so gracious and merciful a character, and justly gives it the designation of glad tidings. Though every part of our Lord's obedience was meritorious and tended to magnify the law, yet His death upon the cross was its perfection and consummation; then it was that He exclaimed, "It is finished." In that tremendous hour He satisfied the penal demands of

Justice, He silenced the thunders of Mount Sinai, He conquered death, He triumphed over principalities and the powers of darkness, and opened the gates of everlasting life to sinners. Dark and cloudy as that day appeared to the eye of sense, it was the brightest day that ever shone upon a guilty world, for on that day a light above the brightness of the firmament shone through the whole Jewish economy. Types met with their antitype, shadows were turned into substance, victims no longer bled upon the smoking altars. The veil of the temple was rent in twain, and a new order of things rose before us. Whilst infidelity triumphed and insulted our dying Lord, saying, He saved others, Himself He cannot save, it spoke indeed the truth. He was enchained and bound, but it was by a love to us and our salvation. Thus we read He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was He stricken, for it pleased God the Father to bruise Him and put Him to grief, and in this He commended His love most conspicuously toward us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

III. The end or design of this gift of love was that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life. This was God's great object in giving His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He has not sent Him into the world to condemn the world, as sinners might have expected, but that the world might be saved by Him. In this blessed design of man's redemption we behold the three divine persons moved by sovereign and free love, heartily joining in the most wonderful scheme of our everlasting salvation. The blessed Father to exert the grace, the Son to advance the merit, the Holy Ghost to apply the purchased benefits, the Father to adopt us for His children, the Son to redeem us for His mystical members, and the Holy Ghost to sanctify and renew our hearts. The design of this unspeakable gift is no less manifested in the resurrection of our Lord, when He secured the union of His people as His quickened and mystical members and their resurrection to everlasting life. It is no less conspicuous in His ascension when He took possession of heaven in their name, prepares them for the heavenly mansions, pours down His Spirit upon them for that end, weans their affection from transitory objects, and attracts them to things above where He is, making continual intercession on their behalf, and securing their exaltation in due time. It was in the consideration of this grand truth that the Apostle Paul spoke of the great Mystery of Godliness – "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory." All which was intended to adopt us into His family to sanctify our nature and receive us into glory, and when we consider the despicable objects on whom this unmerited favour was conferred, we are devoutly struck with unspeakable and holy veneration of the Divine Author, from whom all this has originated freely. When men adopt, it is on account of some excellency in the persons adopted, as Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses, because he was exceeding fair; and Mordecai adopted Esther because she was his uncle's daughter and exceeding fair. But man has nothing in him which merits this divine act, as in Ezekiel 16:5 – "None eye pitied thee to do any of these things unto thee, to have compassion on thee, but thou wast cast out in the open field to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born." It was in this state our Maker found us, when He said "Live," and when He pours His Holy Spirit on His people they receive Christ by faith as freely offered in the Gospel to this end. His divine grace is imparted to them in order to excite their gratitude and direct their attention to the glory of Him who called them from darkness to His marvellous light to accomplish the great end of their salvation. They are divinely conducted to run the Christian race with faith, hope, and love; they proceed in their journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem, faith is the foundation and measure of hope. The latter is only the anticipation of those blessings which the former realises and presents to the mind. If faith be strong, hope is full of immortality and glory. Her heavenly prospects vary with the divine principle from which

she proceeds. She is associated also with that humility which waits with patience for the full accomplishment of the promises. Hence, as an anchor within the veil, she keeps the soul sure and steadfast amidst all the fluctuating tides and tempests of this lower world. But, these graces, however important, beneficial, and permanent in their effects, are only instrumental to that grace of love with which we shall ever be filled in everlasting praises of Him who loved us. All other graces are but means to this blessed end. When we enter into a state of grace the full fruition of God, even eternal life, is ultimately intended. The end of God's unspeakable gift and all the graces of His Spirit through Him are to land us at last in the unfading and incorruptible inheritance. Love should adorn our Christian profession while here below – "The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned." "Now abideth, faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." It is of a superior and transcendent nature, and without it all other gifts are but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. While faith is that primary grace which apprehends and appropriates the salvation of Christ, and while hope ardently looks for the perfect and ultimate fruition of this salvation, divine love is that holy affection which constitutes the health and felicity of the soul. It is the greatest evidence that we can have of being called of God. It is the prize itself, for in proportion to our love we dwell in God and God in us. Of all the Christian graces it is the most general and comprehensive, concentrating every other into its own nature. It suffereth long and is kind, without usurping the place or disturbing the functions of the rest. Love allies itself to them all, regulates their exercise, preserves their simplicity, refers them to their proper end, and by purifying the secret chambers of the soul, keeps up a hallowed flame of devotion which diffuses life and splendour over every part of divine truth, and thus maintains their just empire in the heart with a single eye to the glory of God. It is also eternal in its duration – charity never faileth; faith ere long will be lost in vision, and hope in enjoyment. Their specific operations do not extend beyond the grave. When they have conducted the Christian to the confines of a better country they consign him over to perfect love, there to arrive at the very fountain of love, from which all the streams run for the healing of perishing sinners, and join the spirits of the just in songs of everlasting praises to the Lamb that was slain and redeemed them by His blood.

I conclude with a short application.

Is the love of God therefore from everlasting? Is it the great, the eternal, and absolutely free favour of God in Christ manifested in the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal blessings to the unworthy entirely detached from all supposition of human worth and absolutely independent of any such thing as human goodness? O! then, all ye children of want and sons of wretchedness, whether Jews or Gentiles, to this unexhaustible fountain of God's free and unmerited love ye may freely come. Here the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, with longing hearts and uplifted hands, big with expectations of being healed, may come with the utmost readiness, for the invitation extends to all characters and descriptions of men, and the proclamation (whosoever) is expressive of the freest favour and richest grace, including offenders of the worst characters, publishing pardon for sins of the deepest dye, and all ratified by Veracity itself. It affords sufficient encouragement to the vilest of sinners who is willing to owe his all to divine bounty, to receive the heavenly blessing, and with faith and gratitude to rejoice in the royal donation. Yes, it is the sovereign love of God that raises the poor from the dunghill and the needy from the dust, and sets them on thrones of glory, and numbers them among the princes of heaven. Happy, then, are they who are taught the infinitely marvellous, pleasant, powerful, and profitable truths of God in a manner that enlightens, draws, renews, ravishes, and sanctifies their heart. Happy they who being

chargeable with every guilt and pollution, have them all washed away through the efficacious and expiatory sacrifice of their Lord, their righteousness and strength. How freely may they come to His throne of grace to receive of His love and sing in the heights of Zion. Happy His subjects, Who is love itself, whose laws are holy, just, and good, a perfect law of liberty, and whose whole administration is wisdom, righteousness, condescension, kindness, and love. O! then may that blessed day hasten when time shall give place to eternity, when our transient glimmerings of His glory here issue in our being for ever with the Lord, when our beloved ordinances of His grace shall be exchanged for seeing the God of infinite love as He is, who will acknowledge us in the face of His dear Son, who is the light of the celestial mansions, our everlasting light – our God, and our eternal glory.

[October 1924]

## Sermon.

By the late REV. ALEXANDER MACLEOD, Rogart  
(formerly Uig, Lewis.)

“Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee” – Psalm 55:22.

We are all in a state of trial and probation, for a permanent and eternal existence in another world. The space in which we move is but short at best, and by several circumstances very much contracted; but short and contracted as it is, scenes of the most weighty and important nature are transacted upon it. Man in his present fallen condition is truly forlorn. He is appointed to endure many severe afflictions, which he can neither foresee nor prevent. In the distribution of afflictions there is no doubt but the unerring wisdom acts, nor can chance have any place in His vast dominions, where even a sparrow falleth not to the ground without Him. It is true that in our short-sighted apprehensions the distribution appears very unequal, but humility and entire resignation are our bounden duties; for here we know but in part. Men’s natural dispositions are as different as the complexion of their faces; nor can we imagine that the same measure of afflictions will answer the end of their discipline. Hence it is that among those who are evidently the

children of God we see some whose heads continually hang down as the bulrush, while others have no severe dispensations comparatively to endure. Even among the wicked this seeming partiality may be discerned. There is no question, however, but the end of these different dispensations is that they may be disciplined and prepared for a state of infinite perfection, when all tears shall be wiped away from their eyes. Those for whom these afflictions have not answered these ends, but, like Pharaoh, harden themselves in wickedness, shall be left inexcusable. It often happens that the dearest and nearest child of God feels most of the bitterness of the rod; “in this world ye shall have tribulation.” We may rest assured, however, that there cannot possibly be one needless drop in their cup, for it is measured out by the unerring wisdom of their beneficent Father. A believer without afflictions and crosses has reason to doubt his sonship, “for He chasteneth every son whom He receiveth.” Here the excellency of our holy religion appears, that it not only calls us to endure afflictions, but makes them productive of the most invaluable advantage to those who are exercised therein. The inspired penman of this Psalm had to endure not an ordinary measure of these afflictions, both before and after he became king over Israel, but he was not left destitute or unaided; he had experienced that God’s strength was made perfect in weakness. From the experience he thus had of the divine help in every time of trouble he gives it as his advice to all in similar circumstances to follow the same method. With God there is no respect of persons. He is equally ready to succour and help the weakest believer as He was to help David; and when they follow the same course, “out of weakness they are made strong.” I presume there are some now present who have experienced the truth of God’s promises. that His strength is made perfect in their weakness. There is none without his own burden. Some may think that there is none more uncomfortable than themselves; some may go so far as to suspect the safety of their condition, and speak bitter things against themselves. In order by the divine blessing to give some direction and help to these heavy-laden and weary souls, it is my design to show –

- I. – Some of those many burdens which every believer may be presumed to have.
- II. – How we are to cast these burdens upon the Lord, or what is implied in so doing.
- III. – Clear up the import of the promise – “He shall sustain thee.”
- IV. – Practical inferences.

I would earnestly solicit the patient and attentive hearing of all who are now present, that they may have an opportunity of knowing whether they have a title to be numbered among the true disciples of Jesus, and hear Him invite them, saying – “Come unto Me.”

- I. – Some of the burdens which every believer may be presumed to have.

(1) Sin is a most grievous, a heavy and a dangerous burden. This is a burden we have brought with us into the world, and while we remain here, with which we must struggle. There are many who now hear me that may have no feeling of this burden; and how can they, seeing they are all in a spiritual sense dead in trespasses and sins. They have such a weight of sin upon them as will be more than sufficient (unless they are relieved from it) to sink them down to the lowest hell, and keep them there throughout the endless ages of eternity. Like a man immersed under water, who feels no weight from a quantity the hundred-thousandth part of which he would be unable out of the water to bear. But when the divine life is communicated by the Spirit of God, the feelings are restored to the once dead and insensible soul. While one is dead he is in the land of silence where no complaint is heard, but when life is restored the person feels and complains. The Apostle Paul

informs us, that he was alive once without the law, that he thought himself a good man, and wanted a feeling sense of the burden of sin, but when the commandment came sin revived and he died. The burden he had felt brought him down to the ground, he found himself unable to bear up under it. There was a strong and, on the part of the Apostle, an unavailing struggle; the soul now quickened, felt the burden of sin, and unable either to bear it or extricate himself from it, he exclaimed: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." The body of sin had affected all the powers of his soul and notwithstanding that it was deeply felt, he could do nothing towards rescuing himself, Romans 7:24. Nor was this peculiar to the Apostle only, he speaks the experience of all the people of God. Sin is their daily and most grievous burden. They would rise upon the wings of faith and make their escape from the world of troubles, but sin as a weight prevents them. They would hold spiritual converse with God, but sin intervenes. They would have their conversation in heaven, but sin prevents their mind from acquiring that spirituality of affection which is necessary for that employment. They would, with unwearied perseverance and daily advancement, go towards Zion as travellers to that happy country; but the burden of sin prevents them from making but a small progress. This burden is much more so to some than to others. And perhaps those sins which never come to light, yea, which they never committed bear heavier upon them and prove their greatest burden. The Psalmist felt this burden (Psalm 38:4). Every believer does the same and, being burdened, groans and longs exceedingly to be relieved from it. We should, therefore, lay aside every weight and more especially that sin which doth so easily beset us that we may run with patience (though not sinless) the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1).

