

Outlines of Sermons.

By the Late Rev. JOHN SINCLAIR, Bruan, Caithness,
(Preached on 5th, 12th, and 19th April, 1840.)

“Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water” – John 4:10.

Eleventh Outline. –

We have ended to state some things in “the gift of God,” and we may say, as Job, “Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him?” (Job 26:14). The eye can see much, the ear can hear more, the heart can conceive more, but all these cannot take in what is laid up for them that wait for Him. Unless we could know God’s whole heart and whole soul; could, like the Holy Ghost, search the deep things of infinite Godhead that is in Christ Jesus; could dive to the bottom of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone for evermore, and tell the happiness of being delivered; could examine and reveal all the mysteries of Christ’s work, by the Holy Ghost, in bringing all the elect out of the state of nature, and in saying to them, “Go forth;” and could measure all the glories of heaven, all the pleasures that are at God’s right hand for evermore, we could not tell what is in “the gift of God” to the full. But when He says to the poor woman, “If thou knewest the gift of God,” etc., the meaning is, “If thou hadest a true, though not a full knowledge of the gift; if thou hadest tasted, though not able to drink in this sea of bliss that is in Him; if thou hadest known what passeth knowledge, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.” The knowledge here spoken of is not that head knowledge which “the princes of this world” may have in the understanding, but what “babes and foolish things” may have. Indeed, it is a being taught by the Spirit to seek the Spirit; but it is a knowledge or feeling of want and need, with some sight of the value of the object wanted and needed, and of its suitability to that want and need – that it is the very thing which would answer and none else – and also a pressing necessity of having the object, from the danger of continuing without it and the happiness of possessing it.

But it is here said, not only “If thou knewest the gift of God,” but also, “And who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink.” So that it is not only necessary to know the gift, but that He who is speaking and present is the gift. A person might think, “Oh, if I had known where Christ is, or that ever he spoke to me, I would have asked of Him,” etc. Some would think, “If He were personally present, however far distant, they would go and consult Him – go to any part of the earth if He were on earth.” Now we indeed need a personal call, but that is in our ears, which is general and particular. We intend then to show, if the Lord will, that Christ is speaking to us, and to each in particular.

I. He speaks to us in the Bible, the written word. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.” And the very end of the Scriptures being written was to reveal the “gift of God.” “These (things) are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). Sometimes He spake in a supernatural way; “And the Lord spake unto me, saying.” “The word of the Lord came unto me, saying.” “Thus saith the Lord.” So also “Spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost.” Again, He spake by audible voices; “Samuel, Samuel,” “Saul, Saul.” And He also spake personally on earth. But now He speaks by His Word. (1) It is given by Christ’s authority. “The testimony

of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” It is His letter, signed with His name, and sealed with His seal. Every soul now in glory is a seal. “Ye are my witnesses.” Hence those who will not read the Word, though they can, despise that authority, and do what they can to seal Christ’s mouth. This is fearful. (2) He never speaks but according to this Word. “To the law and to the testimony.” If you have any impression, it must agree with the Word, or it is from darkness. This Word is more sure than a voice from heaven (2 Peter 1:17-19). Be not deceived with impressions. (3) He addresses it to all, and commands all to hear. “Search the scriptures.” All are to read the Bible who can read. (4) He addresses it to every individual. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” “If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.” He speaks to every individual as certainly as if by name, “whether he hear or forbear.” In the one case it becomes the gospel of salvation, in the other, of condemnation. (5) Every man is bound to receive the Word as to himself. “Hear ye him.” If He speaks, every one should hear what He has to say, according to the character addressed, for He speaks to sinners, to those in spiritual graves, to cases of all kinds. (6) A man is safe in resting his case upon the Word. It is a “sure” Word. There is no deceit in the Word; and if we could rest there, then the case is safe in the hands of Him who speaks. He is not a deceiver. (7) It will judge every man, whether he receive it or not. “The same word shall judge him at the last day” (John 12:48). Every man who has a Bible has his sentence already in his house if he continue unchanged.

II. He speaks to us in the word spoken or preached. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14). I speak not for self but for your sakes, both for warning and encouragement. If they be real preachers, they are ambassadors for Christ. “Now then,” says the apostle, “we are ambassadors for Christ.” Their authority is not of themselves, nor of man only. They are sometimes very despicable in themselves and in the eyes of others. Some of them were of humble occupations, such as fishermen. Others were, in character, blasphemers, injurious persecutors, from hell’s fireside. Yet being sent, they represent Christ. They act by orders; then the words are His words, not theirs, so that He speaks, not they.

