

A Lecture

By the REV. D. BEATON, Wick.

“For they are dead which sought the young child’s life”– Matthew 2:20.

Christ had no sooner appeared in the world than Hell was moved to its depths against Him. With a skill which was not lacking in persistent determination to thwart the divine purpose, Satan marshalled his forces and inspired his instruments for the overthrow of that Kingdom which was to be set up as an everlasting Kingdom – “for of a truth,” says Peter, “against Thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together” (Acts 4:27). But Satan had miscalculated the tremendous resources of power against which he threw his hosts, and had completely underestimated the deep, unsearchable counsels which eternal wisdom had decreed for the frustrating of every attack of the adversary, and for consummation of the great design that the God of salvation had in view. This was a conflict in which God’s glory was at stake, and the hope of a countless number of the race to which we belong. To God the issue was certain from the beginning, but to men looking on how often it appeared that the forces of darkness were to gain the day. As the Redeemer entered into the battle with the crown upon His head, conquering and to conquer, men were too ready to have their eyes diverted by the great upheavals caused by the struggle, instead of keeping them fixed upon the One who was ruling in the midst of His enemies with the assured knowledge that the issues of the day were to be on the side of eternal truth and righteousness. Viewed from one standpoint, nothing seemed so easy of accomplishment as the utter destruction of God’s great plan. He, upon whom the accomplishment of this design rested, was a weak and helpless infant, and nothing was easier for Satan than to work on the mind of one of his servants to stretch forth their hand against Jesus. When men were told that through this Child the great purpose of salvation was to be brought about, they might have said that the hopes of that countless number who were to be saved was hanging upon the breath of a helpless infant. But this is not a correct way of viewing the matter, for while it is true that the Lord Jesus was a helpless infant, it is no less true that He was the everlasting God, and no created power – angelic or otherwise – could touch that life until He gave permission. In this case, as in the case of His cause, it was hanging on the slender thread of life, but that thread, said Beza, was in the hand of God, whose power is irresistible. Satan’s attempt to frustrate God’s design was not met by the exerting of power sufficient to crush Herod, but by the use of means to render null the well-planned scheme of Satan. And when God’s time had come, He summoned the defeated tyrant into His presence to answer for his misdeeds. It was when this took place that the announcement was made – “For they are dead which sought the young Child’s life.” In these words we read heaven’s divine announcement, not only in regard to this attempt to frustrate God’s purpose, but to every attempt that has been made, is being made, and will be made to the end of time. However long the struggle may last, and however hopeless it may appear to God’s people to battle any longer, the day is coming when it may be written at the head of every chapter of history describing the conflicts against the cause of Christ – “They are dead who sought the young Child’s life.” The same words epitomise the description of the issue in the spiritual struggle of God’s people also; for, as surely as it was announced to Israel and witnessed by their very eyes – “The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see

them again no more for ever” (Exodus 14:13), so surely will it one day be fulfilled that every power that sought to destroy the life of grace in the soul will be subdued. For our present purpose, however, we intend to consider these words as conveying a message to us in connection with the opposition Christ’s cause has met, is meeting, and will yet meet in the world. The methods Satan has adopted to destroy Christ’s cause have been so varied and so incessantly supplemented by new methods the moment he discovers the old are a failure, as to indicate that there is a ceaseless vigilance and malevolent determination to crush the cause of truth if Satan can accomplish it. It is to be observed that whatever differences there may be in the plan of attack, the objective is always the same – the destruction of God’s cause – and towards that goal Satanic subtlety directs its attacks and Satanic power drives them home. The more one reads the history of the Church of God in the world with his mind fixed on this aspect of its history the more will he be impressed with the thought that it is a miracle of miracles that there is a cause of Christ in the world, and the only explanation that can be given of its existence is that the Saviour’s promise is being realised before our very eyes – “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” We shall now proceed to notice some of the methods Satan adopts to destroy God’s cause in the world.

I. Satan attempts to destroy God’s cause by stirring up men to put Christ to death.

This was a well-planned scheme, and though it failed in the first attempt, when Herod, under the instigation of Satan, stretched out his hand against the Lord’s Anointed, he did not give up his plan. When He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and read the divine promise announcing His own coming and His work, the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him, but, as He expounded the truth, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath, “and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong” (Luke 4:29). But, on this occasion, as at the first, “He went His way.” Time and again this plan looked like it would be carried out, but it failed. His hour was not yet come, but when that hour came – the hour and power of darkness – He was delivered over into the hands of His enemies. The demonic hatred with which Satan had drenched the hearts of men was soon to find expression, in one of the most vengeful cries that ever was heard in this world, and in one of the most awful prayers that ever was made to the Judge of the whole earth – “Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!” – “His blood be on us, and on our children.” If there could be joy in hell, the devil would have felt it when that awful cry was heard on earth. It looked like at length that a decisive victory had been won. But if such a hope was ever entertained it must have been shattered by the extraordinary happenings of the resurrection morn. The One who died in weakness was alive, and now alive for ever more; and in the message He gave to His persecuted servant in Patmos – “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever more” – we have the divine announcement of the eternal frustration of Satan’s well-planned and seemingly successful scheme. But what has the word of God to say as to the issue of this struggle of which we have been speaking? – it declares that He made a show of principalities and powers – that He led captivity captive. And as for the men who shouted out, “Away with Him, crucify Him,” they have long since gone to their account, and the cause they tried to destroy is still in existence.

II. Satan seeks to destroy God’s cause by stirring up persecution against His people.

We may consider this subject from a three-fold point of view –

- (1) the persecution under the Jewish Church;
- (2) the persecution under the pagan power;
- (3) the persecution under the papal power.

(1) The persecution under the Jewish Church.

The hatred of the Jews to Christ was extended to His followers. He warned them that they were going forth as sheep among wolves. The wolf, if it could speak, even though it could reason, could give no intelligible excuse for the desire it had to destroy the sheep whenever it saw it, except that it was its very nature to do so. And when one considers the intensity of the hatred stirred up against the infant Christian Church, no natural explanation can account for its continued existence. At the time of Stephen's martyrdom we are told that "there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the Apostles" (Acts 8:1). Satan, in kindling the fires of persecution to a fiercer glow, did not reckon on that scattering abroad of Christians in the region of Judaea and Samaria. How fiercely these fires burned, and how persistent were the efforts put forth by the persecutors are clearly indicated by the words – "And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest" (Acts 9:1), and again – "I persecuted this way," says Paul "unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). But the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church, and who knows but as Saul stood by Stephen consenting unto his death as he witnessed the beautiful heavenly composure of the martyr as he passed through the cruel ordeal, that thoughts were awakened that day that were not easily silenced. The attempt to destroy the cause of God by the Jews utterly failed, and the more the church was persecuted, the more it grew.

(2) Persecution under the pagan power. Satan now enlisted the strong arm of the civil power to crush the cause of the Most High. We do not wish to harrow the feelings of our readers here with a description of the means adopted during the Neronian, Decian, and Diocletian persecutions, but the bare mention of these is enough to chill one's blood. But no tortures that racked the body or fiery ordeals through which gentle women and heroic men passed could stay the onward progress of the heavenly cause. Men chose to be torn by wild beasts in the Roman amphitheatres and cast into caldrons of boiling oil rather than renounce the Lord who redeemed them. Satan had not reckoned on the divine strength vouchsafed to the martyrs in the day of trial, and here again the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church, and Satan was utterly baffled to destroy it.

(3) Persecution under the papal power. Satan having failed to accomplish his purpose through the Jewish Church and the pagan power, now had recourse to the so-called Christian Church as represented in the Church of Rome. This enlisting of a powerful so-called Christian institution on his side was a masterstroke of the enemy, and right skilfully did he make use of it. The diabolic ingenuity evidenced in the methods and means of torture were of such a nature that were it announced that men and women could face them without renouncing their faith, one would unhesitatingly say it is impossible, that is, if one overlooked the promise – "My grace is sufficient for thee and my grace is made perfect in weakness." The dark dungeons that witnessed the lingering deaths of saintly men and women and the walls that heard the groans of heroic men as their limbs were racked, but heard no word of renunciation of their faith could they but speak, would have a tale to tell that would appear almost incredible. The men who planned these tortures have long since passed to their account, and the power that authorised them, drunken with the blood of the saints, is doomed to drink the cup she filled to others. What was the crime of which these men and women were guilty? Loyalty to the truth as revealed in the Word of God, and loving devotion to the Lord who redeemed them were the crimes that awakened the hatred of Satan and moved the hearts of wicked men to stamp out, if it were possible, any signs of the true cause of God in the world. At times it looked like that the enemy was to prevail, but neither the terrors of the Inquisition, nor the extirpating wars against the Waldenses and the Huguenots nor the fires of Smithfield were successful, and

the cause of God came through the fiery furnace, heated seven times, with a vigour after the terrible struggle that can only be accounted for on the supposition that One like unto the Son of Man was with it in the fiery furnace. When the French King threatened to wipe out the Huguenots, he was answered with the fearless and significant words of Beza – “Sire, the Church of Christ is an anvil that has broken many a hammer.”

But persecution was not the only means Satan used to destroy God’s cause in the world. Error cleverly disguised and plausibly presented was intended as a potent instrument for the destruction of Christ’s cause in the world. The Christian Church was not long in existence when Satan began to sow his tares.

(1) Legalism, with its complete subversion of the ground on which a sinner’s hope rests for eternity was a cunningly devised scheme, and it is significant that in his Epistles the Apostle Paul gives the clearest indication of the distress caused him by this false teaching, which was not a gospel at all. He suffered more from the Christian Judaising teachers than from the adherents of the old faith, and while the doctrines of grace presented an insuperable barrier to the advance of legalism, the enemy, by a cleverly executed move, swept the great bulk of the professing Christian world into line with this deeply laid plan. The basic doctrine of the Church of Rome is founded on this ruinous error, and thousands of Protestants are building upon this false foundation for eternity. For though at the Reformation the great truth of justification by faith was declared with no uncertain sound by the great Reformers, yet it was lost sight of, in after days, by many of those professing to be Protestants. But though Satan has deceived so many, he has not yet been able to stamp out God’s truth.

(2) The attempt to destroy God’s cause by denying the true Deity of the Son of God was a blow struck not at the outworks of the Christian Church, but at its very heart. It looked like for a time that it was to be successful, and as Athanasius, the fearless defender of the faith, was banished, it seemed that the cause of God had fallen. But Athanasius was recalled, and the truth of God triumphed. Satan did not cease in his attempt to overthrow this great doctrine, and so down the ages the Church had to contend with Socinianism, Unitarianism, and Kenoticism. The latter theory is one of the most subtle of modern attacks on the true Deity of the Son of God, and it has been invoked as a foil against our Lord’s testimony to the Old Testament Scriptures.

(3) The attack on the Scriptures in the name of learning has had an extraordinary vogue. It has entered into the high places of theological learning, and has been warmly welcomed there. Young candidates for the holy ministry have imbibed this deadly poison at the hands of their teachers, and have in turn become disseminators of the same. But, however long the tide may take in turning, the ebb will come by and bye.

If time permitted reference might be made to Evolutionism, Spiritism, Communism, Christian Science, Russellism, Seventh Day Adventism, and other members of that numerous brood hatched by Satan, but they are all destined to fail in the end.

III. Satan attempts to destroy God’s cause by introducing worldliness into the Church.

With apparent diffidence he suggests that the rules and laws of the Church are too strict – that a little yielding on the part of the Church will work to its advantage. And if this subtle suggestion is given heed to it is followed up by others in which the interests of the young figure prominently. The young, he suggests, must be kept in hand at all costs, and the best way of doing so is by introducing into the services of the sanctuary and the management of the Church as much of the world as possible. New generations need new methods, it is suggested, and the old paths by which the saints of God went on their way to their everlasting rest are said now to be out of date, and unless we have a religion that suits the men and women of the world, it will not do. If it is suggested in opposition

that the way of worshipping God is not left to man, but set before us in His Word, then we are met with the subtle and deluding question – “What harm can there be in this?” Anything that wars against the spirituality of the worship of God and that deadens the spiritual life of God’s professing people ought to be shunned by them as the plague. That a determined effort is made to destroy the cause of God by infecting it with a deadly worldly spirit is plainly manifest to all who love Sion. But even this device of the enemy will be frustrated, and the attempt to smother the cause of Truth by a worldly spirit will be overthrown by Him who promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church.

The Church of Christ exists in a hostile world. It is attacked on every side, but however diverse the mode of attacks, there is behind them all a governing mind, and however unrelated the opposing agencies may appear, there is no getting away from the fact that there is a co-ordination that indicates all too plainly that they are not isolated agencies working without any objective, but are all definitely shaping towards one goal – the overthrow of the cause of God in the world, and as the believer scans the field of battle his heart would fail him if he had no help but in man – his sure and all-sufficient help is in the name of the Lord.

[May 1925]

Christ Seeing of the Travail of His Soul.

[This sermon is taken from a small volume entitled “Sermons for Sabbath Evenings” (Edinburgh: 1848), and has the following prefatory note: – “It is proper to state that this sermon was not prepared or designed for publication by Mr Stewart. It was preached by him in Canonmills Hall, by appointment of the General Assembly, and taken down by a hearer. It will be found, however, even under such disadvantages, an admirable discourse, and not unworthy of its eminent and lamented author.” – Editor.]

By the REV. ALEXANDER STEWART, Cromarty.

“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” – Isaiah 53:11.

It was predicted from the beginning that the Saviour of sinners should be a suffering Saviour. This prediction is amply reiterated by the prophet Isaiah; but the distinguishing characteristic of this chapter is that it is one of the earliest, if not the first, and it is certainly one of the clearest passages, in which it is declared that His sufferings should be vicarious – that is, in the room and stead of sinners.

It is to Christ's sufferings that reference, then, is made in the text – “the travail of His soul.” It is a peculiar and remarkable expression, and, though frequent enough in Scripture, by no means of ordinary occurrence in regard to Christ. Perhaps we may be somewhat led to the meaning of it, by a passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, distinguishing, of course, between the master and the servant. Paul says, “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you”; intimating his parental affection for his spiritual children among the Galatians – his parental anxiety respecting them. Their very life was in danger, in consequence of the fatal error that had made such havoc among them. The spirit of the apostle was similar to that of Moses of old: “O Lord! this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold: yet, now, if Thou wilt forgive them their sins; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.”

So likewise, the Lord Jesus Christ, but with an unspeakable pre-eminence above all His servants, may be viewed as regarding the people of His charge with intense love, contemplating their lost and helpless condition with unspeakable pity and compassion, and engaging His heart and soul in the business of their salvation. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” “Who is this,” saith the Lord, “that hath engaged His heart to approach unto Me?” The Saviour laid hold on them, took them, as it were, into His heart, engaged His whole soul in one concentrated purpose, for the salvation of the people of His charge – the objects of His unspeakable love. He was called to His office, as was Aaron. No creature could have ventured to attempt drawing near to the awful Majesty of heaven – to draw near, and to name, in the presence of God's terrible justice and purity, the names of those rebellious sinners that had so inexcusably offended, or venture to appear on their behalf, and to plead for them. It was an awful thing to consider that God – the infinite God of infinite purity, justice, and majesty – should be approached, and the names of those wicked creatures pronounced before Him, with a view to their salvation. Christ did this; and in doing so, He presented Himself as ready to satisfy all the demands of justice, and vindicate God's purity. As Jacob wrestled with the angel, and prevailed; so He wrestled with God, and prevailed. He was in an agony yet, as a Prince, He prevailed with God.