(2) The hiding of God's countenance from the soul is a burden, weighty and unsupportable, to the believer. Sin is not only the worst of evils in itself, but also the cause of all the other evils man is appointed to endure. It is matter of no small astonishment that we are in general so fond of our greatest tormentor. Among the other great evils which sin introduced into the world, that complete and universal alienation which it has made between the Creator and His creatures is by no means the least. This of itself is misery enough. There is no happiness for a rational being but in God. Sin made God, in whom is no enmity, an enemy to us; and man, in the constitution of whose original nature there was no enmity, is now enmity itself. Nor is this all; the highly-favoured few, who, through the mercy and free love of God in Christ, have been readmitted into favour and intimate fellowship with Him, have reason with David to exclaim that God hides His countenance from them, and they are brought low. The soul-excruciating pain of desertion is felt by none except those who are admitted into nearness and fellowship with God, who upon some favoured seasons can say with the disciples it is good for us to be here; and we may observe that the degree of distress wherewith the soul is affected upon the hiding of God's countenance, corresponds with the degree of intimacy enjoyed. Those who are only mere professors of religion desire no more of it than such a measure of knowledge as shall enable them to pass through the world with a reputation, but the sincere believer desires to have the life of religion, and the life of religion is fellowship and communion with God, who is not the God of the dead, but of the living. This man alone can say that it is sweeter to him than honey, than the honey-comb (Psalm 19:10). He has not only seen, but also tasted that the Lord is good. The life of faith is the Christian's life, but the communion with God which His people enjoy with Him upon some seasons depends not upon faith. They may have a faith's view of God when they have not an experimental communion with Him; so that we have here two distinct considerations. Sometimes the hiding of God's countenance refers only to one of these: we may have faith in exercise, when we are very low in our experience. This was the case with David, as he expressed it in Psalm 42. New converts in the day of their espousals live more by experience than by faith. Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the bridegroom is with

them? But the day is coming when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they mourn in those days. Hence we are not to imagine that God's providential care shall ever be withdrawn from His people: "My presence shall go with you, and I shall give you rest." But it implies that in our experience we are not uniformly to enjoy the same sense of His gracious presence, which upon some occasions we are permitted to enjoy. What a cloud came over the mind of the disconsolate disciples when Jesus was in the grave. Those who have been in similar circumstances can best tell. The reason why God thus withholds the influence of His Spirit in their experiences from His people is in some measure concealed from us. He giveth no account of any of His matters. We know that it proceeds from love. Sometimes it arises from unwatchful or unguarded action of His people. They may have forgotten it, but when they feel their souls bereaved of comfort, they then confess that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that they have forsaken the Lord. Perhaps they may not discover the reason, and yet from God's dealings towards them they know they have offended Him. Like an obedient wife whose happiness depends upon the smiles of her affectionate husband, or a dutiful son who anxiously wishes to please his father, the believer would anxiously know wherein he has offended, and would suffer any infliction rather than to want the smiles of his father and his God. But I presume that some of the desertions of believers may arise from the infinite wisdom of God towards them, in order to prepare them for some extraordinary discovery of Himself, or some change that is to happen in their situation. But from whatever cause it arises, it is an uncomfortable situation, and when a believer comes the length of losing sight of his resignation as a duty he owes to God, it becomes intolerable (Psalm 70).

(3) The believer's doubts as to his interest in the benefits of the everlasting Covenant, well ordered in all things and sure, is another heavy burden. As another evil consequence of sin, we are under sentence of condemnation to the holy and good law of God, having lost our ability of giving that perfect obedience which it requires. We are, therefore, upon the terms of the first covenant outcasts, and have most justly forfeited every claim to any of the benefits we had secured to us in the covenant. The last breath we draw is only from the unmerited goodness of God. But the Lord was pleased to establish with His people in Christ a new and unalterable covenant. In this covenant the forfeited right and lost blessings are restored. They are sure to all the seed, and they have as unquestionable a title to them as Adam in innocence had to all that God promised him. That this covenant is made with Christ and ratified by His blood, is every believer's salvation and all his desire. But if the covenant is made with Christ as head and representative of His people, it is but just and reasonable that while He stands according to the stipulations of the covenant, those who are interested in it, for whose sake He entered into such an engagement, should be partakers of the benefits of the covenant. Unless this had been the case, to speak with reverence, we could not say that justice would be done to the covenant Head. We find, therefore, that there is no believer but receives these covenant blessings. It is also the first concern of every Christian to know in whom he has believed, and to taste of covenant love in covenant mercies. This is as unquestionable an evidence and much more so than if an angel came from God with the same message with which he came to the blessed virgin. Yea, it is as certain as if God with an audible voice declared that one is a child of the covenant. Covenant benefits can only come to the children of the covenant. The children's bread cannot be given to dogs. Christ undertook and accomplished the work for those that the Father had given Him from eternity. Nor need any one examine into this secret mystery; let him rather know if his state bespeaks him to be among the redeemed of the Lord Jesus. There are some who have no doubt on their minds but they are God's children in the covenant of grace. It becomes them to take heed how they walk. There are others, and the greatest number,

who, notwithstanding that they are as certainly interested in the covenant as the former, can scarcely believe it. They dare not say, but they may be; but they dread they are not. They are prevented from utter despair, but they are often on the brink of that pit. This is a most severe burden, and naturally resulting from the former. These doubts arise from within and from without. The experience of sin and sinful corruptions working from within; the promises so completely locked up that the believer dares not look to them. Unbelief and the evil suggestions of Satan will misrepresent the promises, and even doubt their veracity (Psalm 116:11). When he considers the advanced state of other believers, he does rejoice, but instead of being encouraged, he rather concludes that, were he one of God's children, he would partake of their privileges. He can find no parallel to Himself among the people of God: he often repents and bitterly laments that ever he presumed to take the children's bread. This is a most unsupportable burden to an awakened soul, who knows and firmly believes that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby he can be saved, but that of Jesus alone. These doubts and dismal apprehensions may be in part constitutional. They are, however, in some degree or other felt by true believers. They should be cast upon the Lord. He shall sustain us. The manner of casting them upon Him comes to be considered under another head; but let none imagine that this case is peculiar to him alone. It is the lot of many of God's children. Be not content, however, in the condition, but believe that you may be a child of the covenant, although you may not have the appearance of it. Distinguish yourself from the formal hypocrite by not contenting yourself with a probability, but aspiring to a certainty.

(4) Their duties are a burden to believers. This may on first hearing surprise some who are not acquainted with the experience of believers. But to make this in their view a greater paradox, their duties are their burden and their pleasure. They feel an ardent, growing desire for the duties of their holy faith as they advance in the spiritual life. But their minds are enlightened to see and believe the immaculate holiness and spotless purity of God. They know that He is a Spirit, and they that serve Him acceptably must do it in spirit and in truth. They, on the contrary, find themselves under the influence of carnal and dead affections: they mourn after that fervour and warmth in devotion, which, though it cannot recommend them to the favour of God, would indicate the indwelling habitation of His Holy Spirit. They would do good but evil is present with them. They would go unto God as their chiefest joy and glory in Him, but they find a deadness and indifference. Even their most solemn duties, where they expected comfort, are rendered uncomfortable to them by the intrusion of vain thoughts; and sometimes they retire from the house of God much more burdened in this respect than when they have entered it. They are often in a strait between two: they fear that their duties may provoke the Spirit of God to withdraw, and yet they cannot refrain from duties. Nor is this occasionally: some even complain that they have reason to fear that no duty of the Christian life had ever been rightly performed. They sometimes doubt their sincerity; and any commendation from men grieves and humbles them. They exclaim from a sense of deadness – “Awake, O north wind, and come thou south.”

(5) The temptations of Satan are a burden to believers. In this wilderness of their pilgrimage the people of God are exposed to many hardships; they are in themselves a poor, defenceless people. Among other things which make their journey through life often uncomfortable, they must feel the stings of fiery flying serpents. The Apostle's complaint, in the experience of every child of God, holds still true, “and we are not ignorant of his devices.” There are some of God's people who have more discernment than others to know his temptations. There are some who from their natural temper and other circumstances are less exposed than others. Some, from a long experience of his attacks, are not much disconcerted, at least till he makes use of new methods. Some are tempted to such abandoned vices as they would not communicate to their nearest connections or their most confidential

friends. They find their hearts contrary to their wishes open to his attacks. They find, even, in the most solemn part of their duties, that the heart, by the evil suggestions of the enemy, is carried away. Nay, sometimes they are compelled to abandon a commanded duty. They hear his secret whisperings carrying away their attention. They pray against it and yet their smart is not eased. Upon some occasions they have relief, but after that his temptations are renewed with redoubled fury. The more seeming relation and zeal they discover for Christ they are the more distressed by the cunning and craft of the old serpent. Cast this burden upon the Lord.

(6) The present melancholy and unpromising state of the Church of Christ and its members is another grievous burden to the believer. It is an undoubted evidence of a Christian temper, to have his mind expanded and enlarged by universal philanthropy for all men. Every true believer is of a public spirit, yea, the cause and glory of Christ concerns him much more than his own private interest and even his eternal salvation. Seeing that he has a union with Christ and the members of his mystical body, he has a particular and abiding concern for his mother, the church. Thus we find the believing soul expressing himself in Song 8:2. We justly despise that son who denies and disregards the influence which natural affection has over him; nor can the most dutiful attention repay the care and painful distress of a mother. It is no less unnatural for children of the same family to be indifferent about one another's welfare. Between Christ and believers who are begotten by the Gospel, there is a much more intimate relation. They are members of one body. They are under the influence of one spirit, they are children of one family. They are joint heirs with Christ, of the same glorious hope. Every believer feels an interest in the Church of Christ. He rejoices over it, and mourns when the cause of Christ is not triumphing. When he perceives the marks of an angry God towards the Church; when he sees judgments drawing nigh, when he sees Satan successful then is his time to encourage, warn, and admonish, earnestly and unceasingly imploring the return of God's favour and His exercising protection over His Church. There is much reason to mourn and lament over the cause of God in our days. Who that is in any measure animated by the same Spirit but will unite with the weeping prophet in Jeremiah 9. But although the union of believers with one another exceeds that of natural affection, it by no means eradicates it. On the contrary, it raises it to a degree of which a natural person is never susceptible: it begets a concern for the immortal part. It not unfrequently happens that godly persons have very ungodly and wicked relatives. Adam had a Cain in his family, Aaron had a Nadab and Abihu, David had an Absalom, and in the Saviour's own family there was a Judas. And in general many of the people of God have cause to complain that their house is not right with God. In the distribution of God's grace it happens in families and congregations that while one is taken, the other is left. This must be matter of grief to the believer, and the more intimate the connection the heavier the burden. Cast this burden also upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.

(7) Poverty is a burden to believers, notwithstanding that the Lord has in a great measure alienated the affections of believers from earthly to heavenly objects; and that they expect to be made happy only when that which is in part shall be done away, yet they must feel like other men the ills of life. They are in general a poor, despised, and afflicted people. "Not many noble, not many mighty are called." From the present unrelenting state of men's mind they have in their view little lenity to expect. There is, in most cases, no mercy for a poor man. "The rich have many friends." It is likely the believer many times knows not to what hand to turn for relief. He may have others depending on him, and sees nothing wherewith to provide for them. This is a burden grievous to be borne. It may sometimes stagger the faith of a confirmed believer. The affliction wherewith his family is visited heightens the distress. In similar circumstances we find the Israelites upon their crossing the Red Sea. They had no prospect of support; they were always to move forward, and even should they settle, the wilderness would

give them no maintenance. But the Lord had provided for them. If many of us had been present, it is most probable we should have joined them in their murmuring against God and Moses. Cast this burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee. "They that truly seek the Lord shall not want any good."