Twelfth Outline –

Here are two things specified as necessary to be known in order to a sinner’s asking the “living water,” namely, “the gift of God” and who it is that calls. Unless we have His authority we cannot ask in faith. We have spoken of the first thing, “the gift of God.” We observe further concerning the gift – (1) It is a most valuable gift. We may say that, when God would give a gift to man, He went to the cabinet of His jewels and gave the most precious diamond there; nay, an only one, that He left none like it. “He gave his only begotten son.” “Having therefore one son, he sent him last, saying, They will reverence my son.” (2) It is a most suitable gift. “Such an one became us;” suited us. Had He given all the works of His hands in heaven and earth for value, they were nothing to this. And had He given all others for suitability, they would not do. Because less would not do, He gave what would do, cost Him what it will. If the angel said to Abraham, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld from me thy son, thine only son,” we may borrow the words and say, “Now we know that Thou lovest man, seeing Thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son, from him.” Be the case what it may, He suits the case. (3) It is a free gift. “That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). He seeks no price, nothing to put into His treasury for Him. This is important. He seeks nothing for themselves, nor to recommend them to Christ. Come at once to Him without money or

price. Note well here; if He seeks anything from them, it is only what would ruin them by keeping them from Christ. It is only things hurtful that He asks for. (4) It is a gift freely offered. Yet it is to be sought. "Come ye to the waters" (Isaiah 55:1). "Yet for all this, I will be enquired of." It is freely offered, and the seeking is rather of a heart to take the gift. Were it not for what is in us, there might be none here to-day afraid of anything. For all is in Him we need.

Now, as for the second thing, "who it is that saith to thee," observe we have the gift of God, Jesus Christ, speaking to us: –

I. In the Bible, the written word. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Christ is emphatically called "the Word," because He reveals the Father to sinners, as our words reveal our thoughts. "He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God." We may say that the word is the Father's, the Son is the mouth or revealer, and the Holy Ghost the breath by which it is spoken. "Come, O breath." The Scriptures then are the words of Christ, the gift of God, and speak to every one who reads or hears. It is given not by man or angels, and therefore observe – (1) It has the authority of Christ. Instead of being doubted, it commands the faith of every one, either that he is in a state of condemnation or justification. The Word describes the state and case of all men and women in the world. (2) He never speaks but according to the Word. "To the law and to the testimony." Therefore a creature has great need to see that his case be decided by the Word. Sometimes the mind may be filled with gloom and despondency on various accounts, as the Psalmist in the 73rd Psalm, "until he went into God's sanctuary" to His oracles. On the other hand, a hypocrite may be lifted up with impressions, and may be thanking God, or as Paul, thinking all well, till the law come. Therefore there is great need to hear what the Word says. (3) He commands all to read the Word. "Search the scriptures." Sometimes the tempter will terrify a creature from reading the Word. But observe, it is Christ that speaks, and then we ought to hear. The old heart is against it, but remember that is just its enmity and deceit. "I hate this man, for he never speaks good of me." (4) He addresses every individual. "If any man." "Whosoever." "Except a man be born again." There is not an individual in a family but to whom the Word speaks in particular. "Saith to *thee*." "Thou art the man." It speaks to father, mother, son, daughter. "Hear thou." There is warning to all, and individually. (5) It will be the rule of judgment (John 12:48). The Bible rejecter is a Christ non-receiver, and the Bible will condemn him at last. It is not a trifling matter to have a Bible in a family.

II. Christ speaks by the word preached. (1) Those who are real preachers are His ambassadors. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20). In His room, name, and authority, they speak His message. In themselves they are vile, and once were injurious, persecutors, blasphemers, but they have all authority from Him. (2) They who receive their word, or rather, His word at their mouth, receive Him (Matthew 10:40). They who take warning at their reproof are reckoned as taking it from Him. If it is His message it has His authority. (3) Their message will be found binding. "Whatsoever ye shall bind in earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose in earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:18). Of course, this is only by the Word. (4) Their message will be a sweet savour unto God, as to believers and unbelievers, of life or death (2 Corinthians 2:15,16). Oh, what will come of the Word in Bruan?