The expression might, likewise, be profitably illustrated in the way of reminding us of certain highly interesting and important truths in regard to the sufferings of Christ, and the union between Him and His people – the parental relation between Christ and His redeemed people. “Behold, here am I, and the children which God has given me.” And likewise that His sufferings were at once voluntary, and yet of necessity. It was most voluntarily that He entered into the engagement. “Lo! I come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me, to do Thy will, O God!” It was truly and voluntarily that He took hold of the nature of the seed of Abraham and not of that of angels. But having once engaged in this, and pledged Himself to its accomplishment, then – as without shedding of blood there could be no remission – it was not possible that the cup should pass from Him.

The expression may remind us likewise, that His sufferings were fully expected, and yet at the same time, when at last His hour was come, they seized upon Him with a suddenness and severity that amazed Him. His sufferings were fully expected – He knew what was to happen – He predicted it – He not only told that He was to be lifted up on the cross, but He also forewarned His disciples that the Son of Man must be rejected, scourged, spitefully entreated, and put to death; but when at last His hour was come, He was amazed.

And lastly – The expression may remind us that Christ’s sufferings were perfectly singular – not in the natural and established order – not in the course of nature – not according to the ordinary rules of justice. The rule of strict justice is evident. “The soul” – the individual soul – “that sinneth, it shall die” – the teeth of the children are not to be set on edge for the sin of the parents. But in this case, He that did no sin died the death.

These things have been the subject of our meditation and commemoration in the days that are past. I will not enlarge on these points, but go on to direct your attention to what I apprehend is the more direct scope and bearing of the passage – the assurance of Messiah’s success. And brief as this expression is, there is an admirable fulness in it. He shall be satisfied. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” He shall surely and altogether be satisfied – satisfied in regard to what is always the supreme end of God in all His actings – satisfied as to the manifestation of God’s glory. Having been made flesh, He is God manifested in the flesh – not concealed or hid, but manifested to the universe in a way that was never witnessed before. He shall also be satisfied in regard to the great end of the divine government in the economy of redemption, in so overruling the entrance of sin as to establish the very basis of His government over His intelligent creatures on firmer ground than before. He makes an end of sin, so that hereafter it cannot any more have a beginning among the ransomed and redeemed – He prevents it from ever breaking out again.

Further, He shall be satisfied personally. As a person – the second person of the Godhead – He took upon Him human nature, and in that nature He was humbled, even to the death of the cross. He shall be satisfied with the personal exaltation that is awarded Him. Being in the form of God, as the apostle tells us, He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. Wherefore God also highly exalted Him, and has given Him a name that is above every name. He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. It is a crown of purest gold, and length of days for ever and ever, which the Father hath bestowed upon Him. He shall be satisfied, and is satisfied, and shall be still more abundantly satisfied, with the just recompense of full reward that will be granted to His human nature. Possibly there is a reference to this in the ascription of praise given to Him in the 5th chapter of Revelation – “Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.” “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” – “Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Worthy is He that was counted a madman, and in league with Beelzebub, to have all that He did fully vindicated, and have all wisdom assigned to Him. Worthy is He that was crucified in weakness, to have all strength ascribed to Him. Worthy is He that despised the shame to be crowned with honour. The blessing be for ever on the head of Him who endured the cross, and was separated from His brethren.

I apprehend, however, that the satisfaction here promised, has a still more special reference to His Church – to His people – to the persons who are the travail of His soul – those who owe their spiritual existence, their birth, their place in the family of God, to His interposition – to “the travail of His soul.” And this agrees better with the

vicarious character of His sufferings, which runs through the whole of this passage of Scripture. He satisfied divine justice, and divine justice says again, He shall be satisfied. It was from love to His people, as well as from love and obedience to His Father, that He suffered. He suffers, He cares, He pleads for, and saves His people. They are the travail of His soul, and it is in them that it is here promised that He shall be satisfied, whatever that weighty expression meant. The text, then, is evidently an assurance that Messiah's labour and death should not be in vain. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He suffered in the room and stead of His people. Now, if the result were a matter of chance, surely nothing could be more unsatisfactory. If it depended on them – on their will – whether or not they should accept of this salvation, then would I only advert to this fact, that Christ died, rejected and despised. His death was the result of a most extraordinary instance of combined rejection. Jews and Gentiles agreed in this. He was forsaken by His friends, and the unanimous exclamation was, "Away with Him! away with Him! crucify Him! crucify Him! Can you conceive any thing more unsatisfactory, than that He should have to trust to those who nailed Him to the cross – to trust to them to be satisfied. Were it put upon this footing, nothing could possibly be more unsatisfactory; but it is not left to that. He is assured that He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied; that, lifted upon the cross, a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet it is assuredly secured to Him, that He should be the object of universal attraction. There was a security for this; power is given to Him over all flesh, for the express purpose that He might give eternal life to as many as God had given Him. It is committed into His own hands; in their hands nothing could be more unsafe or unsatisfactory; but the power is given into His hands to make them willing – to give them eternal life. This comports with other expressions in the context. The thing is so important as to be repeated, and no wonder. "He shall see His seed," equivalent to this, "He shall see of the travail of his soul." "My righteous servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities." The justification of the many, follows upon His bearing their iniquities. Hence, in subordination to this great promise to Christ, the promise was made to Abraham, when he was yet an old and a childless man, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for multitude, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, innumerable.

Again, Christ will be satisfied in the number of the saved. It is amazing to think over what tracks of country, during so many long ages, "darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." To think of all the cruelty and licentiousness, misery, and wickedness, which overspread the world, what a thick darkness and vile delusion bind multitudes of souls fast in spiritual death; and if we come nearer home, to those favoured spots where the true light hath long shone, our own country, which is like Judea of old, a land where God is well known; yet what delusion, deception, indifference! How dark and mysterious is it! and, I doubt not, it has sometimes been a subject of temptation to God's people, that when the Saviour has appeared as the Conqueror, the Prince, Satan should thus still reign. But, be this as it may, we are to rest in faith on this assurance – and should it not be satisfactory? – that Christ shall be satisfied! It is very true that spiritual barrenness was a great trial to the ancient Church. It was symbolised in the cases of Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel: it was alluded to in the case of Samson's mother and Samuel's; and this trial is a trial still. But the promise to Abraham is stedfast, the promise to Christ is sure. And it is very remarkable, in this connection, that on one of these rare occasions in which a gleam of joy brightened the countenance of the Man of Sorrows, he rejoiced in spirit at one time, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Christ is satisfied; Christ will be satisfied with the numbers – and they are not small

– which the Father has given to Him. And this should quell our murmurings, our false zeal, our unbelief, our disposition to quarrel with God. Look at the example set us by Him, who, if there were discontent in the case, had a right to be discontented. Look at Him who thanked His Father for the poor and the mean, and not for the wise and the mighty.

I may remark here, in passing, that this ought not to relax our efforts. It did not relax His. Satisfied with those whom the Father had given Him, He is deeply occupied in heaven with the accomplishment of the work of their salvation, at the same time joyfully and cheerfully satisfied with the limits which the Father has set.

Again, Christ's satisfaction extends farther than to the mass and the multitude – it reaches to the individuals. We may purchase a flock of sheep, pay the price, and if we have the full tale, and the number, we are satisfied. Nay, in regard to spiritual matters, we hear of the success of our mission in Calcutta, hear of a thousand young men receiving instruction regularly, and would yet more rejoice in hearing that ten, twenty, thirty, or a hundred were really converted. We would rejoice in the number, but they are at such a distance, that we see merely their number. It is very different, however, in other cases. Jacob loved Rachel, and though Laban gave him a wife, it was anything but a satisfactory arrangement that Leah should be in the place of Rachel! And Christ loves His people individually. One individual cannot be palmed off for another. He loves them individually, as was intimated by the high priest's breast-plate of old. The name of each individual could not be engraved upon it – there were only the names of the tribes; but this intimated that all the individuals were remembered by the high priest. So Christ is the good Shepherd. "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." They know Him – there is no doubt of that; but it is as true that He knows them, and that individually. Hence the force of the expressions, "I have called thee by thy name – thou art mine." "I know thee by name." And hence the value of the chapters of names. Look at the last chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Mark what a long list of names. You see how the apostle notices the members of the Church by their names – adverts to the excellencies of each – sends his encouraging approbation – his Christian salutation and regards – and sends it to every one by name. And he was warranted and inspired by the Spirit of God to do so; for that chapter is as much inspired as the third chapter. And so in the Book of Chronicles, God shows that He regards His people by name. He converts them individually and by name. He counts the very hairs on their head. There can, then, be no substitution. Christ is perfectly satisfied with the arrangement of His Father. He whose largeness of heart is like that of Solomon of old, which was even as the sand which is on the seashore, is our New Testament Solomon, and has a largeness of heart to know and to remember the circumstances of all the seed of Jacob. "I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine."

He shall be satisfied with their personal excellencies. Placed in the great structure of the spiritual temple, the felicity and glory of each individual of His people shall be such, that the Saviour shall be satisfied. It is not according to what we desire for ourselves. The measure of glory reserved for Christ's people will be such as to satisfy the immense and boundless desires of the Author of salvation. It is a sort of resting-point to the perfections of God – when His truth and immutability rest and are satisfied – when His justice rests and is satisfied – when His benevolence and mercy rest and are satisfied. His boundless goodness has now found way in this plan of salvation, and here all the perfections of the Deity shall rest and be satisfied. Not merely his people shall be satisfied – that does not come up to the end to be accomplished. He shall see "of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

Again, it is the Sufferer Himself that is to be satisfied. It is the travail of His soul – His sufferings, in all their intensity of pain and earnestness of desire – that He is to see,

and be satisfied with; and His parental love towards those for whom He died is also to be satisfied. And here even the foibles and follies of men may afford an illustration. When parents look at their children, they are pleased with the excellencies they discover. This shows, at least, what they wish their children to be. These dreams and ideas show the parental desire. But in the present case, it is not the voice of flattery. It is Jacob that is to be satisfied with his Joseph – Rachel on behalf of her Benoni. Let the children of Zion, then, be joyful in their King. Let them fill up the measure of His joy, and satisfy His soul. Let them beware of those things that may dissatisfy Him. Surely it is an argument with an affectionate son, even when at a distance, not to grieve his father's heart – not to be a heaviness to her that bore him. But it ought specially to characterise the children of the Lord Jesus, who are the travail of His soul. A parent would not be satisfied with an idiot child – he could not be satisfied with a deformed child; And can Christ be satisfied with those deformities, that want of symmetry of character, which He sees in His children? Let us apprehend that, with the apostle, for which we are also apprehended – even the satisfaction of the Redeemer – to be what will please Him, what will satisfy Him, and to aim at it the more constantly, because it is declared that He shall be satisfied. Each of His people cost Him much. And a parent, by-the-by, would not be satisfied with a dead child! It is a sad thing when the hour is come, and there is no joy when the child is born into the world. Let those who may receive serious impressions among the young, and over whom pious parents, ministers, and elders, may be watching with eager hope – let them take heed of sinking back, so that it shall appear that there has been only a dead corpse, and not a living child! And let all who have an interest in the glory of Christ be stirred up to consider the case of lost and perishing sinners. I am sometimes struck with the amazing spirit that breathes through the Scriptures – it is as if the apostles and primitive Christians were inspired with a passion for saving souls, not exactly a passion for preaching, except as a means, but a real passion for the saving of souls – it shows itself in the extraordinary anxiety, and the minuteness discernible in their epistles.

And let sinners be aroused. Let them strive to enter in at the strait gate. Is it not an encouragement to think that Christ will be satisfied in their salvation? Let them not perplex themselves with certain modern questions. He is a perfect Saviour – a complete Saviour – to whom you are invited to come. Is it any objection to our Zion that it has salvation for walls and bulwarks – that it has ramparts around it? It has its gates open: men turn away, because, forsooth, its ramparts are not broken down that you may enter. Is it an objection to Christ that you must be humbled – must be indebted to Him for every thing. O beware that something of this kind stands not in the way. He addresses and encourages every sinner that comes to Him, that He will in no wise cast out. But if sinners will find objections – if they are determined not to come – if they will be indifferent to this great matter, let them recollect that the favour is done to them – that they are not doing a favour to Christ. Their goodness extends not to Him. Let them not imagine, like some foolish parents, that in allowing their children to attend a charity school, they are doing the patrons of that school a favour. Let those who will despise and reject this salvation be assured, that though they may wring many bitter tears from the hearts of parents, ministers, and others now, and though over them, if Christ Himself were here, He would weep, as He did over Jerusalem in the days of His flesh; yet let them be assured, that even their perdition will not be permitted to disturb that eternal repose, that everlasting rest, that assured satisfaction, which awaits the Lord Jesus in the glory of eternity.

[June 1925]

A Sermon

By the REV. EWEN MACQUEEN, Inverness.

“And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” – Mark 16:15,16.

In endeavouring to consider these words for a short time, we shall: –

I. In the first place notice a few things about the men who are here addressed. Women are not addressed, although many in our day maintain that women should be preachers as well as men. We do not see, however, that the blessed Saviour gave them this commission. Hence, what the blessed Saviour did not give we have no right to give.

II. In the second place, we shall notice the commission which Christ gives them.

1. The field which He assigns to them.

2. What they should do in the field that was assigned to them. He says, "Preach the gospel to every creature."

III. And in the third place, the results which were to follow a preached gospel to the end of time. If the gospel is not saving you, it is damning you. The acceptance of the gospel, the crediting of the gospel, will not fail to do what Christ said it should do, but we have also what the non-acceptation of the gospel will do. Is it the law that will condemn us? No. If the damnation of the law were the only damnation, it would be no damnation in comparison with the damnation of a rejected gospel.

I. With regard to the men addressed, we see here the wonderful wisdom of God.

1. It was not angels whom He commissioned to go out with the gospel, although some people have the idea that those who go out with the gospel should be angels. An angel from heaven would have no knowledge at all of the stubbornness of sinners, and of the hard-heartedness of sinners. Those who are here commissioned were all children of wrath even as others; there was no difference between them and other sinners. They were mostly fishermen on the Lake of Galilee, men who prosecuted their occupation as strenuously as other men. But what made the difference? Well, everyone of them knew the power of the word of God addressed to them by Jesus Christ. "Follow me," He said, "and I will make you fishers of men." When the word of God came to them it had this effect, to immediately sever asunder their great and idolatrous love of the world, and this is the effect of the word of God whenever it comes to an individual sinner or many sinners. Immediately it breaks the great love that is in the soul of the sinner to the world. Before that took place in the case of the disciples, their boats, their nets were their all. Zebedee I presume would be supreme in the eyes of John, the boats and nets in the eyes of Peter, but when Christ said "Follow me" there was such power in these words that made their boats and their nets very little and made Christ appear everything in their eyes. It made them believe this was the true Messiah. When He asked Peter, "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am", Peter was led to say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." They were men who were taught of the Father in heaven that here, in the son of Joseph and of Mary as the Jews thought, they had indeed the very Messiah. "The Word was made flesh and we beheld His glory." Those were the men who were commissioned now – those who beheld His glory.