Lastly, the want of a burden is a most grievous and weighty burden. However strange this may seem to some present, this is the most unsupportable of all the burdens we have mentioned. It is so in its own nature, and more especially as it unfits us for having it removed. Owing partly to the believer's constitutional habits, the delusion of sin, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of his own heart, he finds himself in a state which he cannot describe. There is such a deadness and indifference seizing him that he cannot with any degree of precision trace any work of grace in his soul; any corruption, any need of a Saviour, any danger, any desire for an alteration of state, and yet he feels a most uncomfortable uneasiness in that situation. In this state such indifference may take hold of him, that unless restrained by the unseen agency of God, he would commit any sin to which he is tempted. But in the goodness of God Satan is restrained in a great measure. The believer would mourn and lament his sins before God, but he cannot. He would pray, but knows not how. He would meditate, but knows not on what. He would believe, but feels himself under an utter inability. Sin, like a delirious fever, has seized all his soul, and he can scarcely feel or describe anything in its true light. We should be cautious that we do not create such a state for ourselves. Cast thy burden upon the Lord.

II. How we are to cast these burdens upon the Lord. Man, in consequence of his apostacy from God, labours under the most deplorable inability in a moral sense. Any one of these burdens we have enumerated would be more than sufficient to prevent his ever arriving at that rest which remaineth for the people of God. But blessed be God we are not left to have an unavailing struggle with difficulties. We have a mighty one as our defence, and underneath are the everlasting arms. To encourage our approaches, He has assumed human form, and most graciously bore Himself all these burdens. This makes a faithful and fellow-feeling High Priest. This of itself must be matter of encouragement for feeble and helpless sinners. But they are not left to conjecture. He condescends in the most endearing unequivocal manner, to invite them to His pardoning, refreshing, and supporting mercy, much readier to communicate strength than they are to ask him. "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). In this state of trial and difficulties we groan, being burdened, but we labour not alone. The Angel of the Covenant that appeared unto Jacob in the way is ever present with us. But there is such humility and condescension in God towards sinners that they find a difficulty in believing it possible – "Dost thou wash my feet?" There is no question but God is more than sufficient to uphold the most disconsolate believer under the heaviest burden which any is doomed to labour under. But the difficulty rests on his own part. That impotency which incapacitated him for bearing under his burdens, disables him also from casting them upon the Lord. There are two hands wherewith the believing soul should cast his burdens upon the Lord: these are faith and prayer. If at any time, which often happens, one of these begins to fail, it must be cast by the other, and sometimes their joint efforts must be exercised. Like as Moses and the inferior judges managed the concerns of the children of Israel. I speak not of counterfeits. Both these must be inseparable if they be of the genuine kind. Faith may sometimes be weak, but prayer may be had recourse to in all cases. Prayer must be offered in faith; but it may be the prayer of faith, when faith itself is not in exercise. Faith, likewise, partakes of the nature of prayer. In any and in every situation when we have recourse to these, they prove effectual. There is no burden which we may groan

under but can be supported in this manner. How comfortable may the soul who has freedom of access to God in prayer be in any situation. And I may appeal to the experience of some who now hear me, that not infrequently they had approached a throne of grace bitterly complaining of their many hardships and trials; but, if in the goodness of their God, they have been admitted to any intimacy there, they find themselves eased of their burdens and possessed of unexpected strength for their Christian course. A burden can never bear too heavy upon the believer while he has freedom of access to God, to make known unto Him all his complaints.

III. What is implied in this promise – “He shall sustain thee?” This does not imply that a belief in the all-sufficient, all-free grace of God in Christ should make us more careless in our walk through the world. This would be to sin, because grace doth abound. If a man be rescued from sudden destruction by the benevolent exertions of another, should this induce him to expose himself to the same danger, even should his former benefactor stand by; and surely no man in his sober senses would be so mad. This imputation upon the doctrines of free grace is the most unfair and unjust that can be conceived. The clearer and firmer a believer’s assurance in the favour and protection of God is, the greater watchfulness and circumspection does this beget in him. Neither does this promise imply that when we cast our burdens upon the Lord we ourselves are henceforward to go free. This would not be to consult our good, which God uniformly does. Such is the corruption and deceitfulness of the human heart that did we but for any length of time want something to humble us, we should in a short time turn wanton against the Lord, and bring upon ourselves the sorest burdens. For there are no burdens so severe as those which we have brought upon ourselves by our unwatchfulness. The promise, therefore, does not run in this way. You shall be free, but He shall sustain thee, labouring under the burden and often ready to fear that you shall fail. But the promise implies –

1st. That no unnecessary burden shall be laid upon us, that even a dog cannot bark against us without permission. The Lord is infinitely wise; He does not proportion our burdens according to our resolutions, but according to our danger; and what He has designed for us, or what He is to do by us. There are many who may suppose that a less burden might serve, and that should he have easier burdens he might make a greater progress in the Christian life. But this proceeds from ignorance. A little acquaintance with your heart will convince you that even the measure of affliction you have is scarcely sufficient for keeping down the pride and haughtiness of your heart. They are all measured out by infinite wisdom. They are necessary for preserving us right in our journey through life, lest we might make a shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience; and though we may not know it now, we shall know it hereafter. For we are yet but children in knowledge; nor do we know what the wisdom of our father intends for us. He shall sustain us; and surely if we must be indebted for strength, we should leave the manner to Himself.

2nd. This implies that we shall have every necessary direction and discipline under these burdens. When we have at first engaged in the Christian course, we are impatient of restraint: we think that nothing but comforts and uninterrupted communion and fellowship with God is to be enjoyed. But we have not gone far when we find that we are not yet made perfect. We must undergo a discipline here, that we may arrive safely and qualified for the enjoyment of the higher house. When we begin the Christian life we may have many struggles. Ephraim most emphatically compares himself to a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke (Jeremiah 31:18). The untoward disposition of his heart was much severer than the service to which he was called. The Lord shall teach His children

this discipline until they are at length brought to rejoice and joy in tribulation. They bear the yoke not of constraint, but of a willing mind. They are under the tuition of infinite wisdom and unalterable love.

3rd. This promise implies that they are perfectly secure under every burden, and that at length they shall be delivered out of them all. He shall sustain thee. He, who is the Almighty, He who is Lord of Hosts; all thy burdens are under His immediate inspection; yea, they are ordered by Himself: "Fear not, for I am with thee, be not afraid, for I am thy God." While there is omnipotence in Jehovah to sustain a fellow-feeling and grace in Christ, and the fellowship of the Spirit the true and sincere believer cannot fail. It is true that even the most sincere believer is but weaker than frailty itself; but the appointing of the burden for believers belongs to God: troubles arise not out of the dust. Omnipotence itself cannot lay any burden which itself is not able to bear. Pray not then, O believer, that thy burden may be removed or even lightened, but in a consistency with infinite wisdom, well knowing that though of yourself you are insufficient, yet your sufficiency is of God: "His grace shall be sufficient for you, for His strength is made perfect in weakness." But think not that even God Himself is to support you under these afflictions always. He has a nobler service for you yet in the higher house. Even while we are supported under afflictions, and they are thus joyous, there is a desire of deliverance natural to man. This time of redemption draweth nigh. The end of the journey will ease us. Our salvation is nearer than when we have believed. Who would grudge a few trials and difficulties, if need be, in this world when there is the more unquestionable certainty of a sudden and certain deliverance. More especially when we reflect that these very distresses shall enhance the value of the enjoyments, and that they are, moreover, one chief means whereby we are prepared for heaven. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

#### IV. – Practical inferences.

(1) Hence we may remark what an inestimable privilege the Gospel of Jesus is. It has among many other advantages given us clear and comprehensive notions of that great Being whose we are, and whom we serve. It has made Him, who was formerly little more than an object of terror, an object of love and unshaken confidence. Believers can now contemplate His adorable perfections and see them in the face of Jesus all exercised on their behalf encouraging their hearts, and giving them good hope and consolation through grace. Nor can any one consider God out of Christ but as an object of terror; on the other hand, connected with this knowledge of God is our happiness. Let the advantages we enjoy be duly estimated.

(2) Hence, we may learn the true cause of our disquietudes and anxious fears. It is true that we must suffer many things in this our probation state. These are not, however, the cause of our fears. Our fears do not arise either from our sufferings or wants. Many of our fellow mortals had these to endure, and yet they were not cast down, but rejoiced in them. There is none who is in the least acquainted with the history of the saints but will know this. Have we not the same unchangeable God? Is not His goodness, His power, wisdom and love equally free to us as to them, and yet we do not find such unshaken confidence? The reason is plain, they had more real intimacy with God; were much more exercised by afflictions than we are, yet they fainted not because they believed that underneath were the everlasting arms. It is necessary in order to constitute God an object of dependence, that there be a special revelation of Him to us as individuals.

(3) Have we cast our burdens upon Jehovah? This is an important question. Sooner or later we shall all feel the need of Him. But unless it is done as an act of the will, with

the consent of the mind we should not imagine ourselves safe. A reliance upon God is the believer's privilege.

(4) A word to those who have unshaken confidence and freedom of access to God. They should walk circumspectly, lest they may in their experience deprive themselves of this greatest of all blessings. They should, also, have compassion upon those that weary themselves for very vanity. They should bear with the weak. They should guard against self-sufficiency.

(5) Those who entertain doubts of an interest in God and can not say whether they have laid their burden upon Him, they should examine whether He has done anything for them in time past from which they may comfortably conclude that they are objects of His peculiar care. They should, also, endeavour to commit their ways unto God and having done so to leave the issue with Him. They should often contemplate the unchangeableness of God their Saviour.

Lastly, a word to hypocrites and self-secure sinners. It happens often that those who have least cause, are the most seemingly comfortable. But their joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot – it shall be turned into sorrow. They should examine upon what their confidence is founded. If they would but listen to the voice of conscience it would inform them that it is nothing more than presumption. Real trials and severe difficulties are before them. Let careless sinners also consider the awful situation wherein they stand. Consider what is said, and the Lord give you understanding.

[November and December 1924]

## Notes of a Sermon.

[It will be noticed by the reader that this sermon is incomplete - Editor.]

By the late REV. ALEXANDER MACLEOD, Rogart  
(formerly Uig, Lewis).

“And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day,  
In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen” – Genesis 22:14.

The providences of God towards His people are most remarkable and fraught with the most weighty instructions: they are no doubt intended for the benefit of all generations, and preserved in the Scriptures for that purpose. The history of Abraham, the friend of God and father of the faithful, is most remarkable and interesting. Of that part of his life and that severe trial of his faith to which the text refers we have an account from the beginning of this chapter, and in the text a remembrance is kept of it. The Lord shall be seen by His people in their difficulties, straits, and trials. He shall be seen in the mount, as in the case before us, when matters are brought to an extremity; when all succour failed, and we have neither help nor hope. As, on the one hand, we ought not to despise the chastening of the Lord, so on the other we ought not to faint when we are rebuked of Him. Just as Abraham was about to lay the knife on his son the Lord was seen; this made the deliverance most beneficial and sweet. Let us notice –

- I. That it is God's usual way to bring His people into extremities.
- II. That then, and not before, the Lord will be seen.

- III. That these straits and trials into which God in His sovereignty brings His children are not punishments but privileges.
- IV. Let us make application.

I. That it is God's usual way to bring His people to extremities.

That is a truth so fully established by the history of God's people, both living and dead, that we need not stay upon the point. We refer you to the great cloud of witnesses with which we are surrounded. Those that are now nearest the throne above came out of great tribulation. The tribulations do not arise out of the nature of religion necessarily, but it has been the manner in which the wise Sovereign of the world saw meet to lead His children forward towards the enjoyment of that rest which remaineth for the people of God. I would, on the present occasion, endeavour to direct your attention to a few reasons as far as we can know them and He has revealed them, of this part of the divine procedure towards His people. This may help us in apprehending and discharging duty.

(1) The Lord will bring us to extremities that they might be really felt by us as an affliction; we, too often, create innumerable evils for ourselves; and while we view them through the medium of our own fancy, we presume that there is none so heavily afflicted as we are. And it often happens that nothing will convince us of our sin and folly except the hand of God being laid heavy upon us. Then we forget what we are wont to consider as a heavy affliction. Until we are brought to an extremity it really is no affliction; and from what is not so we reap no benefit. For we come out of those furnaces we have ourselves heated more stubborn and self-willed than before. But when we are shut in on every side and have no hope left, then we shall look out of ourselves. God does not willingly grieve nor afflict any of the children of men, but He does it for their profit.