1. Remember, then, that Christ has spoken to each of us, and therefore ask of Him. 2. See what your case is by the Word. By it we shall stand or fall. 3. See, it is not easy to come to assurance. Only by the Word, illuminated by the Spirit, and searched. 4. Take heed of false teachers. "Try the spirits" by the Word. "If an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you . . . let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Such would be much more likely to be followed than the true preacher. "If another come in his own name, him ye will receive." 5.

Having tried if you can find the true teachers, consider that their words will not fall to the ground. They are not lost yet.

There is something here said to the woman, Give me to drink. When Christ speaks, He says something to every one. We have mentioned that “the gift of God,” being a gift, there is no price paid by the creature for salvation directly to the law or yet to God for Christ. Nevertheless, Christ seeks something from all who come to Him, though not as a price, yet something which they are better without. Here we note: – (1) He might have wrought a miracle for allaying His thirst, but being under the law, the law would not allow Him that. O! His thirst was painful, the law offended, the curse laid on Him! And, clearly seen, the reason: He suffered for others – not as His own on earth suffer, to kill corruption in themselves, for He had none. (2) He asked her to relieve that thirst. O, how humbling to Him to have to ask of such a creature, such a sinner! It is not wrong to seek worldly aid from the wicked world. (3) He asked in order to get conversation with her. He wanted to introduce the subject; He knew what would follow.

Now, while these were the reasons directly, we take occasion by way of accommodation of the words, founded on other parts of Scripture, to mention some things which He asks from all, and takes from all who are made to come to Him, and some which He may take when He chooses or leave as He sees meet.

I. He demands the heart. “My son, give me thine heart” (Proverbs 23:26). The heart is the palace of the soul, and since He intends a palace in His Father’s house for those who receive Him, He demands a palace from them now. What sort of a heart is it which He demands? 1. It is a hard heart. It is compared to a stone, to adamant. “After thy hardness and impenitent heart.” He seeks it to make it soft. “I will give you an heart of flesh.” Now, He had to be thirsty for the woman, but He had also to drink a cup of wrath which melted His heart like wax into the midst of His bowels. 2. It is a heart of enmity. “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” He will make it a heart of love. “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 20:6). This is an exceeding great and precious promise, for without love none see Him, but such as shall be anathema when He comes. 3. It is a deceitful heart. “The heart is deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). Its hardness and enmity are rendered dangerous beyond description by its deceitful nature. He will redeem it from deceit and violence, and make it an honest and good heart to sow in; and then the handful of corn will grow in the top of the barren mountains, taking away all hindrances. 4. It is an unclean heart. “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart.” He will make it clean. “I will sprinkle clean water upon you,” so as to make a “pure heart,” in order that you may “see God.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” He wants to cleanse the heart. 5. It is a heart of unbelief. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” – (Hebrews 3: 12.) He will make it believe. He will make it hear the voice of the Son of God. Unbelief shuts out Christ, bars His doing mighty works, makes Him swear in wrath that they shall not enter into rest, despises threatenings, braves them, despises promises, departs from God, and destroys the soul, laying it under condemnation.

[May 1899]

Outlines of Sermons.

By the Late Rev. JOHN SINCLAIR, Bruan, Caithness,
(Preached on 19th and 26th april, and 3rd May, 1840.)

“Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water” – John 4:10.

The last Sabbath we made some remarks on the words, “Give me to drink,” showing by way of accommodation of the words some things which He *may* ask of all who come, and some which He does always ask and will have.

I. What He *may* ask. 1. He may ask health. So from Job, “Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his feet even to his crown” (Job 2:7). Lazarus also was “full of sores.” Note Psalm 38:2, &c. The rod has a voice, but none hear till the Spirit speaks. So in Kilsyth, 60 heard by the Spirit in one week. The rod had no effect on Pharaoh. It will have no effect on us till we hear the voice. 2. Their substance. So Job, Naomi suffered “the spoiling of goods.” In the first he took away substance to give soul health. Wonderful Gaius! John writes him, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2: 1). 3. Their relations. So Job and others. Their relations in some cases are made crosses. So to David. Watch what the rod saith. Substance abused as in Hezekiah’s case. Likely some cross in any relation either over-valued or under-valued, or not valued according to commandment. 4. Life. Sin or life must go, that they may get eternal life.