2. In the second place, it was true of them that they could not part with Christ. When many turned back and said, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?" He turned to the disciples and said, "Will ye also go away?" Well, my friends, if I can go away from the Christ of God, I have no right to hope or conclude that ever I was called of the Father in heaven. Spurgeon used to put it: "If you can be anything else than a minister, do not be a minister." But what did the disciples reply to Christ "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." If we thought of putting our back upon Thee, we feel it would be eternal death to us.

But on the other hand, were they altogether free from unbelief? Oh, no. It was true of them as to their old nature that they were hard-hearted. Christ upbraids them for this. Now, I believe that there is no man on the face of the earth who gets so much trouble with his hard heart as the truly sent minister of Christ. There was an eminent minister in the north of Scotland called Mr Porteous, and he had a godly session. One of his session became very much tried with a temptation from the devil, and after enduring the

temptation for about a fortnight or three weeks he made for the minister, going, as he said himself, to send in his resignation. Well, the man found the minister out in the garden, and Mr Porteous said to him, "I suppose it was not without some message that you came from the mountains to see me?" The man was afraid to tell his message, but at last Mr Porteous made him tell it. "Well," he said, "I am both ashamed and afraid to tell it; I came here to resign my office as an elder and to resign even my right to go to the Lord's Table." "That is a serious thing," Mr Porteous said, and urged him to tell the reason. "Oh well, I am very much tried with the temptation that there is not such a Being as God at all, and what right has a man who is down so low as that to be an elder or go to the Lord's Table?" "Ay, ay, man," said Mr Porteous, "I did not think the devil had that temptation for any man but for a minister. Many a day he hurls that at me. I know your trouble full well. I cannot take you out of that trouble, but rust will not lie on your soul as long as you have that temptation."

As I said already, they were also men full of unbelief. We do not need to go out of our own hearts for unbelief. It is a weed that grows in the garden of every heart, and it will follow the people of God as long as they are in the world, as his shadow will follow a man. When Christ, as the Sun of Righteousness, will shine on the soul of the sinner, unbelief will follow as a shadow on the side the Sun of Righteousness is not shining on. We see then that the men who were sent out were men who were adopted, men who could not part with Christ whatever it would cost them. "We have left all and followed Thee," said Peter.

II. In the second place, what was the field of their commission? "Go ye into all the world," wherever Adam's race have gone. He did not say, Go and preach among the lost angels. No. I believe that although the persons of the Apostles did not come to this place, the Apostles came to it for all that. "He being dead yet speaketh." And why into all the world? Because there is not a part of the world that does not need them and does not need what they carry. We know there are plenty who do not feel their need of the Apostles or of what they carry, but, my friends, the less you feel your need, the greater is your need. When Christ came near Jerusalem, what made Him weep? "Ah," He said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." Men blind to their need of what the Gospel alone can bring to them is something that wrings out bitter tears from the glorious eyes of the Son of God.

Now, what is true of men in all the world?

1. First of all, men and women are everywhere spiritually dead, and how can they be brought alive? By nothing but by the gospel of God's dear Son. A brother may weep for another dead brother, but will a weeping brother be able to stop and arrest the spiritual death in which his brother is? Oh, no.

Yet none of these his brother can
Redeem by any way;
Nor can he unto God for him
Sufficient ransom pay.

The spiritually dead cannot feel their own condition. But, in the next place, men are all morally under the curse of a broken law. Is it not clearly and distinctly stated, "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." The Gospel alone brings before us what can remove the fearful curse. We are enemies in our mind by wicked works. There is enmity in the natural man that would dethrone God if it were possible for him, the spirit of the deicide. Then how can I, how can you get this nature that is dominated with enmity against the being of God

changed? Can I get it changed by following any system of human invention? No. The Gospel is absolutely needed, my friends. And how will you know the enemies of God? They will go to vanity instead of delighting in the law of the Lord. They sit in the chair of the scorner, they hate the Sabbath of the Lord, they hate the people of God.

But let me notice now what the gospel is – the remedy for sin-destroyed sinners. Well, it is glad tidings, the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ. As the whole world has but one natural sun, similarly the gospel is concerning one Person, and that Person is the Son of God. I pointed out that men everywhere were spiritually dead, but what does the gospel bring before us? We lost life in the first covenant head, but in the Lord Jesus Christ “was life and the life was the light of men. And the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us.” So, my friends, to you who are by nature spiritually dead, the blessed, glad tidings come with life everlasting in their arms. The gospel comes to dead sinners to-night. What does it come with? With that eternal life which was with the Father and manifested unto us. If you realised your deadness, my dear friends, you would just be like the slaves at the time of the emancipation in the United States of America, about which I was reading lately. It was President Abraham Lincoln who got through the Act, and on the day he went up on a platform in Washington and read the Act that emancipated the slaves, when it dawned upon the poor slaves who were then in bondage that now they had their liberty, they almost rushed the platform on which the President stood, weeping and shouting for joy, “Glory be to God in the highest, and thanks to President Lincoln.” But here the gospel of God’s dear Son comes to us with life eternal for dead sinners. Will you accept the gospel?

2. In the second place, it not only comes with life, but it comes with the Person that bore the curse in His own body and made an end of it, as we are told, “He was made a curse for us.” How? In bearing our curse in His own body on the tree. The Curse-Bearer comes to you. Will you lay your cursed weight upon Him? Will you, my young friends, seek that the Lord would enable you, when He comes with His word to your door, nearer than the door, even to your heart, to accept the Curse-Bearer, and He will remove every curse from off you?

3. And the third thing is that the gospel comes before us with the One who was holy, harmless and undefiled, separate from sinners, who made peace by the blood of His cross. Immediately the sinner gets faith to embrace Christ, what takes place? Ah, he gets a new nature. “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, sanctification and redemption.” But again we were full of enmity. What does the gospel bring to you? The One who united the two natures in the one person for ever, that in the two natures He might make an end of the gulf that was between us and God. The gospel comes to us with the One who made peace, and if you will accept Him, you will just feel that instead of being an enemy to God, you would give the whole world that your past life of enmity were buried in eternal oblivion. The gospel comes to us with the One of whom it is written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.” Do you feel yourself a prisoner, even in the very grasp of the devil? Well, the gospel comes with the One of whom it is written, “He hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” The gospel comes to you with One who says thus, “I go to prepare a place for you; that where I am, there ye may be also.” “In my Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you.” Ah, my friends, there is nothing like the gospel, for you may say that it is the only thing that will raise a sinner from the brink of hell, as you find the Psalmist speaking in the 116th Psalm. The gospel has that in it which will cheer and raise you up from the greatest depths of despondency. The devil does not like his children to be hearing glad tidings that will liberate them from his own chains.

III. Now, let me notice the result of the gospel. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” What is implied here, “He that believeth?” When the gospel comes, it comes invested with everything that the sinner needs, and it is by the gospel the dead sinner is awakened out of his stupor or spiritual death. What is he saved from? From death, from the curse, and from the enmity of his fallen nature. When the word of God, or the gospel, comes with Power, do you ever feel how it will drown the enmity that is in the nature of man? There is no way by which you and I can drown the enmity but by faith’s view of the Crucified One. The gospel will finally save the sinner from all sin, the very being of sin. “And is baptized.” In the days of Christ they were passing over from Judaism to Christianity. He said to John the Baptist, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”

In the last place, “He that believeth not shall be damned.” This is a fearful thing, the damnation of a rejected gospel. What is more fearful than the law? It is the gospel, if it is rejected and trampled upon. It is very clear that this is the last dispensation, and the rejection of the gospel proves the sinner to be the inveterate enemy of God as Moral Governor; it proves the sinner the inveterate enemy to God as the Saviour. My dear friends, are you willing to leave this place with the curse of the gospel upon you? He says, “He that believeth,” shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned.” May you never know the meaning of the words, to be damned of the gospel. Oh, friends, let these words sink into your minds, that the reception of the gospel, through the grace of God, saves with an everlasting salvation, and that the rejection of the gospel will damn the sinner with a damnation that will be unspeakable, and that will never, never be removed.

[July 1925]

Sermon

Preached by the REV. D. A. MACFARLANE, M.A., Oban,
at Meeting of Synod, 19th May 1925.

“O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever.
Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” – Psalm 107:1,2.

The Psalmist here calls upon the Church of God to praise Him for His goodness, and in particular for His goodness as seen in His mercy, whereby everlasting blessings flow forth to the Church. The Lord is good in creation. He looked upon His works in creation, and, behold, they were good. All was perfectly fitted for the great end of His creation. But the exceeding greatness of His goodness is not seen either in creation or in providence. His infinite goodness is seen in redemption, in His mercy – saving sinners from the hand of the enemy, and bringing them to the city of God. This is the crowning mercy of the Church, that she so enjoys and experiences the goodness of the Lord. This supreme revelation of His goodness is therefore the song of the redeemed. “His mercy endureth for ever.” In directing your attention to this portion of His Word, in dependence upon His Spirit, we observe the following points: –

- I. The enemy from which they are freed;
- II. Their Redeemer – they are the redeemed of the Lord;
- III. Their experiences as here recorded of them;

IV. Their final abode – “A city of habitation”;

V. The call to praise the Lord for His mercy in all this.

I. Their Redeemer finds them in the hands of the enemy. This enemy is sin. Sin is the first and great enemy. Death is the last. “The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death.” We see from the Word of God the agency of sin in three leading aspects –

1. There is first of all the manifestation of sin as seen in Satan. The adversary of souls, the accuser of the brethren, is himself under the power of sin. He is the prince of fallen spirits, and the prince of this world, the spirit who now worketh in the children of disobedience. What a cruel and powerful foe this enemy is! He ever increases his own guilt and torment in warring against the Lamb and His Church, yet he ever does his utmost against the Kingdom of Christ. He is compared to a serpent, to a lion, and can transform himself, particularly in matters of religion and the faith, into the appearance of an angel of light. But greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. The Lord delivers His people from every evil thing, and preserves them unto His heavenly Kingdom.

2. The power and the effects of sin are also seen in the world. “The whole world lieth in wickedness.” In thinking of the world, we naturally have in view the walk and conversation of worldly men. What does the life and walk of the natural man manifest but aversion to God and godliness? There is evidently a desire for religion, but it ever takes the form of self-righteousness, self-effort, to please or placate the Being whom the natural man visualises as God. And what sin is seen in the world of men in the form of seeking an earthly portion, earthly honour and glory! “All seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” This is our natural disposition. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. And the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” There is obviously only one remedy for the nations – for such men. That remedy bestows continuous cleansing as long as there is need of such – continuous fruit, which all are welcome to pluck and eat of – and continuous health to cure and to preserve in soundness. “And He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

3. But sin is above all to be viewed as seen in the heart, ruining the soul. Here it is seen minutely. “Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.” “The strength of sin is the law.” Without law there would be no sin. Or, as one puts it, “If you take away law, men may act unreasonably, or in a way injurious to themselves and others, but they cannot sin.” Also, if there were no law, there would be no condemnation. “The law not only reveals and condemns sin, but it exasperates and excites it, and thus gives it strength.” Sin then reigns in the heart. Sin entices, fascinates, entangles, and finally torments. Body and soul are the helpless victims of this pitiless and befouling enemy. Never is there the remotest hope of escape from its presence – its guilt, misery, power, love, and very being – by any effort of mere man. We should particularly seek to realise that we take the guilt of sin and the disease of it with us into the world of spirits, if we go hence without pardon and sanctification. The Redeemer of Israel is waiting to embrace the contrite in heart, and to say, “Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace.” “He is ever nigh to those that be of broken spirit.” He is able and willing to give liberty in order that the trusting soul may enjoy holiness and love, and may purify himself even as He is pure.

II. From such a foe, then, the Lord redeems His people. He is their Redeemer. What they cannot do, He can, and did in large part already. What the law cannot do, He did (Romans 8:3,4). The obedience unto death of the Lord of Glory is the price of the liberty of the Church.

“Ye are bought with a price.” The Paschal Lamb, with its sprinkled blood, was one of the chief types of the sacrificial Blood of the Saviour, under the Old Testament dispensation. “Without shedding of blood is no remission,” and “When I see the blood I will pass over you,” are two of the pillar-truths of the faith which the Israel of God are taught in every age. What a suitable Saviour, then, He is! The Goel was suitable in his own place. So also Melchisedec, and Aaron. Sacrifices and offerings were good. The law was good. Tears – smiting upon the thigh – coming with weeping and supplications – are all good as evidencing the state of mind and heart of His Ephraim. But none of these can wash away sin. The only remedy is the infinitely meritorious, sacrificial blood of the Divine Saviour. He is suitable for the trembling, contrite soul; is ever nigh to those that be of broken spirit. And as for one, so for all truly seeking His face. The innumerable multitude which shall assemble on Mount Sion with the Lamb shall have the one testimony as to His priestly dignity and His Atonement, “Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” How different His suitability and sufficiency is to that of the pool of Bethesda! It was only for some troubles and for the first who entered at the appointed time, but the Lord Jesus is able and willing to save to the uttermost. “Now is the accepted time” – “the acceptable year of the Lord.”

While eternal redemption was obtained by His dying for the Church, and entering into the Holiest with His own blood, it is also needful to keep in view that He applies His redemption to all whom the Father gave Him, by the power of His Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes as the Spirit of the Head of the Church, His Blessed Agent, to make sinners willing to receive the truth and kiss the Son of God in a day of grace. “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.” He has an arm that is full of power; His hand is great in might. He changes a Paul, a Philemon, an Onesimus, and they are all one in Christ Jesus. Each learns more deeply the truth, “By grace ye are saved.” And where the self-same spirit is which these three had – and many more in their day – there, as Jacob said, is the house of God, and there is the gate of heaven. The Head of the Church, then, by His Word and Spirit, applies to them for their justification, sanctification, and perfect blessedness at last, the redemption purchased by Himself. “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”

III. Thirdly, we have before us the experiences of the redeemed as part of the reason for their praising the Lord. They praise the Lord for the Unspeakable Gift of His Son to be their Redeemer, and have increasing reason to praise Him for what He does in them, and for His presence, protecting care, and provision for them by the way. This is implied in the application of the work of redemption, but we may briefly look at this part further as we have it in the context. It is said of them that they wander in the wilderness in a solitary way. To say so usually means that they backslide, or are prone to lapse. This, sad to say, may be true. Their love is apt to wax cold, they may be left to slumber, and there is within an old nature as well as the new – an evil heart of unbelief ever ready to depart from the living God. Dr Duncan points out that God sees some of His own children walking more closely with Him than others, and rewards them accordingly. Others of His family are less obedient and require chastening for their profit that they may be partakers of His holiness. He does them good in this way, and they shall praise Him for His mercy. “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.”

Their wandering is, however, to be taken in the simple sense of sojourning and travelling. The Lord led them all the way, going before them to seek out a place of rest, and He brought them duly to the border of the sanctuary. It is noteworthy that Israel alone, of all the families of the earth, travelled by a prearranged way from the house of bondage to

the land of promise. It was a solitary way as regarded them or the other nations. Egypt was left behind. Amalek crossed their path. They met with other foes also. But they alone as a nation had the experiences and blessings and hopes and revelations in their great journey, of which we read in His Word. So with the Church. She travels in a way which the world knows not of, and has blessings in possession, and infallibly in prospect which are bestowed upon her members only. They have here no city to dwell in. Yet is it true that by faith they are come to the city of the living God, the New Jerusalem. But the fulness of that blessing is reserved for the Kingdom of Heaven – the city where the inhabitant shall not say, “I am sick; and the people who dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.”