(2) That in our extremity we might seek unto God. We are all, since the introduction of sin, alienated from the life that is in God: we run after the creature, and pursue with eager, imaginary expectation the fleeting shadows, and as long as we believe that the creature can do us any good, we shall go no further. Hence it is that when we are exercised in the discipline of our Heavenly Father, and acquire spiritual discernment, we see that the severest dispensations which at the time were viewed as indications of the divine displeasure, are seen to be fruits of His love, and inseparable from it. Those that in their health live at the greatest distance from God, and never hear what He says, will often in their affliction adopt the language of, in Hosea 6:1 – “Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.” It is only when the aid of the creature ends that the assistance of the Creator comes in. On a death-bed almost all are serious. When the creature can afford them no comfort nor stay; when all are wholly vanity, “miserable comforters.” But it is one thing to be convinced of the vanity of, and renounce, all creature comfort from necessity, and another thing to do it from a conviction of the excellency of divine things. It is one thing to say in the bitterness of one's spirit, “My judgment is greater than I can bear,” and another thing for the soul to say – “Thou art my portion in the land of the living.” Natural causes may produce the former, but nothing except a saving work of God upon the heart can effect the latter.

(3) That we may acknowledge and praise God as our helper and deliverer. We are so attached to self and so much under the influence of this universal idol, that when difficulties are only partial, we ascribe the deliverance, at least in part, to ourselves and other means. If we lean to the creature, we will either resolve them wholly to it, and forget God, or at best divide the praise. It is true that God has appointed means, and uniformly works by them, but until we are denied the efficacy of means and refer all to the supreme will and blessing of God, we cannot have a deliverance in God's way nor as a real benefit; see this beautifully illustrated in the case of Gideon (Judges 7:2). The

original number which Gideon had to oppose to that of the enemy was comparatively few, but then Gideon would have ascribed the victory to himself in some measure had he been suffered to go forth with them. But when the number was so very much reduced as to leave no hope of a victory, the praise must be entirely and wholly referred to God. The language from such a deliverance will naturally be – “Not unto us, O! Lord, not unto us, but to thy name, for thy glory and truth’s sake be the praise.” God will not divide His glory, “He will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to graven images.” Had Abraham discovered the ram a moment sooner, God should not have so much glory of it, nor would Isaac be so sweet to him as receiving him from the dead. Those who are taught of God know that when they substitute any idol in place of God that He takes vengeance on that invention – all of them must say in a day of God’s mighty power – “What have I to do any more with idols?”

(4) That from a happy necessity we might be made to seek the Lord, and know Him experimentally. In our ease and prosperity we are all prone to be satisfied with a speculative acquaintance with God. And until these fine speculations are called into actual exercise by severe trials, we may think that our hill standeth firm, and shall not be moved. But all these refuges of lies shall be swept away, and in the day of evil nothing but a practical experimental acquaintance with God can support the soul. Nothing is well learned but by experience. This alone can inspire confidence in God. The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me (said David) out of the hands of this Philistine. It is when a person is in real extremity that he shall have experience of the Lord. Therefore, we read concerning Manasseh that when he was in affliction and prayed and humbled himself, he knew the Lord was God (2 Chronicles 33:13). Such of you as attend to God’s dealings with His people will find that it was always upon some emergency or change in their circumstances and situations that He manifested Himself to them. This was eminently the case with Jacob, both on his leaving his father’s house and on his return. He had upon both these very critical occasions clear manifestations of the God of Bethel, and that knowledge of God which men acquire in such circumstances never leaves them. It has the best influence both upon their hearts and life. It even animates them to an unshaken trust in God in the prospect of death and judgment.

Lastly, that our faith in, and acquaintance with, and confidence in God might be tried and proved. This view we have of this dispensation towards Abraham, see verse 1 compared with Hebrews 11:17. The most spiritual faith and the most scriptural experience have some alloy and mixture. This was the case with Abraham, though on the whole his knowledge of God was special and his love to Him sincere, yet his heart was alienated in some degree by Isaac. He suffered him to go to the utmost without committing the deed, to see whether his faith would carry him forward to that very severe act of obedience. The language of all these trials is, Lovest thou Me more than these? How severely did Jesus try the trust of Peter, and in a similar manner the woman of Canaan. But blessed is the man who endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. The trial of their faith is more precious than gold that perisheth. The oftener the pure metal is melted, the more precious it is, for there is no time of melting but it is separated from some alloy. Such is the case with the vessels of mercy, until they are wholly purified, and fit to be presented without spot or wrinkle or blemish, or any such thing. With this difference, however, that all these trials and furnaces cannot purify the soul: it is only the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, that cleanseth the soul from all sin.

By way of application:

(1) Let none judge God's love by the external evidences of it, but wait the issues. When a physician cuts deep and administers harsh medicines we may feel distressed, but without these there could be neither life nor cure. Sin has penetrated so deep, that God, in order to restore the soul to moral health, and fit it for His own enjoyment, administers such means as He sees most fit. But both His wisdom and love are sufficient guards to prevent any unnecessary severity either in the manner, the measure, or the time. I was dumb, opening not my mouth, because Thou didst it.

(2) Let us learn from hence never to be discouraged, nor suffer our hearts to be cast down within us, however seemingly desperate our case be. A believer in God through Christ may address the language of David to himself, Psalm 42:11, and 43:5. What case could be more desperate than the one before us, and attended with circumstances of greater distress? Yet the Lord, in the fittest and most proper moment, delivered him. There are many other similar instances left us on record in the Holy Scriptures. Consider the case of Job and the happy issue of it. Consider Nebuchadnezzar's case as in Daniel 4, the Israelites at the Red Sea, and the Jews in Mordecai's time. And I believe there is none who has marked God's ways towards himself, but must have remarked that man's necessities are God's opportunity. Still hope in God, therefore, for you shall have yet cause to praise Him, who is the light of your countenance and your God.

(3) Let this subject call forth the exercise of patience and self-examination under any particular distress or affliction. God's time is always seasonable: a deliverance from trials, without suitable dispositions to improve that deliverance would be most hurtful to ourselves. Let patience then have its perfect work that we may be entire and wanting nothing in all the will of God.

See the difference between real religion and the bare name, true religion always produces fruit; we may have the name and the knowledge without the truth of religion. Abraham's obedience is referred to by God Himself, as an evidence of his having feared Him (verse 12). Some think they can be honest enough men: good husbands and wives: faithful parents and affectionate dutiful children, and so on without religion which is impossible. For the tree must be good before the fruit can be good. While others think that if they can talk about religion, and attain to some experience in it, that they may neglect personal and relative duties. Both these extremes are damnable errors. Without religion man is on a level with the beasts that perish, and without the fruits of genuine universal holiness every man's religion is vain. The apostle James tells us that Abraham justified the truth of his faith (religion) when he offered his son, Isaac. As God, therefore, in His Word, and by the work of His Spirit in the renewed soul, has joined faith and good works, let not man put them asunder. Let your light so shine before men that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father who is in heaven.

[January 1925]

## Synod Sermon.

By the REV. JAMES MACLEOD, MODERATOR.

Preached at Glasgow, 20th May 1924.

“And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end” – Luke 1:33.

We may consider: –

- I. What are we to understand by “the house of Jacob?”
- II. The King that was to reign over “this house.”
- III. The continuity of His reign – “For ever.”

### I. The house of Jacob.

The above designation is given to the church of God by the Angel Gabriel. It seems that the appellation is applied to the church when weak, lonely, and despised (Isaiah 41:14). “Fear not, thou worm Jacob and ye men of Israel (or, as we have it in the margin, “Few men”), I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” The church at this period was very weak so far as public testimony against sin, Satan, and the world was concerned. It is not the masses that may be professing religion that count, but the spirit that animates the profession, and the fruit which it brings forth. For we are, and shall be, known by our fruit. The walk, life, and conversion of the church of God is recorded in the Scriptures, and the profession that continues to act contrary to that rule and standard must ultimately perish.

The family of Jacob was not better than other sinners of the ruined race of Adam. The sin of Adam ruined the entire race. It left us exposed “to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.” The blame is ours. We may cavil, rage,

and blaspheme the Creator, but the fault is ours. It will for time and eternity remain at our door, unless removed through the sovereign grace of God. Sin, guilt, death, and hell belong to us, because we have sinned against the revealed will of God. "The wages of sin is death." The abyss between us and God through sin is of such a nature that, on the one hand, the infinite nature, justice, and law of God is offended; and that on the other hand the finite creature of yesterday cannot atone, amend, nor undo what he did, although one was to offer his body to be burned. The sin of the finite is against the infinite glory and purity of God. Although the whole human race had been chained and imprisoned like the fallen angels for the eternal ages, and were none to escape, God would be eternally just and holy in permitting us to drop into the pit that we digged for ourselves.

The covenant of grace is an act of divine sovereignty. It was not because we were in need; but because God of His own good pleasure provided another way for sinners of our fallen race to escape. It was the sovereign pleasure of Jehovah to provide the covenant of grace. The very term "grace," so often used in the English language, indicates sovereignty. Let us not flatter ourselves at all in this matter, as if every one who may have the mere term "grace" on his lips is to be saved, or that he knows anything at all of what that implies in the Scripture sense. We have no doubt whatever but the trembling, tossed child of God is often afraid that he or she never understood the spiritual meaning of what "grace" implies in the Scripture sense, but such people are made painfully conscious of this fact that they are entirely unworthy of grace. The Lord says to them, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The bold hypocrite assumes the attitude that if he performs a few rounds of formal duties that he puts even the Most High under obligations to acknowledge and reward him. What a delusion!

There are only two classes of people in the world – believers and unbelievers. "And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). In this case, as in the former, Jacob is typical of the church. He was separated from his brother from their mother's womb. This was according to the election of grace. The church of God is one nation of believers, elected from all eternity in Christ Jesus, the Redeemer of Israel. It is one family, and there is no schism in this church in her past and present history, and we have divine warrant to believe that there shall be none in her future life and history. "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through you all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

Believers were like other sinners, without God, and without hope in the world. It was the Holy Spirit that called them all from Abel downward, and onwards to the end of time. He alone can call the soul of man to life, repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus. This is the work of the Spirit. They were all dead in trespasses and sins. They had no desire to turn from their evil ways, until the Spirit of God began to convince them of their forlorn and benighted condition. We believe that Abraham was as ignorant of God before he was called as Paul was before his conversion. They were all alike as far as their state and nature was concerned. The difference in nationality, colour, or culture makes no difference in the nature and state of sinners before God. They need the same power to change them, and the same grace to save them. "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isaiah 2:5).

It was the same Spirit that illuminated her path under the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Apostolic dispensations. Their faith was in the Christ promised of God before His advent as sure as their faith is in Him since His ascension. "For the life of the flesh is in the

blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). The blood of innocent animals was typical of the blood of the Lamb of God. The house of Jacob could not appear before the Most High without blood. It was God that enjoined upon them to use this symbol; and to neglect or disrespect it was a crime which meant the death of the criminal. Under the present dispensation, no one can worship God without faith in the blood of Christ as presented in the Gospel – “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). The house of Jacob under the Mosaic dispensation was called holy, not that any one in the nation was holy as to their state or nature, but because of their privileges, and being separated from the idolatrous nations around them. “For circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision” (Romans 2:25). They were not all regenerated, as their history makes that very evident. We may be circumcised or baptised, and received into external union with the Church, and remain in our hearts and state as far away from God as the Pagans that never heard that there was a God. The corrupt Church of Rome claims that all who profess faith in her sacraments and pays homage to the Pope of Rome, and obedience to her priests, shall be in heaven, and none else. There are others, especially the Greek Church and the sacerdotal party in the Episcopal Church of England, putting forth the same unscriptural claims. Their opinion is that men, united by the same profession, irrespective of their walk, life, and conversation, are the Church, and outside this society there cannot be salvation. We know that the Episcopal Church of England in her best days held different views from what she holds now. Thousands of her clergy are quite prepared to unite with Rome any day, while others would willingly do the same were it not that they do not care to acknowledge the Pontiff of Rome as her supreme bishop. Although thousands of her pastors are prepared to unite with Rome any day, she claims to be the Church of Christ. The Presbyterian Churches are fast following in the same dreadful path, and boast in external unity, toleration, and amalgamation at the expense of Divine truth. The Jews still claim that they, and they alone, are the people of God and His chosen nation, and that all outside their society are doomed to eternal wrath. “O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: For in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall” (Genesis 49:6).