II. Then we mentioned things He will have and not leave. 1. The heart. “Son, give me thine heart” (Proverbs 23:26). What sort of a heart? (1) A hard heart. “As a stone, an adamant” (Zechariah 7:12). “I will give an heart of flesh.” Give Him “a stone, a serpent.” Come as you are. (2) A heart of enmity. “Carnal mind is enmity against God” (Romans 8:7). He gives love. “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). This is precious. No enmity on earth like that of heart against God. He overcomes evil with good. “Ye are enemies in your minds by wicked works.” Every act of the unrenewed mind is an act of enmity. We need reconciliation. We have enmity against common mercy as from the Lord. Hence we do not acknowledge or serve Him. (3) A deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9). It is so deceitful that it evades all searching by sermon, catechising, reading, &c., till it outwits a whole life, and destroys the soul at last. It evades all searching until the King’s Son search it, and redeem it from deceit and violence (Psalm 72:14). Like a deceitful bow. It seems ready at all means, and turns aside. Now He seeks it to be denied, and the creature to become a fool in his own eyes. (4) An unclean heart. “Wash thine heart.” “Cleanse thou me within” (Jeremiah 4:14). Vain thoughts are unclean. Now He wants to wash the heart. “I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” It is a loathsome uncleanness. It makes Jehovah shut His eyes, ears, nostrils. It is a spreading uncleanness. It spread from Adam till it polluted all the world, and filled hell with carcasses which are cast out of His sight, never to return. We are spreading it through every generation. (5) An unbelieving heart. “An evil heart of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12). Now He gives faith. “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ . . . to believe on him” (Philippians 1:29). It is a fearful heart of unbelief. It is nothing else: there is not one drop of true faith in it. (1) It departs from the living God. It goes away at every step. Whatever the creature does, he is carried like an old wreck before the stream. Yet cry for faith. You cannot give the heart. Say to the Lord, “Take it.” (2) It condemns the soul. “He that believeth not is condemned already” (John 3:18). No one is ever acquitted till He believe. All under unbelief are condemned. Now, sue for a pardon. They are condemned wherever they go, sleep, sit, walk, work, and this they feel and know when convinced, and waiting a pardon. (3) It calls God a liar (1 John 5:10). Hence faith, life, is offered to all. For if not, unbelief could not call Him a liar, if He never offered

faith. If we would call a man a liar, how he would be offended! Unbelief calls God a liar in every word He ever spake. (4) Hence it enrages God. "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest" (Hebrews 3:11). There is nothing so enrages Him as unbelief. It is the soul-destroying sin. No other can condemn. It is the principal thing in the unpardonable sin in not repenting. (5) It shuts out of heaven. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." All other sins cannot shut out. "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). Get faith, and then you can work like God.

This is the heart the Lord wants in order to make it soft, loving, clean, and believing. What are you to do to give it? Just to lie before Him seeking pity for His own name's sake.

2. He seeks the soul. "All souls are mine (Ezekiel 18:4). He wants the whole man. "Come unto me." "Give yourselves to the Lord." The saints ask what they have authority for, and hence, "I lift up my soul to thee." "Why dost thou cast off my soul?" It was the soul was the principal object for which Christ came. Sinners are in danger of losing "soul and body in hell." He came not to destroy, but to save. One soul is worth all the world. The body is but dust without the soul, but the soul is life without the body. The soul can enjoy or suffer without the body, but not the body without the soul. He desires the very substance of the soul. "Unto thee, O God, do I lift up my soul." (1) It is a polluted soul. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1). According to the value of the soul, so is the uncleanness great. It is the most filthy thing in the universe. What comes out of it? "Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries," &c. They are hatched in the soul, and there the evil lies. Oh, what pollution! "The sin of my soul." The soul is the most like to Satan of anything in creation. Now this the Lord wants to save. Oh, my soul is *like* the devil. See your soul. (2) It is a lost soul. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 9:26).

Fourteenth Outline. –

We intend this day, if the Lord will, to say a few things on the words, "Thou wouldest have asked of him;" thou wouldst have been praying. We have said something of the gift, and endeavoured to show that the Lord is speaking to everyone who reads or hears the Bible read or preached. Now, the very end for which the gift is revealed is that sinners may come to Him by believing and prayer, not merely may stand gazing. The ultimate end is that they may have everlasting life, but the primary end is that they may believe and pray. It is said indeed, "Look unto me," but that is said in order to "draw" the sinner. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." He is not only to be gazed at, but come to. Why is He preached in Bruan? That they may be praying.