As regards their experience by the way, we see further that the redeemed are often hungry and thirsty on the journey. As the Lord provided for the bodily and spiritual needs of Israel in the wilderness, so He provides for the necessities of the Church. He gave manna. He gave water. Their clothes waxed not old. Their feet swelled not. He prevented them with blessings. So we are dependent upon, and indebted to, the Lord for all His goodness in Providence, and for all the blessings of mercy, of grace, and of glory. “What shall I render to the Lord for all His gifts to me?” His revelations concerning Himself – the truths as to the Trinity – the Person and Mediatorial Office of the Saviour, the whole counsel of God for the believer and for the Church are all, by the blessing of God the Spirit, the meat and drink of the new nature. “Her food I’ll greatly bless, her poor with bread will satisfy.” It is part of the joy set before the Saviour – part of His reward – to bless them with spiritual desires after Himself and by His Word and Spirit to bestow out of His fulness upon them what sustains and satisfies the longing soul. “Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

IV. We have, fourthly, the city to which they all come. Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. Without remarking upon this part at length, let us observe the contrast between the land which they left – and even their condition by the way – and the city which they arrive at, their eternal home. They had formerly no true rest, no true refuge. But not so now. What is said of the year of Jubilee is applicable to the Kingdom of God in its consummation. “The land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety.” In that kingdom which the saints of the Most High shall possess, shall not the land yield her fruit? Shall they not eat their fill? Shall they not dwell in safety? “In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” “Walk about Zion. Tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces that ye may tell it to the generation following.” How glorious His Jerusalem upon earth is! How the brethren and companions love it! When you touch their heartstrings, how they melt with love toward the house of the Lord, and to the Lord of the house – to the ordinances of God. His cause, house, Zion, is their chief joy now. With all their lack of love, they love it, and with all their felt lack of love, they love Him, Jehovah-Shammah! “Blessed are they that do His commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

V. Such praise Him. “O praise the Lord; let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” They sing of mercy righteously bestowed. The fruits of mercy are songs of praise, their love to the Three-One God. Their praise is spiritual, holy, heavenly. Praise comes from a renewed heart and sanctified lips. It is accepted through their Head and all-prevailing Intercessor, the Angel who hath much incense. They know not the “numbers” of His justice and salvation. In the courts of the Lord’s house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem: Praise ye the Lord. “And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many

waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth” (Revelation 19:6).

In preaching the Gospel of the grace of God out of the abundance of your hearts, you are well aware, Fathers and Brethren, that the messengers sent by the Head of the Church have to do with two classes.

There are, first, those who are still out of the way. They are on the broad way. They as yet know not Him who is the Way in Justification, and also the Way in Sanctification. It is for you – in the spirit of the Great High Priest who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, and had at the same time compassion on the ignorant and on them who were out of the way – to declare to them their need of Christ and Him crucified. It is for you to show them the right way, that, by God’s blessing, they may receive the gift of faith, and, therefore, the end of faith, even the salvation of their souls. They shall thus rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is also a special duty and privilege to seek to know the needs of the household of faith, and administer consolation or needful counsel accordingly. The Lord of the Church had the tongue of the learned, and knew how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. And as with the Master, so with the disciple. Those sent forth by Him seek that believers may grow in grace – that they themselves and the many sons whom the Father is bringing to glory may daily press on toward the mark – continue in the grace of God, abide in Christ by receiving out of His fulness, and so when He shall appear, they may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. May we be engaged in heart, by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit, to serve Him daily, so shall He be our Shield and our exceeding great Reward! May the answer to the prayer of Moses be granted to us also – “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!”

[August 1925]

Sermon

Preached by the REV. D. MACFARLANE, Dingwall.

“When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it” (Isaiah 41:17-20).

In this chapter the Lord begins to appeal to the islands whose inhabitants were idolaters, and Britain was one of these islands, and He challenges the false gods they worshipped to do good or evil, to save their worshippers or to punish them. They could not do either, and then He shows what He Himself as the only living and true God can do to those that look to Him for salvation. He can save them, but their idols could do nothing to give the good all sinners need. There was a missionary sent to a heathen land, and a large number of idolaters gathered to hear him and brought an idol in the shape of a man with them, and placed it in a prominent place in the congregation. In the course of his address the missionary, in order to show the vanity of idols, walked up near to the false god they worshipped and spoke thus: “Your god has a mouth but cannot speak, has ears but cannot hear, and eyes that cannot see, feet and cannot walk, and hands but cannot work, therefore, it cannot save you, for it is a dead god.” His hearers were convinced of this, and with the consent of the whole congregation a number of them went up to the idol, removed it and cast it away, and they became worshippers of the God the missionary preached to them. Since the Gospel began to be preached the Lord had a people in the world. In the time of Isaiah the prophet speaks of these as a small remnant (Isaiah 1:9). It is

of these that the Lord speaks in our text. In addressing you from these words we shall call your attention to the following particulars: –

- I. Those described as poor and needy.
- II. Their endeavours to get their needs supplied: – they seek water.
- III. The promise that is made to them: – I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
- IV. The Lord's purpose in this connection in doing what He promised: – that they may see and know and consider and understand together that the hand of the Lord hath done this and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

I. Those described as poor and needy.

The Lord's people are often spoken of in Scripture as poor. By nature all our fallen race are poor, having lost God and all the good we had in our first creation. We are all poor spiritually but the Lord's people are poor in spirit. By spirit here we mean the new nature born again of the Spirit: "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). The old nature considered itself rich and having need of nothing but it is not so with the new nature, it is conscious of its need of everything which God provided in Christ for salvation.

In what sense are the Lord's people poor? Negatively, they are not poor.

(1) As to their state they are justified and there is no condemnation to them. In this sense they are complete in Christ.

(2) They are not poor as to their rights. Christ is theirs; for all the benefits of His redemption are theirs. Christ in His Sermon on the Mount says of them "blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

(3) They are not poor as if they had not received anything of the blessings of salvation, for they have received the earnest of the inheritance. They have a covenant right to all the good things of this world which they need to support their bodies during their time on earth. Christ promised them this. "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

Positively, they are poor

(1) In their own experience; the Psalmist was rich, for he could say that God was his portion and yet he said: – "I am poor and needy" (Psalm 70:5).

(2) They are comparatively poor. They have not yet received all the blessing that they shall receive. And this is true of them during their time in the state of imperfection, but when they are brought to heaven they shall be filled with the blessings of glory in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.

They are described not only as poor but needy. They are not like some beggars who have hoarded up much money and yet pretend to be poor and beg alms from door to door. We have heard about some such beggars that after their death it was discovered that they left behind them hundreds of pounds. These were not needy but the Lord's people are needy as well as poor. Many professing Christians are poor in mouth but not conscious of their need. Through the power of unbelief the Lord's people are often poorer in their own experience than they really are: that is when they come to doubt their interest in Christ and in the blessings of His purchase.

II. Their endeavours to get their needs supplied.

A sense of need leads to this: they seek water. All living creatures labour to get their needs supplied; even the fowls of the air do so. You see them working diligently in the fields to get food to support them. Water in Scripture has several significations. Sometimes it signifies the Holy Spirit, as Christ spoke of it to the Woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee: Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of

Him and He would have given thee living water” (John 4:10). See also John 7:38. It signifies also the blessings of salvation. As these blessings are spoken of in Isaiah 55:1: “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” This, we think, is the meaning of water in our text. Where do they seek this water? They seek it in the means of grace, private and public. They seek it in the closet and family worship, and in the public means of grace. These are wells of salvation as they are spoken of in Isaiah 12:3: “Therefore, with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” They attend these means not only in obedience to God’s command but from a sense of need, and a desire to receive good to their souls. When Christ manifests Himself to His people in the means of grace they find it good to be there as Peter said on the Mount of Transfiguration: “Lord, it is good for us to be here.” You have been many years coming to the means of grace: Have you ever found good in these means? Alas! many have to say that they have not. That is not a good sign, at least, if you are satisfied with your condition. It is sad to think that the great majority that attend the means of grace perhaps for scores of years cannot say from their own experience that they got good for their souls. And yet are not troubled on that account, but it is not yet too late. Cry to God to awaken you out of the sleep of death; convince you of your sins, and of your need of salvation, and change of nature and state. God is the hearer of prayer. He hears the prayer of the poor and needy.

These are discouragements which the poor and needy meet with in seeking water. They seek water and for a time they find none. This was a great discouragement and trial of faith. Perhaps they were seeking water under the ministry of graceless men where living souls can find no good. A certain man said that it would be as unlikely that you should go to the top of the highest hill expecting to get shell-fish there as to go to hear a graceless minister expecting to receive spiritual good under his preaching. And that is quite true, and even where the Gospel is preached by Christ’s ambassadors the Lord’s people may for a time be seeking water and finding none. This is a greater trial, and when they are long in that state our text says that their tongue faileth for thirst or, as we have it in the Gaelic translation, their tongue is dried with thirst. A great and long continued thirst affects the tongue so that they cannot speak or express in words their desires to God. They cannot pray, and they are on the verge of despair thinking that God will not hear their prayers at all. Although this is hard to bear, it is a better sign than to be indifferent resting on their lees without any real concern as to whether He will hear you or not. I would have more hope of your salvation on the verge of despair than to be indifferent concerning the things which pertain to your everlasting peace. Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.

III. The promise:

(1) “I the Lord will hear them.” This is a word in season, a word of comfort and encouragement. He has His own time to hear prayer. There is nothing so comforting to the poor and needy as a word from the Lord. His people would rather hear a word of threatening from Him than to be silent to them altogether. There was a godly man who enjoyed much of the comfort of the Gospel and who, after that, fell into a disconsolate state of mind because the Lord was not speaking to him as on former occasions, and he was for a number of days in a very gloomy frame of mind. Still he was praying, and on a certain day he was praying in some corner outside his house, and when he came home his wife observed that his face was shining as with delight. She said to him you must have received some token for good since you left home. “Yes,” he answered, “the Lord has spoken an awful threatening to me to-day, and this is a token that He has not forsaken me utterly.” Some have found comfort from the words: “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). If God speaks to you by the threatenings of His Word it is a sign that He is still striving with you, but be not content till He begins to speak to you by the still small voice of the Gospel.

(2) "I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Having been long seeking water and finding none they were ready to conclude that God had forsaken them, but in this part of the promise He assures them that He has not forsaken them and that He shall never do so. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." This also, is a word in season to the poor and needy. Oh! what a comfort it is to hear this promise from the mouth of the Lord. What a lift it gives to a poor soul seeking comfort and finding none! No tongue of man can express the joy which it brings to a sorrowful soul. It is a joy unspeakable and full of glory. It moistens the tongue that was parched with thirst, so that now it is like the pen of a ready writer. Praising the Lord and calling upon others to join in praising Him like the Psalmist: "Oh! that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the sons of men" (Psalm 107:21). He tells them that He is their covenant God – "the God of Israel." In another part of Scripture He says: "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord who hath mercy on thee" (Isaiah 54:10).

(3) "I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of the valleys." The high places here mean heathen lands. High places, such as high hills, are places where one would not expect to see rivers of waters. Such were the Gentiles before the Gospel came to them. In connection with this we may quote the words of the Psalmist: "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth on the top of the mountains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon" (Psalm 72:16). The rivers that were to be opened are the means of grace opened for the Gentiles who were by these means brought to be fellow heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His grace in Christ by the gospel (Ephesians 3:6). This was a mystery which was not made known to (or at least understood by) the sons of men in other ages as is now revealed unto His holy Apostles by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:5). These rivers of living water were not like stagnant water but water that flowed far and wide till it reached our country. It flowed to the Highlands of Scotland. It came to Ross-shire, where there was no parish without the means of grace, and poor and needy souls found plenty of water at last. There was scarcely a parish without a godly minister who preached the gospel. Is it so now in Ross-shire? No! You may go from sea to sea and not hear a sermon that will do good to a needy soul. Where are the poor and needy in Dingwall? They are very few indeed. The most do not know where the gospel is because they are dead. They have no spiritual understanding and therefore go anywhere to hear and are satisfied with anything delivered to them from the pulpit under the name of Gospel which is no gospel at all but in name.

(4) The fountains opened in the valleys may mean the means of grace set up; for the Jews to whom the Apostles, and especially Peter preached the Gospel to many, were blessed. Three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost under the preaching of Peter, and many others were added to the number afterwards.

(5) "I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water." This is the effect of the Gospel preached. Those men that were formerly like a dry wilderness were now like a pool of water and springs of water. Men by nature are like a barren wilderness bearing no good fruit but are by means of the Gospel so watered and saturated that they bear the fruits of the spirit whereby God is glorified as Christ says: "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). And thus they were to prove that they were His disciples. Have you found out that by nature you are like a wilderness, and are you dissatisfied with your condition and praying that God would change you by His Spirit from a state of nature to a state of grace? If so, I would not lose hope of your salvation. It is sad to think that so many are careless about the salvation of their immortal souls, but if they die in that state they are lost for ever. I beseech you to have a real concern about your soul's salvation before it is too late. This may be the last

warning which you may have. You are now in the land of the living; to-morrow you may be in eternity. Oh! rest not this night till you find rest in Christ and then although you should not see another day you may be sure, like the thief on the cross, to be with Christ in the glorious paradise of God.

(6) "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together." These trees may symbolize believers of every shade and degree who are public witnesses for Himself in the Church who are like trees that are a shade and a shelter from the heat of the sun and are thus a shelter or protection to others from many evils to which they are liable and instruments for good to those who associate with them. It is said that those who dwell under the shadow of Israel shall return or be converted, and that they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine (Hosea 14:7). This was fulfilled in the past in the family of Abraham. Isaac dwelt under the shadow of his godly father, and he was converted and revived as the corn. Jacob dwelt under the shadow of his godly father Isaac, and he also was converted; and the twelve tribes of Israel sprang from Jacob and many of them were converted too. Although grace does not run in the blood, yet it runs from generation to generation in families and tribes. True godliness was found to run in the line of Seth in Old Testament times. While in the line of Cain, who killed his brother, we see no trace of true godliness but rather the opposite. There is a promise to the children of godly parents unto the third and fourth generation of them that fear Him – that God will bless them with the blessings of salvation.

IV. The purpose in this connection – "That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it." The Lord's purpose in fulfilling His promise to the poor and needy, in such a gracious and wonderful manner, was to convince them and idolaters that He as the only living and true God could do, and did, what idols could never do. He appeals to them to know this, to consider, and understand together that His hand hath done this "and that the Holy One of Israel hath created it." The idols could not do either good or evil, they could neither punish transgressors nor save them, but He could and does both. When the Lord's people are in doubt as to whether they had undergone a saving change, they will admit that they had undergone a change from what they had formerly been. They ought to examine themselves on the Shorter Catechism answer to "What is effectual calling?" And to ask themselves – "Have we been convinced of our sins and misery? Has our mind been enlightened in the knowledge of Christ? Has our will been renewed? Have we, in consequence, been persuaded and enabled to embrace Christ freely offered in the Gospel?" We have no hope for eternity but in Christ alone, and if we cannot say that we have faith of assurance we cannot deny that we have faith of adherence, that is to say, if we cannot say with some believers: "My beloved is mine and I am His;" we can say with others who have a weaker faith: "To whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). Neither their own power or any finite power could effect this change, therefore, it must be the power of God through the agency of His spirit and the medium of His word, even law and gospel, that did it, and that it was the Holy One of Israel that created it. On the other hand, if many professing Christians examine themselves on effectual calling they might find by that test that they are still in a state of sin and misery notwithstanding their high profession. The Lord add His blessing to our meditation upon His Word. Amen.