## II. The King that was to reign over “this house.”

We need not enter into any discussion as to who the King was, nor whom the angel meant. For it is obvious that Luke’s narrative and from other parts of holy writ that the Royal King was and is Jesus Christ. Now a King presupposes a kingdom, and a kingdom subjects.

The Lord Jesus was the anointed King of Zion whom God appointed to reign and rule over His elect Church. God declares concerning this King – “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I will put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1). And in Psalm 2:6 – “Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion; Psalm 10:16 – “The Lord is King for ever and ever”; and in Psalm 149:2 – “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” The Prophet Isaiah confirms this when he says – “For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”

The Lord Jesus is the Second Person, possessed of infinite power and glory. He is not less nor greater than the Father, nor the Spirit, but equal in all the essential

attributes of Godhead. He was elected by God from all eternity to be the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel. God calls Him “mine elect.” He was elected, appointed, and anointed. The marvellous wonder of redeeming love is revealed in the election of the Second Person. But let us not for a moment think that the love of the Father in electing His Son was greater or less than that of Christ in becoming the servant of Jehovah for saving the Church. No. There is no inequality in the love of the Persons of the Trinity. The Persons are the same in “substance, equal in power and in glory.”

It was absolutely essential before redemption could be attained in strict justice, that the Redeemer should be possessed of infinite and eternal attributes. Therefore, those who do deny or belittle the eternal Godhead of Christ, deny the way of salvation through Christ: and hence close the only door of hope and mercy against themselves. The blasphemous theories of the so-called theologians of to-day that the mere example of Christ is all that is necessary, say – “Away with Him! away with Him! crucify Him! crucify Him!” For the weakest believers Christ is God, as to His Divine Person, and as Kinsman Redeemer He is God and Man, two natures distinct in the one Person for ever.

Again, let us consider His work. He was elected, appointed and anointed to do the will of the Father who sent Him. The Church that He came to redeem was dead in sin, living without God and without hope in the world. Satan was her master, his service her delight, and sinful lusts her destruction. It must have been infinite love indeed that would for a moment consider her redemption. But God is love. No wonder, although the Apostle John would declare – “Behold what manner of love.”

Let us now consider the work her King was to do. The power of Satan was to be destroyed. The King was commissioned to do this, for He came to destroy the works of the devil. The law that was dishonoured, violated, and profaned had to be exalted. The claims of divine justice had to be satisfied; if not, the “flaming sword” would never admit her into God’s love and favour again. This work could not be accomplished unless the King would assume bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh, which He did according to the time appointed in the decrees of God. He took to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, united it to His divine Person. “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). “And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee. Therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

Paul, in writing to Timothy, declares it to be a profound mystery. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Timothy 3:16). The Church of God joins holy trembling with her mirth in contemplating the infinite wisdom, power, and glory revealed in the manifestation of the Son of God.

It requires on our part the utmost reverence, the obedience and the love of our whole being when meditating upon the manifestation of Immanuel. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:12). Therefore, Christ being possessed of infinite power, was capable to meet on the one hand the claims of divine justice; and on the other hand to destroy the power of Satan over the Church. He had to contend with the full rage of devils. For the Church was not to be delivered without a severe struggle, agony, humiliation, and finally death. It was in the capacity of King that He went out against the Devil, the Prince of darkness, and in absolute equity destroyed the Devil’s power over His church for eternity. It was as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world that He met the claims and demands of divine justice. In virtue of His finished

work, He reigned, ruled, and governed over His church from her very infancy; and shall continue to reign to the end of time over His church. It was by His Spirit that Abel was called to the life of faith which he so nobly sealed with his blood, through imparted grace. It was by His Word and Spirit that the church during the Patriarchal period was governed, taught, and led out of all her troubles and difficulties. The same is true concerning the church during the Mosaic dispensation. "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them" (Numbers 23:21). The church must be delivered from the power of sin and Satan. There is no inclination in the corrupt will to leave the service of sin and Satan. It requires infinite power, wisdom, love, and mercy to wean her from the Devil's service. The Lord Jesus by His Spirit quickens her to realise how hopeless and helpless is her condition. The quickened soul feels how dreadful it is to be under the wrath of God. We do not speak about the measure that each and all may have been made conscious of, but this is a fact, that we are positively assured of from God's truth, that sin is made bitter to the child of God. The soul is made willing by His great power to leave the service of Satan. Rebekah was no more willing to leave her father's house for Isaac's sake than the soul made willing is to leave the service and kingdom of Satan. The church of God is one in this respect, the Spirit quickens, the mode of operating upon the soul is a hidden mystery, which reveals the nature of the work done in the light of God's truth, in the walk, life, and conversation of the regenerated. Christ must be the object of faith. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in the soul by faith, and the Spirit shall not glorify another object for Christ.

The church, under the Jewish dispensation, did not differ in this respect from the church under the present dispensation. The object of faith was Christ under both modes of dispensations and administrations. When the church exercised faith in Christ the sacrificial offerings were only means to confirm her in her faith in Christ promised. When her faith rested merely in the sacrifices, then she ceased to worship and serve God. It is by His Word and Spirit that He reigned, reigns, and shall reign. He over-rules all the designs of His enemies in every age of time. No doubt the Devil thought if Abel was murdered that grace and godliness would perish with him. But Satan only defeated his own ends as usual. The church in Egypt was like to die, but her dying groans were her very life and resurrection. Her King came down and made bare His holy arm, destroyed her powerful enemies, delivered her, and brought her to the wilderness to cleanse and purify her. The Lord Jesus knows when and how to deliver His church. His love to her never changes. His care over her is the same in every generation. The ages and generations of men make no changes in the decrees of heaven. "Thou art from everlasting to everlasting God." So sang the church thousands of years ago, and that is her song now as then, and will be for ever.

It is our duty to examine in the light of divine truth His manner of reigning and ruling over the church. We have already pointed out that it was by His Word and Spirit that Christ was reigning over the church in every age. "The King, eternal, immortal, invisible" never changes, and, therefore, there is no change in His government, nor in the manner of His ruling the church. The church under the theocracy was governed and regulated by the Spirit and Word of God. The precepts and laws of God were given to her as her only rule to direct and guide her in her life, walk, and conversation. She was not to deviate an iota from the prescribed rules, laws, and regulations enacted and enjoined upon her, for if so, she would cease to be the church of God. The priest, king, and peasant were to obey and observe the laws of God most strictly in their respective spheres. There was no distinction between persons at all under this dispensation no more than at the present time. The Higher Critics of that day were punished by death, as we read in the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram (Numbers 16:32). And let us beware, there shall be no excuse for

Higher Critics at last. God is as holy and just now as He was then. "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses or the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?" (2 Corinthians 3:7-8). Under the present dispensation the external mode of ministration is changed; but the Spirit is the same, and will continue to be the same to the end of time. The Lord Jesus as Head of His church governs and rules the church by His Word and Spirit now as then.

There are many associations setting forth high claims to be the only true church of God. But it is not by our profession we are on all occasions known, but by the fruit we bring forth. The church that does not adhere to the Word of God in church government, practice, discipline, doctrine, and worship is in open revolt against the authority of Christ as King over Zion. The unity and communion of saints can only be realised by faith in Christ through the Word of God. Communion with the Father and Son through the Holy Spirit can only be experienced through and in the Word of God. The courts of His church militant must be ruled, governed, and regulated by His Word and Spirit. The church or society that forsakes the divine rule given to guide and direct her ceases to be the church of Christ. The churches in our native land that cast off the easy yoke of Christ ceased to be the churches of Christ. They are simply synagogues of Satan. We may be despised as a church, our ministers and office-bearers considered illiterate, narrow-minded, intolerant, and vain-glorious for endeavouring to adhere to the Word of God, and to the blessed Lord Jesus as our only Saviour and King. The sneers of men shall be of little moment on the great Day of Judgment, when the King Eternal shall muster all the forces of heaven against all who lived ungodly in this present life. We can claim (and our bitterest enemies cannot deny us that) that we are endeavouring to adhere in the courts of our church to the Word of God, where His adorable will and purpose is made known unto men. And Christ through His blessed Word is reigning and ruling in our midst, and as long as we continue and remain faithful to our trust, the King of Zion will continue faithful unto us. He will not forsake His Word, neither shall He forsake those who adhere to Him in His Word. There are some churches which profess that they believe that the Bible contains the Word of God, but that belief may mean anything or nothing. Our Church believes the whole Bible to be the Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. If one part of it is disputed, then the whole must fall with the disputed part. It is not like the records of fallen men. Some of it may be quite accurately recorded; while other parts might not be so. The Bible is of divine origin, and meant to be absolutely true in every part of it. There can be no half-way in this matter.

It is the society of believers which adhere to the Word of God that can claim to be the Church of Christ. Christ cannot acknowledge societies which on the one hand dispute the eternal prerogatives that belong to Himself, and on the other hand disown His laws, rules, and government as these are infallibly published under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. We have every possible authority to stand steadfast and unmoveable through His promised grace in our present attitude towards the Lord Jesus as King of Zion; and towards other associations which have ceased in part or in whole to acknowledge Christ as King of Zion.

### III. The continuity of His reign.

He was visibly reigning over the Church from the earliest period of her history. He reigns now through His Word and the courts of His church. The officers of the church are bound to administer according to His Word. Pastors are duty bound to rule according to His Word. Elders and deacons are duty bound to rule according to His Word. The members are duty bound to live and walk in this world according to His Word. College

professors are duty bound to teach the youth under their charge and care according to the Word of God. Teachers who neglect their duty for the popular applause of the masses, or for selfish aggrandisement, cease to be teachers in the Church of Christ. The Lord Jesus shall summon us ere long to our final account, and we cannot afford to neglect our duty towards Him. The souls of men demand of us to be faithful to them. If not they shall cry eternally against us. The children yet unborn demand of us to be faithful to their precious souls. If we shall not hand to them what we have received (or profess to have received) from the hands of Christ by His Spirit, we must pass to eternity with their curses upon our heads.

The cause of Christ is (evidently) universally low, and the power of Satan raging throughout the world. However, there is a glorious future before the church of God. While we do not hold, nor countenance, pre-Millennium views, yet we do believe that the cause of Christ shall prosper throughout the whole world. The Jews shall be brought to acknowledge Christ, the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, and Christ, the immortal King shall reign by His Spirit and Word. The prince and peasant shall flock to His raised-up banner. The Cross of Christ will bring nations, black, white, and yellow, to bow before His throne, and pay homage to Him by faith, and shall submit to His laws in love and obedience to His divine command. Satan may be imitating (by a godless League of Nations) the glorious league of nations during the Millennium, but Christ promised the Church to sweep Satan and his leaguers off the face of the earth for a thousand years. He will do it, too. Then after the Millennium comes the end of the world – the Day of Judgment. Believers will be raised up in glory and honour on that day. The wicked, too, shall be raised, but, alas! it is for their eternal punishment – “For the wages of sin is death.”

Let us hold fast by our profession in the strength of promised grace. We have every reason why we should be thankful to the Head of the Church for continuing His loving kindness and tender mercies towards us. He is testifying by His Word and Spirit in our midst against sin, Satan, and the world. We humbly believe that precious souls are quickened in our midst, and that the church of God is comforted from day to day by the ministration of the sealing ordinances, the public preaching of the Word and through private and public prayer meetings. We long for an outpouring of His Spirit among Jews and Gentiles. “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.”