1. If the wicked knew what He suffered, they would ask. For, "If they do these things to the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" We may see what is awaiting sin, in troubles on earth, in cryings of conscience, in the flames of hell, but more in the cross of Christ. He was the Father's only begotten Son, and only had sin imputed to Him; we are dust, and have sin inherent. If then the wicked had known, they would have asked, they would have been praying. Are we greater favourites with Him than His Son, and hope to escape? "He will by no means clear the guilty."

2. If the people of God had known the gift, they would have been praying. For since He gave His Son, He will withhold nothing. "How shall he not with him also, freely give us all things?" Only He knows when and what to give. Things may not be in their time and way. Daniel did not get his request at the time. It was twenty-one days. Paul did not get the thorn taken away, but got sufficient grace to preserve him under it. Now if we are not led to prayer by the revelations of the gift, who can describe our misery? "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin." We are apt to think we pity the heathen, and so we ought,

since without the Saviour they cannot be saved through eternity, but have we no pity in ourselves? They are falling before idols; we will not fall before God. They are imbruing their hands in the blood of their own children; we are imbruing our hands in the blood of the Lord. We entertain sin His enemy, and reject Him after He is offered. They are burning themselves thinking to save themselves; we sinning wilfully though we know it will ruin us. They are sinning against an unknown God; we are sinning against a God revealed. They are sinning against the light of nature; we, against the light of revelation; they against the works of God's hands; we against the Son of His love. What sin, in ruining ourselves with willing hands!

I. The prayer that is acceptable is made under a sense of guilt. "God be merciful to me, a sinner." It is the approach of a guilty sinner to a God of inflexible justice in Himself, yet merciful in Christ, as we intend showing. We are guilty by nature. "I was shapen in iniquity." No good disposition of soul, no innocent member of body. "All as an unclean thing." The person feels as if he brought a lump of hell before the Lord. We are guilty by practice. "Thou hast done evil things as thou couldest." Not one good act, but that which is only from restraining grace. "I kept thee back"; "I also withheld thee from sinning against me," said the Lord to Abimelech. Every act of life is a sin.

1. The guilt lies in destroying one's own soul. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." We mention this first, not because it is the greatest part of guilt, but because it is generally first felt. "What must I do to be saved?" "I am undone." The person under this sense sees no good in him, and after conversion too, none in flesh. Under this fear of self-destruction, that word is experienced, "The sorrows of hell compassed me about" (Psalm 18:5); or, "The sorrows of death compassed me about, the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow" (Psalm 116:3). This at first and afterwards, "I am undone." "Carnal, sold under sin." None are better than this, though they do not see it. And just such are called on to pray, and with hope, as we see afterwards.

2. Guilt of sin against others. Thus David cries, "These children, what have they done?" He sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah. Sin against others is often no small part of their guilt, and may often continue when they have some sight of pardon for other sins. It is most painful to see another hardened by our sin, and see them laughing, etc., and cannot melt them.

3. Guilt of sin against God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." When sin is against oneself, it is "against Thee," because against Thy creature. When against others, it is "against Thee," because they are Thy creatures. But sin is against God, as every sin is directed against His law, so it is against Himself; and though it cannot reach Him, yet the guilt is the same on our part as if it could. And then sin is against Him in proportion to His worth above creatures. "So, if a man sin against God, who shall entreat for him?" Here, therefore, the person may dread immediate vengeance, as the earth opening, or a bolt from heaven to strike, or some other mark of the displeasure of an angry God. "How long wilt thou be angry?" "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me." – Heman. This is no more than truth. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors" (Psalm 7:11-13). The person is realising not only that he is guilty, but saying that the Lord is righteous, and often wondering He defers His anger that He cut him not off (Isaiah 48:9).

II. The prayer that is acceptable is made under a sense of the want of righteousness. "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies" (Daniel 9:18). They are divorced from the works of the law, as laying them under the curse. Hence often, when they have no good works, they have not even reason to plead, and when they have good works, they are made to see them vile, "filthy rags," and "dung." Not one good work in the whole life to cleave to, no, not one. And yet they see the curse on

every omission. “When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?” (Zechariah 7:5).

III. The prayer that is acceptable is made under a sense of helplessness. “We have no might against this great company that cometh against us” – (2 Chronicles 20:12). They have so much guilt, and cannot pardon one sin. No bullock nor he-goat, no sacrifice nor fruit of body, can do this. They have so many omissions, and can do nothing. They have so many curses lying on their head, and can do nothing. They may try, but of no avail. Their hands are stained from every ordinance, and getting worse and worse. Like the woman with the issue, they are no better.