[September 1925]

The Willow by the Water Courses.

A Sermon,

By the late REV. LACHLAN MACKENZIE, Lochcarron.

“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel – (Isaiah 44:3-5).

The Lord’s people are a fearful people, ready very often to sink in their minds, notwithstanding the great things He does for them. But though fearful and faint-hearted persons, when they see themselves alone, yet bold as a lion when the Captain of Salvation goes before them. What makes them give way to thoughts of unbelief and despondency, is the feeling they have of a carnal, dry, unclean heart; not only destitute of grace, but likewise full of wickedness and sin. They find nothing in themselves upon which they can build any ground of comfort. In order, therefore, to strengthen the hearts of His people, the divine promises are scattered throughout the Word. The precious portion of Scripture now read is fraught with joy and consolation to the “mourners in Zion” – “to those who are in the dark and have no light” – to those who see their need of, and would wish to have an interest in, that precious thing called grace. Here, indeed, there are sweet and gracious promises given – not to those who have such and such qualifications; to these, such promises, sweet as they are, would be superfluous; they find no need of them – but to the thirsty, to those who are compared to dry and parched ground, and consequently see their need of Christ.

In speaking further upon this subject,

- I. I shall, by divine assistance, mention the characters to whom these promises are made.
- II. I shall explain to you the precious promises just now read.
- III. I shall show you the fruits or effects of these promises in the persons who are concerned in them.
- IV. Lastly, make a short improvement.

I. I shall, in the first place, point out to you the characters to whom these promises are made.

All the promises are centred in Christ. "In Him they are yea, and in Him amen, to the glory of God." There are some promises which were made to Christ alone, others to Christ and the Church, and others to the Church alone. And it requires some spiritual light and knowledge in the Word of God to distinguish them. Only let it be observed that all the promises made to Christ Himself, though applicable to Him in the highest sense, yet, in a secondary sense, belong to His Church and people.

Although Christ, as I observed already, is included in every promise, I shall speak of it here as it applies to the Church. The Lord speaks comfort to her in these words, by the name of Jacob and Israel. The one is a name of weakness, the other of power. Esau's observation upon Jacob's name was that he was rightly so called, inasmuch as he had supplanted him twice, first of his birthright and then of his blessing. The name of Israel he obtained when he had power over the angel, and prevailed. Israel signifieth one that hath prevailed – a Prince with God. The Church in herself is weak and frail, and can do nothing, but when she, by faith in her glorious Redeemer, layeth hold upon God, she always prevaieth; for we "are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

If we apply them to Christ they may point out to us His state of wrestling and sufferings, and His obtaining the victory over His and our enemies; and in consequence of this, His obtaining a "name above every name, both in heaven and in earth."

II. The second thing proposed was, to explain to you the precious promises just now read.

"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." By water we are to understand the salutary influences of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. These He shall communicate to the soul who is in distress, who sees his great need of Christ as a Saviour. As water refreshes the weary traveller fatigued with heat and panting with thirst, just so the glad tidings of salvation bring joy to the sinner's soul. Grace is a most precious thing, and when the Lord means to bestow it, He puts a strong desire in the soul after it. Indeed, this unfeigned desire is a degree of grace, and such as ask sincerely will be sure to obtain. Thirst is the strongest and most impatient of all our appetites. It has, if I may so express myself, neither patience nor shame, but must be satisfied. It is like Rachel about children, "Give me children or else I die." The spiritual thirst says the same of Christ; the language of it is, Give me Christ or else I die. Almighty God has not implanted any natural passion in vain. There is some correspondent object to satisfy it. He has implanted in us a desire for meat and drink, and if He had not appointed meat and drink to satisfy this natural desire, He would be mocking his creatures, and tantalising their hopes. In our natural desires, however, there may be, and often is, an irregularity; and the Lord is not obliged always to answer them. But as for our spiritual desires, they are never in vain – they will, they must be satisfied. What does our Lord Himself say of this spiritual thirst? John 7:37 – "If any man thirst, let Him come unto Me and drink"; and again, Revelation 22:17 – "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

"And floods upon the dry ground." The soul may not only be thirsty, but even like a piece of dry, parched ground. There may be not only a sense of need, of great, inexpressible need, but likewise a feeling of great misery. The soul may be hard, dry, and barren like a rock or a piece of hardened ground. In some such situation was King David's soul, in the wilderness of Judah. He makes a comparison of the place he was in, to show the state of his soul. "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." King David was then locked up from the means. But it may happen that a Christian shall enjoy the means, and yet find himself hard under them. In such a case let him bring himself under the promise in my text. Pitiably as such a situation is,

others have been in the like, and have found relief through the promise. What is the language of such a soul? I have not a spark of grace. Why, then, if such be thy case, come to Christ. Oh, but says the soul, I have a hard heart – I cannot pray – if I could have freedom to pray – if I could shed a tear – if I could open my heart to my God, I were happy. Is this your case? Poor soul, you are the very person for whom the promise is made, and to whom the words in my text are directed. Your heart is a very wilderness – perfectly hard, and without sense of feeling. Hear the promise made to such, Isaiah 31:6, 7 – “For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert; and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty lands springs of water. Nay, there is comfort for a case still more deplorable, Isaiah 41:17,18 – “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry lands springs of water.” Perhaps you cannot pray; you find your heart hard, and you cannot find a word to say. You are the very person described in my text. You would wish to pray but you cannot do it. Why, then, He shall not only give you a drink to quench your thirst, but He shall even pour floods upon you. A single shower would not do. You have a long drought. He will rain plentifully – He will pour a flood upon you. When you get relief, whatever time it be, your comfort shall be large and your peace lasting. When the Lord’s heritage is weary, He shall send a plentiful rain to confirm it. And in consequence of this hardness, the corruptions may be gathering strength in the soul; and awful and horrid thoughts may arise in the heart. The Lord therefore promises that He will take this likewise away; for, says He, “I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring.” The Holy Ghost the Comforter is promised to all the people of God. His office is not only to convince of sin, but likewise to strengthen the soul. Pardon of sin is the great blessing which the Redeemer has purchased for His people; it is whispered to the conscience by the blessed Spirit, through the Word. The Word speaks peace to all that forsake sin and turn to God. But although we be reconciled, and although the Word speaketh peace, yet that peace may not be intimated to the conscience. The true Christian will be afraid of a false peace, and can never take peace till he sees his warrant from the Word of God. The Spirit shines upon the promise, and makes him see that it belongs to him. This He does by breaking the power of unbelief, and by convincing the conscience of the truth of the promise, as He formerly convinced him of the truth of the threatening. The law says to the conscience, Thou art a sinner. The Spirit shines upon the Word to the soul – “That the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save lost sinners.” In some such way the blessed Spirit speaks peace to the soul. And the sinner ought to be diligent in the means of grace, and in examination of his conscience. And if he cannot find good and holy qualifications within himself, he cannot deny at any rate, but he can find in himself qualities that will give room to precious Christ to show Himself a Saviour. If, instead of holiness, he finds nothing but the leprosy of sin, he can apply to the Saviour in the words of the poor leper, formerly – “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” If he find himself hard, without repentance, he can tell his Saviour that he has heard about Him, “that He was exalted as a Prince and Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and the forgiveness of sins.” If he finds unbelief working, he may say, “Lord, I would wish to believe; help my unbelief.” Whatever corruption is working within him, a touch of the power of Christ can cure him. Let us only endeavour to believe, for to such all things are possible.

III. The third thing proposed was to show the fruits or effects of these promises in the persons who are concerned in them – “They shall spring up as among the grass – as willows by the water-courses.” Nothing shoots forth quicker than the grass, when the rain

and the dew falls upon it; and of all trees and vegetables, none has such a quick growth as the willow by the water-courses. In such manner shall be the growth and progress of the true Christian when his soul is revived with the dew and rain from above. "He shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine – his branches shall spread – his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." It is in the nature of grace to grow, but like every other seed, it requires the rain, and when the showers from above are withheld, it will begin to droop and wither; but when refreshed with the heavenly dew, it will "bud and blossom as the rose." And as it is in nature, so it is likewise in grace; sometimes the dews fall and revive the vegetable creation, and yet the nicest ear cannot hear them – the sharpest eye cannot see them. At other times the rain distills in small drops; sometimes in large, refreshing showers, and sometimes even in storms and tempests. But in whatever manner the rain falls upon the earth, it is sure to do good. In like manner, some are brought from darkness to light by imperceptible degrees – by the blessing of God upon a pious education; some are turned from sin to righteousness in their younger years, but without any sensible terrors; others again are brought to Mount Sinai; they are brought home by the thunder and lightning of the law, set home with all its terrors upon their consciences, before they close with Christ in the promise. But whatever way they come, happy are they who are found in Christ. They shall spring as the grass, as the willows by the water-courses. They shall grow in grace, and proceed from strength to strength, until they appear perfect at last before God in Sion. And they shall give proofs of this their growth in grace.

"For one shall say, I am the Lord's." That is, he shall lay claim to Christ – he shall come to the Redeemer, and close with Him by the faith of the gospel. He comes to Christ, and shall not be cast out. If he cannot say that Christ is his, at least he will essay to say that he is Christ's. Though he cannot say with full assurance that Christ loves him, yet he can say with Peter that he loves Christ. If he cannot say that Christ has drawn him, yet he can say with humility, "Draw me, we will run after Thee." He will be pleading with the Lord, that He is a merciful God. Though the Lord be refusing him, yet will he, with the woman of Canaan, be always pursuing him (Matthew 15:22-28). That blessed woman could not then say, Christ is mine, but yet she pleads kindness – she urges her suit – continues her importunity, and at last obtains her request. The soul must do the same – he must be always about the Saviour's hands – always throwing himself at His feet – always wrestling against unbelief, and never give over till he obtains the victory. The Lord will give the blessing to his child; but the child must wrest it, as it were, out of His hands. The Lord, it is true, promises "to sprinkle clean water upon his people" – "to give them a new heart, and take away the heart of stone; but yet will He be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." The words in my text are very easily repeated, "I am the Lord's," but let me assure you, it costs a struggle to believe them, and repeat them by faith. Some people think faith a very easy matter. With the Apostle, I am of a very different opinion. It is called a warfare, and so indeed it is. To lay hold upon Christ, and keep the grip upon experience, will be found a hard pull: Scripture and the sense of feeling in the people of God say so.

"And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." He shall adjoin himself to the Church and people of God. To enjoy the privilege of worshipping God with His people, in spirit and in truth, is the great happiness of every true Israelite. To be an Israelite, and to be a member of the Church, are synonymous terms. The Church is the mystical body of Christ, and it is faith which can make us true members thereof.

"And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." When a person gives his consent to any bargain or contract, he signs or subscribes it. To subscribe with the hand unto the Lord is as much as to give consent to the

terms of the everlasting Covenant. When a woman marries, she takes her husband's name. The soul gives its consent to Christ, and is called by His name. The smallest degree of grace or faith must acquiesce in the Covenant, as well ordered in all things, and sure.

We must give our will up to the Lord, and allow Him to do His own will with us. One of the terms of the Covenant to which we thus subscribe is that if we go astray, He will chastise us with the rod. We must kiss the rod and humble ourselves when we are the Lord's, and subscribe with our hand unto Him; this implies that we must be holy, as He is holy, for without this necessary qualification we cannot enjoy Him here or hereafter. "The Lord knoweth those who are His"; and the leading feature in their character is that they depart from iniquity. We are by nature destitute of holiness, and cannot acceptably perform any duty. By subscribing, however, to the Lord we resign ourselves to Him, in order to be sanctified. It is in the lowest posture of humility and resignation we must receive grace. However, after all our efforts, we find by experience that our holiness is not complete, that we have not attained Christian perfection. Every true Christian is perfect in his wish – in his aim – in his endeavour. In plain language, he would be perfect if he could.

Now, as we cannot satisfy the law for what is past, as inherent holiness is imperfect, and as sin cleaves to our best duties, blessed be God that the Covenant has provided us with a better righteousness than our own. To this righteousness we must subscribe, and appear before our God in the bright robes of our Redeemer's obedience. In order to obtain the blessing, we must put on our Elder Brother's garment. Holiness qualifies for heaven, but the obedience of precious Christ is our charter. To say that the one takes away the necessity of the other is to talk nonsense. The truth is that such as prize the one will make conscience of the other. I shall not now dispute whether the wedding garment means grace in the soul or imputed righteousness. I believe both may be meant; for my part I cannot separate them in idea. It is our duty to have faith, repentance, humility, and love, and the other graces of the Holy Spirit; and though we possessed them, we could not urge them as our plea for acceptance. Sometimes a cloud may arise upon the mind, darkness and deadness, dryness and hardness, may possess the heart. In such a case we must not despond, while we can look to the righteousness of Christ. Like a man of property, though he may lose his goods, his charter is registered, and his estate may be safe. Let us cultivate holiness, but never lose sight of our Redeemer's obedience. He is the Rock of ages – His obedience procured the Holy Ghost for us – the Holy Ghost is the author of our holiness, and holiness is the source of our happiness. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." It is impossible to cultivate holiness without employing Christ. And for what purpose should we employ Him, if our obedience were complete, and if our own righteousness were not as filthy rags? The truth is, if we saw ourselves in our proper colours we should pant after holiness as the spiritual health of our souls – after Christ's righteousness as the foundation of our hopes and happiness. Let us understand these precious doctrines aright, and they will have the most salutary effects upon our moral conduct. Christ is our physician, holiness our health; will we say that our health is what procured us our inheritance?

In a few words, we must come to Christ as sinners, and subscribe with our hand unto the Lord; we must prove that we have been sincere in doing so, by living soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, and adorning the Gospel of the Saviour who bought us.

IV. I shall now, in the last place, make some observations upon what has been said, by way of improvement.

First, then, we have heard that the people of God may find themselves hard, and may be even so under the means of grace. Let us examine ourselves to find out the cause; perhaps we may be indulging some sin against the remonstrance of conscience; this will cause hardness, and cause the Spirit to withdraw. Let us therefore beware of this, and listen to the divine

Monitor within. But, perhaps, God in His sovereignty may be trying us with hardness, with a view to try our faith and patience as He tried holy Job formerly. We may not be conscious of any sin that might occasion our hardness, nor was he. In this case let us wait upon God, and carry our hardness to Christ; He will soften us, and cause all this work for our good.

To conclude. You find yourself empty. Poor soul! You are hard and dry; you are filthy and unclean; your soul is polluted with the leprosy of sin! Come, then, to the refreshing streams of the sanctuary! Come to the water of life; come to Christ in the sacrament, just as you are! Take what you get, and be thankful. How do you feel yourself? A sinner? Very well; here is a Saviour. Perhaps you do not find yourself soft enough; come away, then, this water will soften and sanctify. He promises repentance; depend upon it, He will perform His word. Are you foul and filthy? You are welcome to Christ: His blood can cleanse you: He reaches His fair hand to you: reach forward your black, filthy, foul hand: He will not refuse you. Are you afraid of this? you need not. His word, His very oath, is engaged to receive you. Whatever be your disease, He can give you a cure; whatever is your want, He can give you supply. Come forward; come as you are; come, and welcome to precious Christ. Whoever comes truly will not be cast out; let him take the water of life freely. All things are ready, come to the marriage. "Come," says the Wisdom of God, "eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled."