[February 1925]

## Short Expositions.

[These notes were sent us by an esteemed friend in Chesley, Ontario, and are taken from a diary of the late Rev. John Ross, who was so highly esteemed by our people in Ontario. – Editor.]

By the late REV. JOHN ROSS, Brucefield, Ontario.

“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein” – Mark 10:15.

### I.

The spirit in which the kingdom of God must be received is that of a little child. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein. This makes it quite sure that those who receive not the kingdom of God as a little child shall miss it and be shut out. They can have no part or lot in it.

- (1) The kingdom of God means the gospel, or the state of reconciliation and favour with God into which the gospel introduces all who receive it.
- (2) It means that state of holy walk with God, and in His service to which He calls you by the gospel.
- (3) That state of glory and eternal happiness, riches, and dignity, which is the present hope of all who heartily receive the gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ is King over the kingdom of God, and all who enter into this kingdom submit to His will.

This kingdom is spiritual, altogether different from the kingdoms of this world. It is not in word but in power; not in meat and drink, but in righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost. This kingdom is given to us, spread out before us, offered to us, and pressed upon our acceptance and it only remains that we receive it. It is given on God’s part, and when that which He has given is received by us, it is ours.

The spirit in which this is done is represented by that of a little child. Let us endeavour to understand in what respects we must receive the kingdom of God as a little child.

- (1) A little child believes readily. It has no established opinions and conclusions of its own which stand in the way of receiving as true with full faith what he is told. He does not consider difficulties and start objections and set up reasonings of his own, but without questioning he believes what he is seriously told by one who has never deceived him. As a little child we must receive the testimony of

God regarding His kingdom, otherwise we cannot enter therein. We enter by faith, and he who holds his own opinions and sets up his own reasonings and hearkens to his own thoughts instead of receiving God's testimony and relying upon it cannot believe, and so cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

(2) A little child is comparatively free of guile. There is a frankness and candour and openness about a little child that you do not find with grown-up people. In this also the little child represents the true Christian. Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. There was no guile found in their mouth. The guileful spirit is offensive to God, and is a great obstacle to faith.

(3) The little child knows its own weakness, can do little for itself. He feels his need of support, care, help, guidance, protection, and this is also the spirit of all who receive the kingdom of God. They know they cannot put away their own guilt, illuminate their own minds, change their own hearts, subdue their own sins, defend themselves against Satan and the world, or do anything for themselves.

(4) The little child is easily weaned from all its cherished tastes. Its affections can be weaned from what it at present loves most, and it can place them on others. It is not so with the grown-up person. And in this also the little child is an illustration of the spirit in which men must receive the kingdom of God. They must transfer their affections from the world to Jesus Christ – to God. All other ties must yield to His claims. All idols must be thrown down and cast away. Your soul must become as a weaned child, weaned from your own ways, your own will, your own pleasures, your own thoughts, your own thoughts of God and of Christ, and of His truth, your own thoughts of yourself, your own righteousness, your own companions, and all that this world holds dear and precious. You must forget your own people and your father's house, and go with the King. In this you must be like the child, weaned. It is a beautiful thing to be a little child in the hands of Jesus, in the hands of a gracious Father. If the kingdom of God must be received in this way, then it is not by working, by merit, by qualifying ourselves for it, working ourselves into it, thinking and reasoning ourselves into it. All this long preparation you are making to qualify yourself for Christ is labour in vain. You are building a Babel from which you must desist. Receive the kingdom of God as a little child, otherwise Christ has, in the words of the text, forewarned you that you cannot enter therein.

But you say – It is hard to become a little child. But it is what you ought to be. What are you before the infinite God? Paul said – “Though I be nothing.” Nebuchadnezzar said – “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.” And in the 40th chapter of Isaiah you read, “Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the dust of the balance; behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before Him are as nothing, and are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity.” Before this Glorious Being is it too much to become a little child, and when He makes to you a gift of His kingdom that you should receive it as a little child, and be a little child in His hand, confiding in Him and trusting in Him as a little child in his father and friend? Trust in His guidance as a little child trusts. Be open and frank with God like a little child. Put away your deceit and guile, and appear before God in your true character, owning what you are. Know your own weakness and helplessness, and that you need the grace of God for everything. Be humble and teachable like the little child. Be obedient like the little child, and be like the weaned child in renouncing all that is pleasant to you but offensive to

God. Thus receive the kingdom of God, and you shall enter therein and find rest to your souls.

What considerations shall I present, then, to urge you thus to enter into the kingdom of God? Let the misery of your present state as a fallen being urge you to press into the kingdom; let the destruction to which you are exposed from the world urge you to lose no time in entering into this kingdom. Let the certainty that the kingdom of God has come nigh to you in very deed urge you to press into it. God has in very deed made an offer of His Son to you as a guilty sinner. That offer lies before you. Let the blessedness that awaits you in the kingdom of God make you press into it. Let the claims which God your Creator and Jesus Christ the Redeemer have upon you urge you to press into it. Let the shortness of life, the uncertainty of it, young man, urge you to press into the kingdom of God as little children. Lay down your proud weapons of rebellion and pride and mocking, and seek the kingdom of God. You will find in closing with Christ and yielding yourselves up to Him, a peace and joy and strength of a kind the world can never give you. Consecrate the days of your youth to God and to your gracious Redeemer. Young women, you, too, enter the kingdom of God as little children. Just as you are. Own Him as the only one who can do for you all you need. You can no more roll off your guilt than a child can roll away a mountain. You can no more cleanse your hearts than the Ethiopian can change his colour or the leopard his spots. The Lord Jesus the Saviour must do all. Nothing can be done without Him.

“Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter therein.” From the very nature of the case he shall not enter therein. The nature of God’s kingdom makes it impossible. The actual state and temper of men’s minds towards the kingdom of God makes it impossible. The very end for which the Kingdom of God is set up makes it impossible. But, oh! it is a becoming thing and a sweet thing to become as a little child in connection with such a matter.

Will God care for those whom His own grace and teaching has brought to become little children? If He sees them going astray, wandering, will He not bring them back? When He sees them in danger, will He not, at the sound of their cry, come to their rescue?

When He sees them loaded with heavy burdens, will He not say, “Give me thy burden, it is too heavy for thee?” Will He not train and teach them? Never fear that He will cast off any whom He has brought to confide in Him as little children. There is not a more beautiful text than this in all the Scripture. And there is no attitude of spirit more becoming in itself, or more pleasing to God, than that of little children towards Him. Towards whom should you be as little children if not towards Him who is love, perfect love, love that passeth knowledge, He who loved His people and gave Himself for them?

[March 1925]

# Short Expositions.

By the late REV. JOHN ROSS, Brucefield, Ontario.

## II.

“And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country” – Mark 5:10.

This shows

- (1) that the devils knew and acknowledged the power of the Lord Jesus. They knew not only that He could put them out of the man, but also out of the country and out of the world.
- (2) These words show the dread which the devils have of the punishment which they know is awaiting them.
- (3) These words show that communion with men, possession of men, dwelling in them and among them, is much relished by them.

They besought Him much that He would not send them out of the country. They besought Him much, as much as a man would beseech that he might not be banished from his country and home, treasures and friends and pleasures. A man who felt himself threatened with banishment from all these by one who had full power to do it would beseech him much to be allowed to remain, and would intreat for all the mitigation of his sentence that could be obtained by entreaty. And this the Legion did in this case. The power of the Lord Jesus over them, the dread of punishment, and a passion for communion with men – wicked men – are the leading points which we see in this conduct on the part of the Legion. And this leads us to inquire, why devils desire, covet and eagerly seek to retain the society of men. That they do so is most manifest from this text, and from all parts of Scripture. And this is a fact that has too serious and important a bearing on the condition of men to be neglected by them. The Legion is not indifferent as to whether he is to dwell with men, or to be sent into the deep. They besought Him much that He would not send them out of the country. And this because he and men agreed well together.

They suited him and he suited them. Their habits and tastes had so much in common. The strongest likings and passions of their nature, and his strongest likings and passions altogether agreed. The body of the Jewish nation in the days of the Saviour was under his power and in his service. So that the Saviour, in the epistle to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, says – “I will make them of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews

and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee". They said they were Jews, and Jews they were according to the flesh, but Jews they were not inwardly, and true worshippers they were not, but the synagogue of Satan. They were Satan's own. They were animated by his spirit, they loved his image, and did his work, and what father would not beseech much that he should not be sent away from his children. If Satan has children, depend upon it he has a fondness and liking for them. He wants to be with them, and will try all he can not to part with them: he will beseech the Lord Himself much not to send him away from them.

There is the closest relationship existing between fallen men and fallen angels. There is an intimacy between them, and bonds of the strongest kind exist – bonds which may be called bonds of love, satanic love, that draws out all his desire towards them. Bonds such as exist between the fornicator and his harlot, between the drunkard and his cups and companions in sin, between the hunter and his game, between the lion and his prey, between the miser and his gold, between the schemer and the pliant, ready agents of his craft, between the giver and the receiver, between the speaker and his willing, eager hearers, between the king and his subjects. It cannot, therefore, be marvelled at that he besought Jesus much that He would not send them away out of the country. This would be against all his likings and against all his interests. He had schemes in hand which he had not yet developed. He was carrying on a trade the full profits of which he had not yet reaped. And to be sent away out of the country without his profits and investments gathered and reaped would be a sore loss. To have done so much and to lose all, and see all his schemes blasted and his hopes blighted when he was about to realise them was something he could not endure. All the principles of Satan's nature, all the interests which he has at stake in the world, and all that he has set his heart upon from the day he caused the fall of man is at work in him, prompting him to keep his hold of all he has got into his power. Let me try and open the subject more particularly. Why did he beseech Him that he would not send them away out of the country?

(1) Because he delights in communion with men, wicked men. He has a present gratification in fellowship with them. He likes to see them, to hear them, to dwell where they are dwelling, and mingle in all business and intercourse. Sin is his present work and delight. And men can rival him in sinning. Men take pleasure in sin, and sin with all their might, with their whole heart, in sinning lies their joy. And Satan is like them in this, that sin affords him all the delight and happiness of which his nature is now capable. No idol of fashion, no idol of society, ever dreads and dislikes expulsion from the circles in which he moves as Satan dreads the disgrace and loss which expulsion from the circles which he haunts.

(2) Not only has he present gratification in human society, but he has his hands full of work among them. He finds ample employment for all his fertile and active mind among them. He is in his own kingdom, in his own fields, with all his machinery in active operation around him, with his whole heart set upon what he is doing. He is not playing nor carrying on his work with any measure of indifference as to whether he will prosper or fail in what he is doing. He means business – business at the present moment with far-reaching consequences in view, making investments and laying out much with a view to future profits, and in the midst of all this to be suddenly arrested and threatened with expulsion and lose all he has done is something he dreads. He besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. This would be to stop all the business he was carrying on, and lose the profits of what he had already done.

When the Lord rebuked Peter, saying – "Get thee behind me, Satan," He gave the reason in the following words: – "For thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the

things that be of men,” showing that to savour the things that be of men is the same thing as being of Satan. The things of men, of which men approve, relish of their own accord, are also of Satan. “And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood” (Revelation 12:15).

[April 1925]

## A Sermon.

By the REV. MURDO MORRISON, LOCHINVER.

Preached in the First Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland,  
Vancouver, B.C., 14th September 1924.

(Taken down by a Hearer.)

“And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” – Isaiah 25:6.

You will notice that the Prophet praises God when he considers His dealings with wicked nations in the past, and how He brought down and laid low the mighty, as described in the second verse, and on the other hand, when He remembered the poor and needy, who, as His people, bore the traits of Christian character as portrayed in the fourth verse. That shows the judgments which God was pleased to inflict upon the haughty and the high and the proud in the past, and the loving kindness which He showed to those who are here described as poor, when he says, “For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat.” God’s Word tells us that He will give grace to the humble, and that He will send away the proud empty; and there would be some hope for you were you coming here this evening, conscious of your need, your poverty, your helplessness, but so long as you think that you can do something whereby you can reconcile yourself to God and procure His favour, so long will you not enjoy any of the blessings of salvation as they are set forth before us in the everlasting Gospel.