[October 1925]

The Door of Salvation Opened.

A Sermon Preached by REV. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

It hath pleased the most wise Disposer of all things, out of the riches of His grace, to render Jesus Christ to poor, lost, and undone sinners, and also pleased the Lord Jesus, not only to die for sinners to redeem them from death and the curse of the law, that He might open a way for lost sinners to return to God, but is pleased to stand knocking at the door of their hearts to entreat their souls to be reconciled to God. And, therefore, as you love your souls, as you love your bodies, as you would not bring damnation on yourselves, hear and fear; and do no more wickedly, but open your hard and stony hearts that the King of Glory may enter in. O! sinner, Christ is now standing and calling to thy soul, if thou wilt hear and open, I will come unto thee. Now Christ is saying, I know thy works, I know well enough that thou hast been a blasphemer, or a whoremonger, or a thief, or a Sabbath-breaker, or a scorner; yet I stand at the door this day, and knock; I will receive thee into mercy, I will forgive all thy sins. I will accept, I will hear, I will save thy soul, if thou wilt open thy heart this day unto me and let me in. O brethren, for Christ's sake refuse not Christ, do not refuse Christ, do not refuse nor reject so great a salvation lest you perish.

1. Consider the necessity you have of Him. “Give me children or else I die,” said Rachel. Give me Christ, or else I perish for ever. Can you be saved without Christ? And if you may have Christ but for the opening the door, then, while it is called to-day, then hear and open to Him. If the door of grace should be shut, thou wouldest be shut up with vengeance for ever.

2. Consider what answer thou wilt be able to make at the Great Day, if thou wilt harden thy heart and not open, why, what wilt thou, what, cannot thou plead for thyself at the day of judgment? Wilt thou say, the Gospel never offered thee Christ? Why, thou hast heard this day: If any man will hear and open, I will come in and sup with him. Will those say, I would have opened my heart had it not been for love of sin, or for ease, or for liberty, honour, friends, or companions. Oh! how will men and angels hiss at thee! This is the person who for lusts' sake forsook His mercy, who, for a little vanity neglected his own salvation. O! how wilt thou curse thyself, that for nothing, yea, for that which is worse than nothing, thou hast put off Christ and His salvation! Therefore, men, brethren, and fathers, hearken unto me, as Moses said to the Israelites, so this day I propone unto you blessing and cursing, life and death; salvation, if you open unto Christ, and damnation, if you refuse Christ.

For the Lord's sake, choose not cursing but blessing; choose not death, but life; choose not hell, but heaven; choose not sin but Christ, though you have formerly slighted Him. If you will now regard Him, though you have formerly condemned Him; yet, if you will praise

Him, though you have formerly resisted; if yet you will yield, if yet you will consent, if yet you will become willing, Christ will be yours, mercy will be yours, and salvation will be yours.

And what will you have more? What! will all this do? Will not mercy allure you? Will love constrain you? Then give me leave to reprove you, and fright you if it be possible, out of those depths of Satan into which you are fallen. However, I am resolved whether you will or not, and the Lord fasten it upon your souls.

Question 1. In the bowels of love and mercy, let me beg then to ask thy soul this question: How long will this life and the comfort of it last? The soul is immortal and will never die, but must have a being somewhere to all Eternity.

Question 2. What will become of thee when this life and all the comforts of it are gone? Oh, hardhearted sinner, this broad way which thou walkest in will never lead thee to the promised land; thy gold and silver key will never open heaven's gate for thee; thy care of this world's good will never plead for thee before the Judge; all thy friends and acquaintances with whom thou hast spent many joyful hours, their good works will stand then in no stead.

Then thou wilt be ready to cry: Where is the Christ whom I have despised? Oh, where is the Jesus that I have resisted? Will He plead for me? No, surely; but go to the gods whom thou hast chosen. O, what will become of me? Must I not die? O, whether will death carry me? Into which of the regions of the world will death land me, either of light or of darkness! To which of the two regions am I now travelling?

Certainly the way of pleasure or worldly profit, the broad way to the world, is not the way to lead me to heaven or to everlasting happiness. Say, O sinner, to thy soul, What! must I be taken from all glory and greatness, from all the diligence, and thrown, like Lucifer, son of the morning, from all my brightness into blackness and darkness for ever? When death hath closed mine eyes, must I awake in everlasting flames! Sinner! thou, thou shalt be without remedy, unless thou open to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Question 3. Ask thy soul on which hand thou art like to stand on the Day of Judgment, on the right hand, or on the left among the goats. If thou wilt not hear, and open thy heart now, be assured the devil will open hell's mouth for thee. What will be the end of these joys which now make so glad thy heart? You are now in the broad way to destruction and utter separation from God's presence for ever. Thy pleasures here we may judge of, but, oh! who can tell the thousandth part of these fiery torments to which thou art liable in the other world?

Whilst thou diest, thou shalt be a damned creature, Whilst thou livest, thou art fed like a beast by common providences, and art a mere stranger to feeding promises. If thou lookest upwards, God is frowning, and His wrath is revealed from heaven against thee. If thou lookest downward, thou mayest see hell gaping, and opening its mouth to swallow thee up quick; many dangers attend thee every day; many miseries every moment; legions of devils stand about thee, watching thee, and waiting for the leave of God to drag thy soul into the lake of fire.

Ah, when thou diest, man, what must thou then do? When Captain Death strikes thee, whose armies of wolves will fall upon thee? Look to it, and remember thou wert once warned, lest thou die eternally. St. Austin's prayer was: "O Lord, rack me, hew me, burn me here, but spare me hereafter." As long as thou refuseth to hear Christ's voice, thou hast a hell upon earth; it is not the multitude of companions that go thither which shall any whit lessen thy torments, but rather increase them; thy life that has been full of worldly joys shall be full of daily woe.

All you into whose hands this little book shall come, O let me beg you to consider, in those bowels of love you have to put your own souls, how your hearts can endure to think of

being then out of heaven, out of blessedness for ever; ask your hearts these questions: Can I burn? Can I endure the vengeance of eternal fire? O, why, my soul, wilt thou not be persuaded to repent? Is there too much pain in that? Thou art ready to say, I cannot bear a cross, nor any affliction, a scoff, or a reproach; talk thee of crucifying the flesh, of parting with thy wordly companions, of entering in at the strait gate; O, these are hard sayings, who can bear them?

But how wilt thou do to dwell with devouring fire? How wilt thou do to dwell with everlasting burnings? Whatsoever thou thinkest now, think what hell will be when the day comes thou must descend into it; thou mayest drink or laugh away the fear of it, but what will it be to thee when thou feelest thyself wrapped in the flames of it, and not a drop of water to cool thy tongue? Think on hell, O soul, and then think on Christ, and consider if a Redeemer from such misery be not worth the accepting of. Think on hell, and think on sin, and carnal pleasures, and delights; consider how they will relish with thee, when thus salted with everlasting fire. Are these the price for which thou sellest thy soul to hell? Oh! bid these lusts and pleasures be gone; and though you loved them well, and have spent your time sinfully with them, yet tell them you must not burn for them, that you will not damn your soul to please your flesh.

Having thus briefly, as may be, laid down the use of terror, which I hope, will waken some poor souls out of the depth of carnal security, now I shall proceed to the last use of encouragement; to encourage poor secure sinners to venture to lay fast hold on Him before that it be too late.

Oh! poor soul, hast thou kept Christ out of a long time, and art thou not yet resolved to open thy heart to Him? What shall I say to thee? Let me say this, Christ waits still for thee; then why wilt thou undo thyself by neglecting so great salvation? Let the consideration of the message Christ brings you, of the errand He comes on, excite you (it is no dismal one He brings, it is no dreadful errand). If Christ had come to destroy thy soul, could He have had less welcome than you gave Him? Oh! for your soul's sake, receive Him. Oh! ye fools, when will ye be wise? Come unto Christ, and He will have mercy on you, and heal all your backslidings, and love you freely.

But some poor soul will be ready to say, I have a desire to come to Christ, but I am afraid Christ will never receive such a wretched sinner as I, who have stood it out so long against Him. For answer to this, give me leave to give you some directions.

Direction 1. – Ah, poor soul, art thou willing to come to Christ? Then will Christ in no wise cast thee out, if thou comest to Him poor, miserable, blind, and naked. O sinner, come not to Him in thy strength. Come thou and say, O Lord, here is a poor sinner, not worth a farthing! O Lord, make me rich in faith. O Lord, here is a miserable soul. Lord, have mercy on me; here is a poor blind sinner, Lord, enlighten me from above; here is a poor, naked wretch, O Lord, save me lest I perish, for I cannot help myself.

Direction 2 – Come to Christ by believing in Him. Ay! when thy poor soul is sinking headlong into hell, and sees no way to escape the fearful wrath of God hanging over thy head, catch, thou, then at such a time fast hold on Christ. Oh! then, apprehend and apply all His benefits unto thy soul; come this way and grasp Him in the arms of thy faith, and say, “I believe in Thee, help Thou my unbelief. And the answer which the Lord will give thee will be thus: – Be it according as thou wilt. Let Christ be in your hand, and the promise in your eye; and no doubt though thou hast been a rebel, a traitor, yet Jesus Christ, having received gifts for the rebellious, will show mercy on thee and receive thee.

Direction 3 – Come to Jesus Christ by repenting and forsaking all thy sins. Thou canst never come to the wedding supper without the wedding garments. The old man must be taken away before all things can be made new. Oh, Jerusalem! wash thy heart from

wickedness that thou mayest be saved. Which God of His infinite mercy grant that we may all do, and be blessed for ever through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.
[January 1926]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. JOHN KENNEDY, D.D.
Preached 28th February 1875.

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” – Psalm 91:1.

There is mention made here of a secret place, and one dwelling in it, and because dwelling there abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. It is sad to be before a passage like this without the sinner being under the shadow, or abiding in this secret place; without any sense whatever of being in its shelter and content as one frozen and dead outside. It would be sad to find one outside, without any ray of light shining from the secret place into the heart from the Gospel, seeing that the poor one may look in. But if I have no more than that I have only a foretaste of what awaits us in hell. Some catch a glimpse of it and are afraid they never will reach it, but blessed is the man who can say, like the Psalmist – “The Lord is my fortress.” The Lord deliver us from being content with remaining without the right to say this. Let us consider,

I. The secret place, and

II. The man who dwells there.

I. The secret place. Men have a secret place, but some have not much to put in it. A portrait, of a friend, a lock of hair, or a few pence may be in the secret place of the poor man, but the rich man has more than that, and requires a secret place, and he is able to provide such. The King requires a secret place for the diamonds of the kingdom, and will have such, and it will be a secure place where the treasures are kept. If men have such, what a secret place the Most High must have! His treasures are there, and if so He has a secret place and His secret place is secure. What are the treasures of the Most High, and what is the secret place He has provided for them? When I think of the treasures of the Most High I must think of His glory. His essential glory dwells in His being and is safe there, and He has not provided a secret place for it; but He determined a manifestation of His glory, and for that scheme He has a secret place from whence to show it forth. There was something else, too, in the sight of God as a treasurer. There was the payment made to the treasury of heaven for which God owes a reward. How wonderful that Jehovah, the independent, infinite, and eternal one should receive a payment for which He owes a reward, and yet God could not be in debt, for the Man who bought it was His Fellow and a divine Person as Mediator. God, therefore, consistent with His independence receives a payment for which He owes a reward. The price was the precious blood of His Son, and if the Most High has a secret place, the precious blood is there and safe to be applied to the fulfilment of His gracious purpose. God has a people whom He loved, though they are a low, mean, and hell-deserving people, although they are a hostile people, and spiritually dead, but what if God loved them. They are precious in His sight, not for anything of theirs, but because in the fulness of His infinite love He bound them up with His purpose of salvation. As loved and as embraced in His purpose, they are infinitely precious in His sight. The provision made for them is precious. How precious is the provision made by the parent for the child, how watchful he

is about it, and when he dies, that child's right to it is a good one. If an earthly parent have this, think what Jehovah's care will be for the provision made for His people.

(1) His glory is in Christ. How suitable this is. He is the brightness of the Father's glory. Every manifestation of the divine glory is from the Son. Every manifestation of the divine purpose is from Him. Every manifestation of His will is from Him. Every manifestation of His power is from Him, and no other can be entrusted with the manifestation of His name like Him. He could not manifest it without being in the flesh. What an honour to the human nature that the highest manifestation of the divine glory should be coming forth from it! Look at it in Eden, and then look at it in the temple of Immanuel's flesh. Verily He has triumphed over the enemy and trampled him under His feet, because He was made sin and a curse. All the iniquities of His people were laid upon Him, and He bore them. Being made sin, the curse of the law came forth and passed over Him, and he that had the power of death got the opportunity of doing his worst. And when this was so, the result was a full manifestation of Jehovah's glory. Thus Jehovah triumphed over His great enemy. You have only to come to God with your sins. There is One whose name is Jesus, and through Him you can ask what would be eternal life to thee. Would it not be well to draw near to God through the blood? In order to preserve the efficacy of that blood it must be in Christ as the Great High Priest, as the King, as the Prince and Saviour exalted, for only as it is in Him will He reign on the ground of it and exercise the power of His life in the salvation of His people. As surely as the blood is in Him as revealed in the Gospel, and only accessible through faith in Him as it is written, "In whom we have redemption through His blood." Never expect anything in mercy apart from the blood of Jesus, or from the blood apart from Himself. If you get mercy it is through the blood.

(2) His people were in Him before the world was. Think of Christ taking care of them in the covenant before the work of Christ was begun. Yes, from all eternity, He did this. I think Christ will not grudge taking care of them in the eternity to come without sin, when He did it in the eternity that is past with sin. I cannot contemplate the people without being chosen in Him. They were chosen in Him miserable and blind, and dead as they were. There was an eternal calm in the heart of God as He had them before His mind in the Son. They are in Him, and safe there. The Head is their life, and in Him their life is hid with Him in God. Blessed are they of whom this is true; there is no doubt of that man dwelling in the secret place of the Most High.

(3) All fulness dwells in Him, not merely that He might keep it, but that He might dispense it. You find people willing to take charge of a thing, but who would not be willing to dispense it; but Christ does this to the blind, the lame, the impotent, and the dead. It is safe, not only the provision, but the poor people who are in His charge. It would be well for you to learn this. Some people claim a lordship over grace, and deny the lordship of Christ over it. They don't think they require to be drawn by Christ to receive of His fulness. Oh, friends, they must be brought to this fulness and receive out of it grace for passing from glory to glory. Such are the treasures of the Most High and His secret place.

II. The man who dwells there. In the next verse the Psalmist says – "The Lord is my fortress." I would like to ask the Psalmist one or two questions –

1. If you are dwelling there, whence did you come there?
2. How did you come in?
3. What did you find there when you came in? 4, What's your warrant for saying you are there?