I. Now, in directing your attention to this passage, I should like to refer, first of all, to the Maker of the feast, for he says here – “And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast.” Who is it that makes this feast? It is the Lord of Hosts.

II. In the second place, we shall endeavour to direct your attention to the place where this feast is made – the place where the feast is made is “in this mountain.”

III. In the third place, we have what is provided for in the feast. The material of the feast is two-fold. There are the “fat things” and there are the “wines on the lees.”

IV. In the fourth and last place, we have the people for whom this feast is made. It is made for all people, for he says here, “And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast” – it is unto all people and for all kinds of people.

I. Now, we shall consider the Maker of this feast.

(1) As a feast is made among men, you will notice that it is not everyone who is capable of providing a feast or of going to the expense of making one. Suppose, just now, that one on equal footing with yourselves, having no more riches behind him than you have, were to announce that he would provide a feast, and that he would invite some people to that feast, and you were among those invited, it would not raise very great hopes in you, and why? Because this person's resources could not go very far towards providing a lavish feast, and if he were to provide it for a still larger number, he would become bankrupt. He would not have sufficient resources behind him to meet the expenses involved. Further, if you heard of a very rich man announcing his purpose of providing a feast in Vancouver, and this man sent invitations to all and sundry, and that you had every warrant to come to that feast, then that would justify you in cherishing delightful hopes and expectations. You would be taken up with it. You would say to yourselves, surely this rich man will provide something very delicious and attractive. I should like to go to this feast. Now, if that man were to propose that this feast should be open, not only to the people of Vancouver, but to the whole of the inhabitants of Canada, or say, further afield, then that would mean that perhaps all his resources would be taxed to the uttermost, and he would be in danger of bringing himself to bankruptcy, however rich he might be. Now, supposing again that the Government of this country, with all its resources behind it, should undertake to provide and sustain all the subjects within its territory, and if it should say, "We shall support you, every one of you, for an indefinite period of time," it would soon collapse. It could not meet the demands made upon it. Its coffers would soon become depleted, and it would be in danger of becoming bankrupt, and all the resources that may be behind any man, or the strongest nations of the earth, would but support a small section of the population of the earth after all.

(2) This is one thing we must realise as true – that when one makes a feast, he must be rich. A poor person could never provide a feast. But here we have one who makes a feast, and it is the Lord of Glory, and He is rich, infinitely rich, infinitely and unspeakably rich; for He is rich in His nature, in His own nature – the nature of God embracing His eternal attributes; infinitely rich and glorious in Himself, altogether lovely, and should be the object of every rational creature's adoration and admiration. For this God of the Bible is a God who is infinitely holy and blessed in Himself, and that necessarily arises from His own nature and the perfections of that nature. He is boundless in His immensity as He is self-existent in His being. He derives no existence from any, but in and from Himself, and He is without a beginning and without an end; everlastingly the same, and unchangeable yesterday, to-day, and for ever. That is the Person who provides this feast. A Person rich in His nature, and not only is He rich in His nature, but He is rich in His Providence. Ah, dear friends, the earth and all that it contains belongs unto the Lord. The whole earth, all its riches, all the minerals in its bowels, all that the earth yields on its surface, and all the creatures that move upon the face of the earth, God can claim as His own. He is the Creator of all, and His claim is by right of possession and creation. Think of His riches in His providence, when He sustains all beings. When He gives them their meat in due season, and sustains man and beast, as we were singing in the opening Psalm. He upholds them day after day, out of the riches of His providence. The earth is yielding continually its riches to man for his sustenance and support, and is it not because of Him that these have never failed? We are daily laden with His benefits. Great is His faithfulness in giving us health and life, and in providing food convenient for us from the earth and from the sea. The earth and the sea are laid under tribute to provide for the sustenance and for the support of human life. Think of His riches in His providence, how He is providing for everyone. His resources never fail; His providential resources never come to an end; He is continually

meeting our wants, and yet how seldom we think of Him, the great and merciful God. We will not as much as acknowledge Him. The most of the people in Canada and upon the face of the earth to-day will not acknowledge God, in His mercies, which He is showering upon them day after day. They are ashamed to own Him. When the Heathen, the Chinese, and the Japanese, and all the devotees of false religions are not ashamed to acknowledge their own false gods – the Japanese in his worship to Buddha, the Chinaman in his worship of Confucius – all have their own gods, all acknowledge them, bowing down before them, and yet, when you think of this great and mighty God whom we profess to worship, and whom the lukewarm professors of this age will not as much as own in connection with the food they eat from day to day. To-day you have an example of the most callous ingratitude. Do they ever express their thankfulness to Him for providing them with the necessaries of life, and yet, on the other hand, if a present were given to you by some person, you would be profuse in your expressions of thankfulness and gratitude for such a gift, but not one word will come out of your mouth in acknowledgment to God for supplying your needs day by day. Ah, what an awful condition we are in. No wonder though our condemnation will have many aggravations at last.

(3) Let me now speak of the riches of His grace. The riches of Grace are infinite, for we read of the riches of His Grace, of His Glory; the exceeding riches of His Goodness; the riches of His Mercy; the riches of His Love; and all these riches are behind the feast that is here set before you, and these are vast and inexhaustible resources. The riches of His Love and of His Glory and of His Mercy, as revealed to us, are altogether wonderful, and should be the subject constantly of our meditation, as well as of our adoration. Fellow-sinner, is He not a rich provider? As has been said already, he who makes a feast must be rich, or else the feast might draw too much upon his resources and cause him to fail; but not so Jehovah, who giveth liberally in the riches of His Grace, and it is the riches of His Grace that are wholly responsible for this feast; that move Him to make this feast for man, for He sees man as poor and destitute; as He says here, “For thou hast been a strength to the needy in His distress; a refuge from the storm; a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.” And we, friends, came all to be bankrupt in the fall of our first covenant head. God had enriched us when we came from His hand, with His own image, and He kept up communion with us by the Holy Ghost; but when we fell, we were deprived of all these rights, and we became exceedingly poor and destitute, and hopelessly ruined and undone for time and for eternity.

Here, then, you have God providing a feast. Man is in a spiritually starving condition. His soul is starving, and he will inevitably die eternally, unless there is a provision made such as the prophet says, “And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.” Think now of His riches, for there are no bounds to them. They are incalculable. They cannot be searched. They are incomprehensible; Jehovah’s riches, which are behind this wonderful feast for man’s soul, are exhibited in the everlasting Gospel.

(4) There is another thing which is always associated with the maker of a feast, and that is, he is not only rich, but he is also kindly disposed and liberal-handed, for when he makes a feast, it implies that he is a very kindly disposed person, and not only kindly disposed, but exceedingly liberal with his resources. He is not niggardly at all, and there is something noble about a person who, when under no obligation whatsoever to do so, provides a great feast. It reveals his liberality and his generous disposition, and that he likes to share with others his possessions. Is there not something noble in this feast? Oh,

friends, think of God, the Lord of Heaven, desiring to share with us His own possessions, His own blessings, and His own happiness; His own grace, His love, His truth, and all that He has He desires to share with us. He is so liberal-minded and so liberal-handed, as it is said in Isaiah 32:8 – “But the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand,” and here is One who is exceedingly liberal in His nature, desiring liberal things for us, and by these liberal things He is ready to say that He will stand, and does He not give proof of it in the Gospel, of the feast He is making, otherwise, the Word of God is meaningless. It is said that He giveth liberally unto all and upbraideth not. He says, “Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.” Here is liberality and generosity of an unusual kind on the part of God towards men; so you shall have no excuse at last, if you continue in a Christless state and in the state in which you came into the world.

II. I come, secondly, to notice the place where this feast is made.

(1) It is made “in this mountain,” and you will observe that the word “this” as a demonstrative pronoun, lays emphasis upon the word “mountain” in the phrase “in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts,” as if He were pointing out a certain location as distinguished from every other place. Now when you come to look upon a mountain, you will find that the word is invariably used in the Word of God to mean great difficulties and trials which the Church of God meets with in the world; secondly, it is taken to mean the nations and powers of this world; but here it is used in a different sense. It is used to mean the Church of God, and it is the Church of God that is represented by “this mountain,” or in other words, the kingdom that Christ was to set up when He would appear in the fulness of the times, and it was to be a mountain. We have a wonderful display of mountains beyond this City of Vancouver, and I could not but be very impressively struck with the picturesque grandeur exhibited by these mountains when passing through them. I was exceedingly impressed with the awe-inspiring spectacle which the Rockies presented to my gaze. Think of the wonderful display of infinite power and of wise design we find in these mountains. What design is there, and what power was put forth to call them into being in such wonderful array and order. There is no confusion or disorder there, peak after peak rising in constant succession, and they impressed us with the thought of the infinite being of God who formed them. What a puny creature man is after all. You have only to go and read the book of creation, and you should then have your mouth for ever closed; never more to speak against God or charge Him with folly. The mountain here to which our attention is directed represents the Church Christ was to set up in the world, or the Kingdom He was to found. A mountain is, in its formation, something rising high above the ordinary plain, and begins from its base to gradually taper towards its summit, and when you contrast the mountain with the level plain, what thought will strike you? What but the thought that there is a vast difference between the mountain and the plain below. Well, that is the way with the true Church of God in the world. The world is down in the swamp and in the plain, wallowing in sin, corruption, and lust; lying in wickedness. It is an enemy to God, to truth, to the salvation of man – an enemy to all that is good. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, for the things that are in the world are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,” and these are the things you find in these lower plains, in the swamp. But here you have the true Church of God. I am not speaking of the churches of Vancouver, Canada, or Great Britain. The true Church of Christ is where two or three are gathered in His name and He in their midst. As godly Alexander Peden, the Scottish Covenanter, said, “Where you find a poor lass behind a dyke, praying to the Lord for the Kirk of Scotland, that is the true Church of God.” The Church is a mountain that cannot

be moved. It is the mountain that rises majestically above the earth and the things of the earth, and wherever you find a poor soul praying to God, looking to Him for salvation, depending upon Him for happiness in time and throughout eternity, you find there the true Church of God. Not the cathedrals of the Roman Catholic Church or of the Church of England, or the beautiful edifices which are reared by the Presbyterian Churches of Canada and the Methodist and Congregational and all other sects you find here – these are not like the Churches of Christ. No, they are more like nurseries of the enemy, leading people astray. Much of what they are concerned about is fine music, or anything but the truth, so much so that music is becoming idolised. “He was a lover of music.” That is the praise that is very often given to young men who die, by ministers at funerals. That is Roman Catholicism. That is an evidence of the fact that we are turning into the ways that will lead to destruction. They are doing as the Jews did in the time when Christ Himself entered into His Father’s House, and took a scourge of small cords, and said, “It is written, my Father’s House shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.” That is what we have to-day. Every kind of theatrical amusement and form of recreation is set up in connection with the present-day churches. The world would plead that if the Church came more and more into line with it, that she was likely to win the world. The Church began to pander and cater to the fancies and notions of godless men and women in congregations, until, at last, they took down the Church to the level of the theatre and the concert hall. The Church will never succeed in raising the world to its plane and level, but the world will succeed in bringing the Church down to its level. The Church should be high above the world and its ways, its fashions and its wickedness.

Then again, it is true about this mountain that the higher you go or the more you frequent Gospel ordinances, the more you see of the glory of God, and the less you will see the world to be. When you rise upon the slopes of the mountain peaks beyond Vancouver, you will see the city very small, but when you are down in the plain, then the peaks appear small. That is the way with the true Church of God. Go into the Church of God, and if you have a spirit of worship at all, you will see how little is the world and everything in it, compared with the one thing needful. They fade into insignificance when compared with the things of God. The higher you go up, the smaller you see the objects down below; the lower you are down, the smaller you see the objects above you. The eye of faith is like a telescope, the one end of which magnifies, the other diminishes. So the enlightened mind or the eye of faith views the things which are above great and the things below small. You remember that the Psalmist envied the condition of the wicked, they prospered always, but then he says he went into the House of God, and he saw the end they would have, and so his envy came to an end. He saw vanity written upon the things of the world. But, my friends, come you unto the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, for “where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

(2) In the second place, this mountain is immovable. Its foundations are deep in the earth, and if you should happen to see a person go to move even a small mountain, you would say that he was mentally unbalanced. It has never yet been attempted. No creature has ever gone the length of imagining he could remove a mountain. Well, we may say that this is a mountain which cannot be moved, the true Church of God, as Christ says, and as it is written in another place, “Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.” This is the kingdom which cannot be moved, and if it were possible for those who have seen these mountains two or three hundred years ago, to see them again, they would immediately say, “I know them; they are not changed,” and that is the way with the truth of God and His Church. Man may change and people may want new religions, but the things of God never change, they are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The

Church, unchangeable in truth, government, and discipline, is like a mountain that cannot be moved, and when a sinner is born again, you will find that he also is like those of God's people hundreds of years in the past – no change in them. Wicked generations are changing, but God will visit them with calamities; they are turning aside from the truth, unto vanities and lies, but God's truth shall endure for ever.

(3) In the third and last place under this head, it is awe-inspiring to behold a mountain. Its majestic appearance strikes you with awe and dread. Well, when was the Church of God an object of majesty and dread and of fear to man? Just when she was keeping to the truth, and when she was giving obedience to Christ and acknowledging His rights as the Redeemer in Zion. That is when she became awful, and an object that caused fear and dread in the minds of men. As Mary Queen of Scots said, she feared the prayers of John Knox much more than she feared 10,000 armed soldiers. Just because that man of God was so near to the Lord and was destitute of fear and full of the cause of Christ, and was ready to offer himself for his God. He was awful to behold, and was like a mountain in his steadfastness. In the Song of Songs the Church is in the following words viewed as terrible: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" That is the Church or the bride of Christ, looking terrible as an army with banners. Mountains are terrible to behold, and excite due feelings of dread and awe as you approach them.

III. I proceed now to consider the material that is provided in the feast. It is made up of two things, of wines on the lees and the feast of fat things.

(1) I should like to speak now of the "wines upon the lees," and you will notice that it is repeated and further amplified, to show the wonderful qualities of the wine set before us in the feast. You never saw a feast without wine and fat things. Rich people have their cellars filled with the best wines, and the older these wines are the better they are in value and in quality. With regard to a feast made by man, it costs an extraordinary sum of money, but then it is only for one diet. It might be as there have been in England, feasts costing many hundred pounds, but only one diet. But here is One who is providing a feast for all time, yea, and through all eternity, and He never fails. His resources never came to an end, and He is providing here wine on the lees, well refined; wine calculated to make one merry and cheerful. We have seen people who have been at death's door with weakness and faintness, and when wine was administered, the person received strength and felt cheered, as wine is a means of restoring health at times. The everlasting Covenant between Father and Son embraced this very material for the feast He proposed to make for sinners. In the Gospel you will find this often compared to a supper or dinner. Christ says a certain King made a marriage for his son, and he killed the oxen and everything was ready, and he sent his servants to ask them that were bidden to come to the marriage.

In another place, in the 9th chapter of Proverbs, God's provision in the everlasting Covenant for perishing sinners is declared in the words, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens. She crieth upon the highest places of the city, whoso is simple let him turn in hither." Now that idea was brought out in the Proverbs by Solomon, and the Saviour Himself is, as it were, putting light upon it when He says, it is like a dinner or a supper a certain man made, and you know a supper or a dinner is the last meal, and very often feasts are made at dinner-time or supper-time. Then, as the supper is the last meal, I may say this feast is the last provision, which is the Gospel. God made other arrangements in Old Testament times. He gave the Law and He gave the Prophets, as meals going before, but

now He has given a feast in the everlasting Gospel; a last supper or dinner, and He will make no further provision. The feast of the Gospel is God's last gracious dispensation until the end of time, and if you do not come to partake of the material of this feast, then there is no other provision for you. Ah, think just now of this wine! What is the wine on the lees, well refined? It is just the love of God. The love of God is compared to wine. It is like wine on the lees, well refined, very old wine – old as Eternity. God loved them with an everlasting love, and with loving kindness has He drawn them, and this aspect of God's character is the most wondrous of all, namely, that He should have loved sinners, and that this love should be manifested in the gift of His dearly beloved Son.

When a man makes a feast, he is impelled by love and kindness towards those for whom he provides it, and we may say God was impelled by everlasting love in His heart to make this feast for sinners. Oh, what a wondrous provision! How old? As old as Eternity; before man had a being. Think of this provision! Think of God loving sinners from Eternity! Now, friends, I say the love of God, shed abroad in the heart, is just as you take wine out of a cup literally; you feel the effect in your soul, you feel it affecting your whole being; your body as well as your soul. The whole being of man feels the effect of this love, like wine well refined, well refined in the cross of Christ, in Christ's dying upon the accursed tree. Could there be any higher manifestation of the love of God? That is the greatest proof you have of this love; God giving His own Eternal Son, and that Son coming to die upon the cross, and remaining under the power of death for a time. Well, friends, think of this wine upon the lees, well refined.

(2) Let me now consider the second part of this provision of the feast, which though mentioned first in the verse, I take up last, that is, "A feast of fat things." It is again Christ in His death and suffering. Christ took our nature unto Himself, for as God He could not suffer. He could not offer the sacrifice required until He became man. I may say that Christ exhibited the sap and marrow of divinity in all His words, for "He spake as never man spake." The people wondered at the gracious words that came out of His mouth. The words of the Saviour when He preached on earth were like a sweet-smelling myrrh. People were conscious of a wonderful fragrance in His word; they felt that no man ever spake like this Man, yet the Pharisees resented the Lord of Glory. They felt great authority accompanying His words: they felt their consciences disturbed as they listened and realised the authority with which the Son of God spake, the Grace that was in every word that came out of His mouth; in every step of obedience on earth; every step He took in obeying the law and satisfying justice. The Psalmist, in reference to this, says: – "They with the fatness of thy house shall be well satisfied," and again, the 63rd Psalm reads – "Even as with marrow and with fat my soul shall filled be." Ah, when a creature partakes of this marrow and this fat provided by God it is like filling and satiating the hungry soul. Nothing else will satisfy the hungry soul. Are you hungering for Christ? Here is a feast provided – a feast of fat things, full of marrow. The offerings of lambs under the Mosaic economy were typical of the Saviour, the Lamb of God. In the Old Testament the fat of animals was roasted and the smell inhaled by the priests was altogether appetising and savoury. Here you have Christ offering Himself in His body and soul, a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile God to us. That is the feast here for you to-night; a feast of fat things, full of marrow. There is nothing else like it.

What is marrow? Marrow is that which every living creature must have in its bones. A creature without marrow in its bones would not be able to move. If its bones were to break, without marrow they would not heal. Well, we have all broken bones. All fell in Adam. We can do nothing. We are hopelessly helpless, like a maimed man who cannot move. Such is man as he is in himself. He has nothing whereby he can move towards

God or make himself acceptable to God. Therefore, this marrow is provided to heal man and to give strength to the poor, and to bring him nigh to God. Here we have a feast of fat things, full of marrow, and this is what you need – that marrow might be put into your bones, and that you might be raised up to serve the Lord and to obey His commandments; to cleave to His truth, and to walk in His ways, and to delight in His ordinances. Faith from heaven will enable you to partake of this feast. This is the feast of fat things; for Christ says – “My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me,” and you have life in you if you partake of Him. And how are you to partake of Him? By faith. What is faith? Faith is a firm, full, and whole-hearted persuasion of the veracity of the Word of God, and of the truthfulness of these things that are set before you. Remember, it is not in a corporal way at all you are to partake of this. Not as you take ordinary bread and wine. You are to partake of it in a spiritual manner, and the soul has a mouth, and that mouth is faith, and it is this you are to put into the mouth of faith and which comes into the soul, just as if you were swallowing your ordinary food which goes into yourself and becomes part and parcel of your body. The Christian comes to be like Christ, and assimilates Christ, or the Divine nature to himself. It is in this way they grow up unto the full stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

The more a creature partakes of Christ, the more spiritual he becomes. Ah, then, it is by faith we are to partake of this feast. What a wonderful feast it is. Think of this feast this evening. I invite you in the name of the Lord to partake of it, and if you will not partake of this feast, you will perish and you will die eternally. You have resisted God’s way of salvation too long. You would have none of this provision in the everlasting Covenant. But yet once more Christ is offered to you here. Ah, friends, seek that God would beget in you this faith, and remember that it is Christ set before you in His humiliation, by taking our nature unto Himself, and in our nature obeying the law and satisfying the demands of justice, and dying upon the accursed tree, and coming under the power of death for a time; rising again on the third day, ascending into Heaven and sitting on the right hand of God – that is the provision set before us, and you must take it spiritually and by faith your soul must feed upon it, and you never tasted such a sweet portion as Christ in the Gospel; and remember He is set before you at this table, and the most costly dishes placed thereon, and the material of the feast is placed there, so, my friends, the table we have here is the everlasting Gospel and Christ offered there for sinners. As Dr Duncan said, sitting at the Lord’s Table at a Communion in Edinburgh, when he heard behind him a woman sobbing and weeping as the elements were being distributed, and when the minister brought them to this poor woman who was weeping, as she was in the act of putting out her hand to take the elements, he turned round and said, “Tak’ it, woman, tak’ it; it is for sinners.”

This provision is for needy sinners, and I invite you to come to this table, and there is no bar set before you. You have nothing to pay for it; without money and without price, as it is said in Isaiah, “Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me and eat ye that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me, hear and your soul shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting Covenant, even the sure mercies of David.” Oh, what a feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined, is the love of God set forth here! God under all aspects under which He reveals Himself as Saviour, as the feast of fat things full of marrow, will give health and life to you and will restore you to the image of God and will give you a title to eternal happiness.

IV. For whom is this feast made? For all people. It is not only to some as distinguished from others. No, it is for all alike. It is for the Jew not more than for the Gentile. It is for both and all. It is for black and for white and for the yellow. It embraces all races. Ah, yes, this feast has been made, and it is for all people, as it is said, "and they shall come from the east and from the west, and from the north and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God." Thus the Jews that rejected Christ, when they were bidden to come to the feast, are suffering the consequences of that rejection in their descendants unto this day, for the Jew is still outside, and he is still refusing to acknowledge this Christ, and he will die eternally for his sins. It is for you and for such as you, a sinner, a great sinner, a hell-deserving sinner. It is for high and low, rich and poor, young and old, no matter what they are. This is the only thing that will meet the condition of all classes of people, the only thing to meet your needs as a sinner.

Who is at the head of the feast? God himself. What does He do there? You know that the person, who makes a feast, condescends to the condition of those whom he has invited to the feast and mingles with them and places himself on the same level. In this feast have we not marvellous condescension? He was high and lofty, He also dwells with him who is of a broken heart and contrite spirit. He shows every token of loving kindness and gives every expression possible of hearty welcome to this feast and He says, "eat O! friend, drink abundantly." Oh, what a wondrous Jehovah our Jehovah is! What is to become of you if you reject him? I put it to your poor soul personally this night. The only hope for you if you are to be saved is that you partake of this feast. As I close my discourse, I leave my subject with you. Are you a sinner? You are invited and none are excluded but those that exclude themselves. As the maidens sent forth crying, "Come ye simple ones and eat of my flesh and drink of my wine which I have mingled." If you obey His command to come, oh what a feast we have here! I leave these words with you, and eternity alone will reveal what responsibility attaches to you in connection with this truth in which I endeavour to set forth the provisions of His love and grace. If you wilfully refuse its terms, I say if you continue as you are, a Christless sinner, steeped in your wickedness, there is no other hope for you but to be cast away where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. I press upon you this evening the command to flee from the wrath to come to where God has made this wonderful provision in the everlasting Gospel, and which is here displayed in its wondrous riches and glory, and may the Lord, in His mercy, give you a taste and appetite for this feast, for I hear that you are more for the world and for the things of time, and that you are grovelling in the flesh and the world, and never rising higher to think and to meditate on that which is of supreme moment for time and for eternity. May the Lord bless His Word. Amen.

[April 1925]