1. Whence did you come there? You say – "As to my state, although I was, according to the purpose of God, chosen in Him, I was lying outside, under the power of sin, the dupe of the world, in the grasp of Satan, on the brink of hell, and the only door open to me was the

door of an eternal hell.” So it is with you here to-night. The Lord was warning me, but I would not heed Him; calling me but I would not come, lying in the field frozen and dead. The light of the Gospel produced no effect on me, and I would have lain there until death came to sweep me into hell, unless the Lord had mercy upon me. While I was there I was turning the Word of God as witness against me. As long as you refused to be warned by His law and refused His Gospel, you turned the law and the Gospel to be witnesses against you. A man goes out to the streets at night in search of outcasts. The first he finds is fast asleep on the ground. He shakes him and wakens him, but he says, “Let me alone.” He yields and passes on. The next is a drunkard. He lays his hand on him, and he shakes it off. He leaves him and passes on. The next is enraged and only calls him a fool. So he is left, too. The next has the chill of death on him. He knows a corpse is before him. But you must unite all these before you can find a case like yours and mine. Asleep, intoxicated with the world, and in our conscience desperate, dead in trespasses and sins. What hope is there for such a one apart from the free, rich, almighty mercy of God?

2. How did you come into the secret place? I think I hear this answer – “I did not come without being brought in. The Lord awoke me and made me feel my miserable state. I saw Him who is the secret place and who is the door. I was enlightened and I would fain reach a secret place. I heard His voice to me. I rose, I cast myself on Him, I entered the secret place, and found rest there.

3. What did you find there? It is not much I can tell, it was so wonderful; no one can tell all that he sees there. But if ever I went in I saw the glory. I saw the blood there, too, and the beloved people and the fulness of grace. If I didn’t see the blood there my heart would have fainted. There would be no hope without it. It was through the blood that I saw the glory and the beloved ones who were all sinners saved on the ground of the blood. I was like one that dreamed. The glory is unspeakable, it never entered into the heart of man to conceive its like. The glory is inconceivable, the knowledge infinitely rich, the people for ever blessed.

4. What is your warrant? I would like to be under no mistake in saying: – “The Lord is my fortress.” I would like to have no doubt that I was called by God to Christ. I would like this made known to some here to-night for without it, never will there be a true sense of unbelief. I would like not only that you would be called but that coming to Christ and entering in through Him as the door, you would dwell in Him as in the secret place. What a wonderful Christ! He is the door and He is the secret place. The door is open to let one in but never to let one out. Once the promise is mine I claim a right to what the blood entitles me to. A right to the privileges of God’s saved Israel, He has made the cause of my salvation the cause of His glory, and because He can’t give His glory to another, He won’t give me to be a prey to the Destroyer. Well I have a warrant for saying so. What is your warrant for saying you have closed with Christ on the terms of the Gospel? Because I counted Him worthy trusting, and I counted Him worthy confessing. Thus adding to my faith, virtue, when I became acquainted with Christ, I began to know God, humbled as I never was before, and so I was drawn to God. It is this knowledge which brings down self and sin. There can be no doubt from whence it came. Such is the knowledge I received, to that I added temperance. I was content to have done with the world, with its cares, and with its wealth, and as soon as that the world began to mock me and persecute me. The world does this in its own way. I was content to suffer it. I added to temperance patience; I was willing in the hand of God to suffer from the world; rather to have the sufferings of God’s people than the ease of the world. I added to this godliness. I was often with God in secret. Sometimes the waves of trouble threw the vessels of mercy further in. When the sea is stormy the more pleasant is the haven. I don’t know when a man enjoys his home more than on a stormy winter night. I think God’s people never have

such peace and delight as in persecutions. Like the three men in the fiery furnace, they had more peace than the King, for he trembled, and so also with Daniel in the den of lions. Why are we so secure at the prospect of suffering in the world? If the light of God's face shines upon us what need we care for the persecution of the world? Why change a man's way for the midges being flying across the path? In the trial seek to keep near to God and when your heart gets warmer it will get warm to God's people; so adding to godliness, brotherly kindness. I don't know what makes me so cold to God's people, but that I am cold to Himself. As there is brotherly kindness there is charity. All these making my calling and election sure, and evidencing that I dwell in the secret place. And in the face of all I will say: – "The Lord is my fortress; I will trust in Him."

Now where are you? I put this question in the Lord's presence to each one here tonight. Where are you? Some may say, "I don't think much about it. "The Lord have mercy upon your poor soul, you have none yourself. You are lying outside the secret place where all the privileges of God's people are. Another says: – "I don't say I am in, but I will enter in sometime." The door may be shut upon you before then, and you will be shut out in the storm of wrath in hell. Another says: – "I am afraid to say the Lord is my fortress, but this is all I can say that, as a poor sinner, I desire to thank God that there is an open door in the Gospel to go in, I am looking to Christ, I am afraid I can't reach Him, but I am looking to Himself to bring me in and all depends on Himself to bring me in to dwell there." If you are truly shut up to Christ, then it is not too much for me to say on behalf of Jesus that He will not fail you – "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Is then one saying: – "The Lord is my fortress but my soul is too cold to sing the song of praise to Him, but I have the hope to leave the heart of stone behind and have a heart to praise Him for ever and ever." This will be His delight. I cannot conceive His delight when His people are like Him, perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of Him. May this be yours and mine, and to His name be the praise! Amen.

[February 1926]

Gleanings from Many Fields.

DR MACDONALD'S MOST MEMORABLE SERMON.

[Most of our readers have heard of the renown of Dr Macdonald, Ferintosh, as a preacher of the Gospel. His powerful discourses were blessed by God in the conversion of many, and his labours as a preacher were signally owned. The following sermon on the text, "Thy Maker is Thy Husband" (Isaiah 54:5), is described by the Rev. D. Campbell, Kiltarn, as "the most memorable sermon ever preached by him." We quote Mr Campbell's introductory note in full: – "The most memorable sermon, then and ever preached by him, was the action sermon, cognate to that on which he preached on his first communion Sabbath at Urquhart. Hundreds of abler sermons has he preached, but none which the Lord more signally blessed. It was never fully written out, but the following skeleton of it was found among his papers, and is here subjoined that it may serve to give an idea of the kind of preaching which the Lord delights to honour. It was delivered in Gaelic, but the notes were written by his own hand in English" (Quoted in "The Apostle of the North," p. 89.)]

Remarks on context. Consider,

I. The Parties.

1. The Spouse. Every true believer, and as such married to the Lord. But by nature

- (1) In a state of degradation, a child of Satan, a slave.
- (2) Drowned in debt – of obedience to the law, suffering to the justice of God; unable to pay, and therefore a Prisoner.
- (3) Without spiritual beauty; but on the contrary, altogether defiled, deformed, loathsome (Isaiah 1:7; Revelation 3:17,18; Ezekiel 16:6).
- (4) Dead – spiritually (Ezekiel 30,7; Ephesians 2:1,2).
- (5) In a helpless condition. None else would or could look after her or release her, nor had she any strength in herself.
- (6) With all this she was full of enmity and rebellion against her husband, waged constant war with Him, thrust the sword into His side.

2. The Husband. Thy Maker, the Lord of Hosts, the Holy One of Israel. God, God in our nature. Consider

- (1) His rank. The Lord, Lord of lords and King of kings; the Son, honoured by all the heavenly host, adored by the redeemed, the source of all created rank and greatness.
- (2) His riches. The God of the whole earth, heir of all things, all fulness in Him, rich in what the spouse needs. Rich in merit to pay her debts, rich in grace to make her rich – inheritance that fadeth not away.
- (3) His beauty (Psalm 45:2; Song 2; Hebrews 1:2,3). All created beauty from Him; He can beautify His spouse; He can attract and ravish sinners with His beauty.
- (4) His power (Isaiah 9:6,7). As God, His power is infinite, manifested in creation, providence, and redemption. Power to quicken, to deliver, to subdue, to protect, to preserve, etc. (Psalm 110:3).
- (5) His love. Oh, what shall we say of this! See Proverbs 8:30,31. He died for His spouse, she was formed out of His side; waters cannot drown His love, manifested in rescuing her in a day of power out of her wretched condition; and, after her espousal, in abiding with her, in compassion towards her, in holding communion with her, etc. And, oh, what shall its exercise be throughout eternity!
- (6) His faithfulness – in reproving her faults, in never forsaking her, in not receiving accusers' reports of her. Oh, how faithful is he!

II. The Connection. Marriage. "Thy Husband." A relation is established which is called union. This is variously represented in Scripture; and subsists between every believer and Christ. Here consider,

1. Christ offers Himself in marriage to the soul, by the Gospel, in which He reveals His excellent properties, and offers Himself to the soul as involved in the ruin described. This is the design of the glorious doctrines and invitations of the Gospel (Isaiah 55:1-4; Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17).

2. Gospel means and ministers are employed for the purpose of representing this proposal (Genesis 24). The Apostle espoused Corinthians to Christ. Oh, what an honourable work! How faithful should ministers be!

3. The Spirit is sent forth, to make the soul sensible of his condition, to reveal Christ in His properties and proposals, to make him willing to receive Him, and to loose him from every other attachment (Romans 8:4,9; Psalm 45:10; John 16:9-15).

4. The soul, in consequence, under a sense of need and unworthiness, and having a view of the object, approving of the terms and accepting of the offer, casts himself at Christ's feet resigns himself to the Redeemer and follows Him. This is the act of faith and closes the union, and is the foundation of all future intercourse and communion. "My Beloved is mine."

Here is

1. A marriage with the consent of all the parties – Father, Son, and Spirit; law and justice; angels and saints.

2. A wonderful marriage.

3. A joyful marriage.

4. A sure marriage.

5. An honourable marriage.

6. An everlasting marriage.

III. The happy results of this marriage. The spouse has from her husband, in consequence,

1. A change of nature (John 3:6; Ezekiel 16), in order to love, obey, and enjoy Him.

2. A glorious robe as a wedding garment – His own righteousness for covering, shelter, and ornament (Psalm 45:13; Revelation 3:18).

3. Beauty. Graces of the Spirit (Psalm 45:13).

4. Provision – food, drink, light, life, liberty, joy, etc.

5. Protection – from enemies, sin, Satan, and the world.

6. Communion. The enjoyment of His presence.

7. Riches.

8. Introduction to heaven at last, and eternal residence there (Psalm 45:14,15).

Hence, 1. Self-examination. Marks of those who are not, and of those who are, married to this Husband.

2. Sinners, consider your condition – accept of the proposal (Matthew 22:5). Different classes.

3. Saints. Draw nigh this day, behold what your husband did and suffered for you.

[February 1926]

A Lecture

By the REV. NEIL CAMERON.

Delivered on New-Year's Day in the Hall of St Jude's, Glasgow.
(Published at the request of St Jude's Kirk-Session.)

“Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them” – Jeremiah 15:14.

We read in the preceding chapter God's terrible judgments threatened on account of the conduct of the people. Jeremiah prayed for the people to the effect that it was the fault of false prophets that the people were so rebellious. God told him to declare that He did not send these prophets, and that they and the people to whom they prophesied lies in His name should all fall together with sword, famine, and pestilence. In the beginning of this chapter God declares that should Moses and Samuel stand before Him His mind could not be towards the people. This shows how desperate their condition was. For the Lord did extraordinary things in answer to the prayers of Moses and Samuel in their days. The people, instead of turning from their sins, began to curse the prophet Jeremiah, because he opposed them and warned them of the consequences of their departure from God to idolatry and the abominable practices connected therewith. It seems that on account of the facts that God refused to listen to Jeremiah's prayers for the people, and that the only effect his warnings from the mouth of God had upon them was to curse him, that he made up his mind that he would hold his peace and reprove them no more. This is how we understand the exclamation of the prophet – “Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention in the land! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.” He meddled not in secular affairs. If we take these words in the light cast upon them by God's remonstrance – “If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them,” it seems to us that Jeremiah had made up his mind, as referred to already, that he would hold his peace. He was not the last who came perilously near the same conclusion. Some are not ignorant of the painful feelings expressed above by Jeremiah when he exclaimed – “Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife and contention to the whole land!” As the Lord gave courage and fortitude to the prophet that made him like a brazen wall, which is not easily cast down, so He can do still. He promised Jeremiah that He would cause the enemy, who was to destroy the people and their cities, to deal mercifully with him. God's promises made the prophet indeed like a brazen wall; for neither threatenings, nor slanders, nor even the hole of the prison, in which he sank in its mire, could make him cease to deliver God's message to the people whether to the king, or princes or common people.

Let us consider our text under the three following divisions: –

- I. The departures from God's Word in doctrine and practice in Scotland.
- II. Let us consider the position taken in 1893 by the Free Presbyterian Church.
- III. Our present duty relative to other Churches.

Before we enter upon our subject, I wish to remind you that the Synod of our Church has repeatedly passed resolutions ordering all the ministers of our Church to explain our position as a Church annually to their own congregations and to other congregations under their charge. I certainly felt bound by this resolution, and I do feel so still. I thought which would be the best day upon the whole to deliver a lecture on the subject. I felt reluctant to do it on the Lord's Day, so I concluded that New-Year's Day might suit well, as the

people would have the day free from their employments. So I have been in the habit of delivering a lecture on this day in this hall here as the Lord enabled me since 1894. You, my congregation, are the judges as to the manner in which I acquitted myself in performing, this duty.

I. Let us consider the departures from God's Word, and its doctrine and practice on the part of the Church with which we were connected till the year 1893.

(1) The Church of Scotland Free began first in her Colleges to deny the inspiration of certain parts of the Bible about twenty years prior to our separation from her communion. Efforts were made to stem this tide of rationalism and infidelity. But the tide flowed into the Church with a force and velocity that caused intense anguish of heart to all lovers of God's Word, and it became clearer every year that, should the Lord allow her to drift down with this flood which the dragon poured out of his mouth to carry her away, she would become a complete wreck. While she lay on the lee shore, and very near dangerous rocks, the "doctrines" of the Word were attacked.

(2) This attack was launched against the Confession of Faith, and particularly against the doctrines of election; the fall of his posterity in Adam; the doctrine of the atonement as set forth in the Confession; and the doctrine of the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost through the Word of God. When this new attack emerged, the contention as to the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible vanished almost out of sight, though it was not in the least abandoned by its promoters. After a good deal of contending and lecturing about the great dangers to which the denial of these fundamental doctrines exposed the Church, another phase of the flood of Satan emerged.

(3) There were a few – twelve to begin with – of uninspired hymns allowed into her worship by a resolution of the General Assembly. Those who wanted these hymns used as an argument that their introduction would bar instrumental music from getting into the Church. The late eminent servant of God, Dr Kennedy, Dingwall, said on that occasion, by way of warning the Assembly, that in less than twelve years from that date the same men who that day asked the Church to allow these profane hymns to be used in the churches, would be there demanding the introduction of instrumental music. This prediction was actually fulfilled to the letter.

(4) Along with all the above dangerous departures, there started in the Church social gatherings, at which vain songs of every description were sung, and ministers began to vie with one another as to which of them would excel in buffoonery, so as to make the carnal world to laugh: but the true people of God wept over such desecration of the name of Christ and the house of God. They also set up sales of work, by which they turned God's house into a house of merchandise. The venerable name of Dr Kennedy was used recently as one who approved of such sales. The writer inquired as to the veracity of this, and found that women sold the things they made to the merchants of Dingwall, and that the Doctor approved of this. No one could find fault with that way of sales of work. When they had filled the Church with the flood of heresies, carnality in worship and practice, the infamous Declaratory Act was duly passed into "a binding law and constitution in the Church." This meant that all the innovations contained in that Act were to be bound on all who would continue in future fellowship with that Church. We refused to put our necks under this Satanic yoke, so we separated in 1893 in order, not to set up another Church, but to continue the existence of the Free Church of Scotland as that Church was settled in 1843. To this position we adhered then, and we have endeavoured in much weakness and imperfection to hold by it till this day. We hope that, by the

Lord's grace and strength, we will continue to do so unto the end of our life in this world.

II. Let us now consider the position we took up then.

(1) When the Declaratory Act was passed in 1892 a protest was entered against it, and an appeal made to the next Assembly to take steps for its repeal. This caused us to remain till the General Assembly of 1893 refused by an overwhelming majority to take any steps to repeal it. None of the Free Presbyterians, so far as the writer knows, ever charged those who formed the present Free Church of having been under this Act during the year, from the Assembly of 1892 till that of 1893; but they have on several occasions charged our ministers, etc., of being under it during that period. This proves that they are put hard to for want of, not a will to use every form of accusation against us which they can devise, but for want of anything true or substantial which they can charge our Church with. No alternative was left then for any who loved purity, integrity of conscience, an infallible Bible, the whole doctrine of the Free Church of Scotland as set forth in her standards, and a complete deliverance from all the innovations then foisted on the Declaratory Act Church, but to separate at once from being any longer in her fellowship and under her jurisdiction. So, at that Assembly immediately after the result of the vote was declared, the Rev. Donald Macfarlane rose and read his protest, which he left on the table of the Assembly. Thus a separation was constitutionally made.

(2) A Deed of Separation was drawn up by the help of our legal agent, which was entered in the Book of Sasines in Edinburgh. In this Deed five reasons are given why we had to separate; our position declared to be the original status of the Free Church of 1843, and all the lawful rights and privileges of the Free Church claimed as being ours by right in civil and ecclesiastical laws. As this Deed has been recently published, I expect you have read it yourselves, so that I need not enter further into it in detail. As you know, it is the first document in that booklet called "Church Documents."

(3) The Synod of the F.P. Church drew up and endorsed a statement as to how our Church hold the Bible as the inspired Word of God. In that statement it is enacted that no one holding Higher Critical views can be a member of our Church. That means that all Higher Critics are excommunicated from having any place in the Church.

(4) It was a common thing in the Free Church, which we left, for men to take ordination vows who, after answering questions and signing the Formula, on their oath to God and man, to the effect that they would assert, maintain, and defend the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, and that they would follow no divisive courses for the said doctrine, form of worship, form of government, and discipline of the Church, to say immediately thereafter that they believed as much of these doctrines as were agreeable to their own views. It seems that Solomon had met with such men, for he gives the advice – "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools." So our Synod enacted that if any office-bearer will change his mind about the doctrines of the Confession of Faith, or any part of the Church's constitution, his duty is to make that known to the Court of the Church to which he belongs, and not to divulge his change of mind to our people to lead them astray. But if he should begin to divulge such views in public, it becomes the duty of any of the hearers to report the same to that court, to which such a person is accountable. The duty of that court is to deal with the man in strict accordance with the Constitution of the Church.

(5) The present Free Church endeavoured on several occasions to form a union with the F.P. Church. As is always the case when movements for union are in the air, it is prophesied that extraordinary good results are bound to follow its consummation. We heard or read that, when in the Free Church Assembly the debates on the proposed union between the Free and U.P. Churches – 1863 to 1873 – were at their height, a minister said that it was evident that if that union would be consummated the truth would be fulfilled that the lion and the lamb would lie down together. The late Dr Begg got up after this speech was delivered, and said that he believed what was said about the lion and the lamb, but he was sure that when the lion would lie down the lamb would be in his inside.

You will remember that in 1917 the F.P. Church submitted a statement to the Free Church in which five essential outstanding differences between the two Churches were set forth, and that no movement could be made on the part of the F.P. Church till these were removed by the Free Church. The reply sent by that Church was nothing more than an effort to throw dust in our eyes – they removed nothing. So our Synod put a stop immediately to the proposals for union with that Church. This is our position as a Church as regards any movement engineered from within or from without for union with the present Free Church. On two occasions in the past that Church did as Dr Begg said – when she lay down she had in her inside a diet of so-called F.P. lambs. This is really her aim – not union but absorption.

III. Let us now consider our duty as regards other Churches in this country.

(1) Let us glance at the rapid downward career of the Established Church. The creed and constitution of the E.C. of Scotland was a most essential part of the constitution of the Scottish nation. Her Confession of Faith and other relative documents were on the Statute Books of Scotland and England. She could not change a word of her creed or constitution without the consent of Parliament. This will appear to you by the fact that when, in 1905, an Act was passed in Parliament to divide the property of the old Free Church between the present U.F. and F.C., a clause was inserted at the end of that Act to remove from the constitution of the Established Church the words – I promise to assert, maintain, and defend the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, or words to that effect. The E.C. could not relieve her office-bearers from being bound by these words without going to Parliament. Since then her ministers are not bound by the Formula of that Church to assert, maintain, and defend the doctrines of the Confession. Now, the leading men in that Church have repeatedly declared that by the passing of two Acts – one in 1921, the other in 1925 – they are as free to change their creed as the U.F. Church is. The leading men in the U.F. Church corroborated that statement repeatedly in public prints. We regret that we have not studied these two Acts of Parliament, and on account of that we give you their opinion, not our own, in this matter. At the same time we know no reason why their statement should not be accepted as truth. Is that not a destroying of the foundations of the constitution of the Church of the Reformation in Scotland? Our forefathers suffered the loss of all things, even of life itself, to build up that constitution and afterwards more still to maintain it. Now, so far as we can see, it has been undermined and destroyed, and no man seems to care. No man is more suitable to destroy a beautiful, carved work of art than a strong, ignorant rustic, who can see no beauty in it, provided he gets an axe and permission to use it. The time is not so far distant in the past in which the creed and constitution of the Church of Scotland was admired not only in Scotland but throughout all the Protestant Churches on the Continent of Europe. But now her hedges are broken down, and the boar out of the forest has placed his snout underneath the bush that burned and was not consumed, and has removed it root and branch.

The Established Church has permitted images and crosses, which are the real symbols of idolatry, in many of their churches. When, in the past, she was faithfully admonished by a few of her ministers to take order to have these removed, she would not listen. She has some of the foremost Higher Critics in Scotland in her professorial chairs and in her pulpits. There is also a strong and influential society in her, doing all they can to bring into her worship the superstition and worship of the Papacy. This is very sad, and it will yet cause many sighs, groans, and tears in our beloved land.

(2) The United Free Church has really gone so far denying the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments that I will not detain you by entering into her condition farther than to give a few quotations. I have here a report read to her General Assembly of a "Social Problems Committee of the U.F. Church of Scotland," which that Assembly refused by a large majority to suppress, and which is being sold by the authority of the Church. Its heading is – "How do we regard the Bible?" by A. Herbert Gray. These are a few of its statements: – "Do we hold that every word in the Bible is true? No, we do not. Do we accept the views of the Bible on scientific questions? No, we do not. Do we approve of all the moral sentiments expressed in the Bible? No, certainly not. Do we regard the Bible as infallible history? No. Do we agree with all the opinions of St Paul? No, we do not." "Further, we know that large parts of the early books of the Old Testament are not history at all in the modern sense." "What, then, is the Bible to us? It is simply the story of how through long centuries men gradually worked their way from primitive religious ideas, and very primitive moral ideas, up to the loftiest heights of spiritual perception which the race has yet attained." "Israel began with what we should call Pagan ideas about God. They believed in many gods, and about their own spiritual god they believed some very strange things." "Why do we need the Old Testament at all? The answer to that is perhaps we don't virtually need the Old Testament." It concludes by saying that – "Possibly the amount of Scripture which is thus living, and which actually operates in the lives of some Christians might turn out to be little more than a tenth of the whole." But enough of this blasphemy. Any body of men who could in the name of a Christian Church homologate the above statements about the Bible has ceased to have the least claim to be denominated Christians. Was it not fully time for us to have fled from such in 1893? Is not this blasphemy against God and His Word the strongest proof imaginable that we did what was right then?

For me, the Lord knows, how it would bring joy to my heart to have to speak of these Churches as holding God's Word and the constitution of the Church of the Reformation in Scotland in sincerity and truth, and how it pains my very heart that my fellow-countrymen have abandoned their own mercies. But, having been made a watchman over your souls, it becomes my duty to God, to you, and to my own soul, to warn you of every approach of the enemy which I perceive as endangering your souls. I know that a sleeping man does not like to be awakened at midnight, but it must be done if the watchman is to be acquitted should the man perish with the sword.

(3) Let us consider a little the condition of the Free Church. It cannot be charged against the Free Church that she does not profess in words to hold the infallibility and absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures, for she looks on herself as being as white as snow on the top of the Alps, but in her practice she comes very far short of this profession. She is made up of three parties. There are a few of her ministers that manifested some time ago a desire to have her practice reformed, and would even yet desire to have this done, but they seem to have lost their courage, and are now as dumb as the rest. We thought at one time that they would persevere faithfully in their opposition to social gatherings, sales of work, etc., and we wished them God-speed, and commended their efforts as likely to work for the good of their Church; but now we have lost all hope in them. Behind them there are

many of the people of that Church who would rejoice in seeing her casting away all these excrescences of the world and the flesh; but she lends a deaf ear to their entreaties when they petition her supreme Court. The last effort in this way came from the congregation of Kilmuir, Skye. Their minister forsook them at the Assembly (as reported in the Free Church Record), and their petition was turned down. Since then the peace of sleep reigns among them as regards these unscriptural innovations. There are others who draw her away towards real latitudinarianism. This party in her ministry carries everything before them with a high hand. A large number of the people help and encourage these. If anyone dares to find fault with any of their corrupt practices, they are immediately up in arms. These are full of zeal for the name Free Church, and they cannot tolerate that one word should be said against their Church. This may be designated zeal without knowledge, and a real spirit of partisanship. The ministers on this left wing got a resolution passed three or four years ago to the effect that some of their ministers – if I remember well, three – should be associated with the Y.M.C.A. An amendment was moved and seconded against this extraordinary resolution, but it got very little support. One of the Professors said, as reported in her Record, that he could not support the amendment on account of the fact that the Assembly had not the light on the subject necessary to enable her to come to such a finding as it craved, and that there was not enough time at the Assembly's disposal to give it full consideration. He then told them that the Y.M.C.A. had a somewhat scriptural constitution (?) when they were started, but that since then they went in for playing cards, for dances, and semi-theatrical plays, and that, at that time their chief representative was co-opted with a Higher Critic in America to print a copy of the Bible on recent Higher Critical lines, probably “a tenth of the Bible.” Surely this should have been more than enough light for the Assembly to give the Y.M.C.A. up in despair. But they did not. The result has been that one of the ministers appointed has now joined the Y.M.C.A., and left the Free Church. The one I refer to is Dr Mackay, Lima. This is exactly what could be expected as a result of the ill-advised step taken by the Assembly of the Free Church as to this case.

Last year a “New Organisation in Scotland” denominated “Church Council” has been set on foot. Its functions and scope are

(1) “Preparation of the statistics of Home Mission work being done, and of the distribution of non-Christian and non-Protestant population;

(2) Provision of uniform dates for national celebrations, etc.” The combination formed is called “Spirit of Fellowship.” Be it noticed that “Home Mission Work” is one of the subjects of this fellowship. The Churches combined in this fellowship are represented by “10 from the Church of Scotland, 10 from the U.F. Church, 4 from the Free Church, 4 from the Episcopal Church, 4 from the Congregational Union, 4 from the Baptist Union, 2 Wesleyan Methodist, 2 Primitive Methodist, 2 Reformed Presbyterian Church.” This is called “a notable example of the value of co-operation in the Church on a national scale.” Let it be seriously noted that this organisation is formed for co-operation and fellowship between all the above Churches, and that the Free Church has joined them in this fellowship and co-operation. This has been reported in the “Glasgow Herald,” from which report the above has been taken.

We have noticed that a Pan-Presbyterian Council was held last year at Cardiff. It was composed of representatives from the Episcopal Church, the Union Church of Canada (which has now no claim to Presbyterianism), the Nonconformists in England, and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and some from the continent of Europe. The Free Church sent one of her Professors there. In his report after returning, he expressed satisfaction with much that he heard and met with at the Council, but deprecated that some of the

papers read were of the Higher Critical style. Notwithstanding, he advised the Free Church to continue to send a representative to this “conglomerate heterogeneous body.”

At the last Communion in Buccleuch Greyfriars’ congregation in Edinburgh the minister was assisted during that season by a U.F. minister, while there were several ministers of the Free Church near at hand.

Unless we are to act like Lord Nelson at the battle of Copenhagen by placing the telescope to his blind eye, and by doing so declared that he was not seeing the admiral’s command to cease firing, we are bound to take into our most serious consideration our future relation to the Free Church. If that Church chooses to follow her downward courses by forming alliances with Churches holding unsound views of the infallibility of the Bible, and that are drifting towards idolatry and superstition, we cannot help it, however painful we may feel it. But we should not allow ourselves to be dragged along with her. We have been in weakness and imperfection, but in real sincerity, endeavouring to maintain our own position hitherto, and we hope, the Lord giving us grace and strength, to continue doing so to the end.

In consideration of what is stated above and much more that might be said, a Kirk-Session in the North required of one of their members, who was in the habit of going to the Free Church in preference to the F.P. Church just at her door, to cease doing so. She refused to comply, demanded her disjunction certificate, and charged the F.P. Church with “making flesh of one and fish of another.” She had told us before that a certain member of St Jude’s congregation had been going there unmolested. We understood that this was the meaning she attached to the words, making flesh of one and fish of another. When the above case was brought before our Session, two elders were appointed to call on that member to inquire whether it was true that she was in the habit of going to the Free Church, and if so, whether she would cease doing so. She politely refused to comply with the Session’s request. When this was reported to the Session by the two elders, and considered seriously by them, it was moved, seconded, and agreed to that she be suspended till she acquiesced in the Session’s request. It has been reported that the Session excommunicated her. This must have arisen from ignorance of Church law, or it must have arisen from malice. I prefer to place the former construction upon it. The Session has now, for many reasons expressed in writing before now, but especially for the reason stated above, made up its mind to hold by this finding of the Session as regards the members of St Jude’s congregation, and to deal impartially with each case as it may arise, so long as the Free Church will continue on her downward course. We have heard that some have declared our conduct harsh, but we are not much moved by man’s opinion while we have God’s Word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

I ask you all now – Do you not think that it was high time for us to safeguard our position as a Church or do you think it is our duty to allow ourselves to be dragged down to the very things from which we have separated in 1893 by the Free Church? “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

Before I stop, I wish to say that on account of the facts that the Free Church has put forth her utmost efforts since 1900 not to reform herself, but to compel us to unite with her as she was or is, and also because of parties from within ourselves who did their utmost to help her to accomplish her aim, who have again and again entered into her communion, not for her benefit, I am sorry to say, I have had to continue right through exposing the conduct of both the Free Church and such as would help her in her efforts to carry our people from their moorings. The Lord helping me, I will continue doing so, irrespective of the slanderous tongues of men. The Lord knows that I have no pleasure in doing so, but I am put in a position where truth and faithfulness toward God and men demand this of me. We have

to consider not only ourselves in this serious matter, but also our children, so that they will be put in possession of God's infallible Word, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the two Catechisms, the form, worship, government, and discipline of the Church of God in the world. This is the best legacy parents can leave to their children. Let this be done, not in words only, but in practice; for even children can discern the difference between consistency and inconsistency. May the Lord bestow grace on our little children, young people and old to enable them to esteem the reproach of Christ better than all that this world can give.

[March 1926]