IV. The prayer that is acceptable is made under a sense of ignorance. “What shall we do?” “Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are upon thee.” In both cases they had good success. A person advanced may know in the general, but in the particular case he does not know. Paul thought to get the thorn removed. “No, no.” Therefore there is an absolute leaving of the case. “Our eyes are upon thee.” This leaves a great latitude in cases of difficulty.

V. The prayer that is acceptable is made under a sense of danger impending, and hence of necessity of deliverance. “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” We get a glance of danger, pray by fits and starts, but then no effect. There must be importunity and patience. The psalmist has a wonderful way. “Remember how short my time is” (Psalm 89:47). In verse 46 he was at his “How long?” and now he seems to plead before death. So Psalm 119:84, “How many are the days of thy servant? When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?”

One word of application.

I. The guilty are not only invited, but fitted for prayer. A sense of guilt is needed. Go on, if any.

II. The reason of the want of prayer is want of felt need. Prayerless persons are either insensible, hard sinners, or self-righteous Pharisees.

III. Ruin is impending on all who call not on the name of the Lord. “Yet show we unto you a more excellent way.” Amen.

[August 1899]

Outlines of Sermons.

By the Late Rev. JOHN SINCLAIR, Bruan, Caithness,
(Preached on 3rd and 10th May, 1840.)

“Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water” – John 4:10.

“Thou wouldest have asked of him.” We mentioned some things which they feel who ask so as to receive. 1. A sense of guilt. “Be merciful to me a sinner.” Sin incurs guilt as

committed against oneself, against our fellow-creature, against God, “thee, thee only.” 2. A sense of want of righteousness. “We do not present our supplications to thee for our righteousness.” Full of guilt, and no good works. 3. A sense of helplessness. “We have no might,” &c. No price to pay for guilt; no works to make up a righteousness; nothing but filthy rags; and no power to seek as we ought. Like a helpless infant. 4. A sense of ignorance. “Neither know we what to do.” Not knowing in what way help may come. 5. A sense of imminent danger. No time to delay. Hence the cry is, “Make no tarrying,” “Come speedily,” “Make haste.”

This leads the soul to another atonement, to blood that pleads; to another righteousness, a garment that clothes; to another help, a hand stretched out to one sinking, to save from the pit of destruction; to another wisdom when the creature becomes a fool, so as not to trust in his own heart; to a point of necessity. When strength is gone and none shut up nor left, then is the time of promise. Here now is there room for a Saviour, “for the gift of God.” It is not guilt that may keep back the soul, nor the want of righteousness, nor helplessness, nor ignorance, nor necessity, but the want of feeling these. We desire, so to speak, to take the lowest ground. Now when the Holy Spirit goes thus far to humble, then He leads to the way that God “causes his ear to hear;” He discovers the one among a thousand, and though often at first there is only a sense of danger, and a cry for help, yet there is some perception of the way. We mentioned some grounds on which safety lies in pleading. Some or other of these grounds are seen; some more clearly, some more faintly. “The gift of God” is the only safe ground.

1. Christ is appointed of God for the very purpose. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “He sent not his Son to condemn,” etc. Therefore take Him for the end for which He sent Him. He sent Him for the very end, and with the very qualifications with which sinners do need Him. (1) God makes a solemn exhibition and offer of Him to all, as if all who hear the Word were standing in one congregation, and He says, “This is my beloved Son.” He offers Him freely to all. (2) Having shown Him, He graciously invites all to come and take Him. “Ho everyone that thirsteth . . . come.” (3) He entreats them to come. “We pray you in Christ’s stead. Be ye reconciled to God.” If He had not entreated, they had no authority to come. They can go no further than He does. While they do it with poor low desires, He does it with bowels of infinite compassion, and He goes no further than clearly authorised by the Father. (4) God gives His sovereign command to receive Him. “And this is his commandment, That we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 3:23). Similar is that of John 6:29, “This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.” These are two wonderfully gracious Scriptures. The command is given as peremptorily as any other command or work is required. The command to worship Him, to keep the Sabbath, to honour parents, etc., has no more force, nor so much now as this. (1) Because without believing none of them can be rightly kept. “Without me ye can do nothing.” (2) On believing, the creature begins to keep all. “I can do all things through Christ.” This is of great weight to urge us to seek faith without which we cannot please God. (3) On receiving Him, the union between Him and the soul gives an interest in His keeping the commandments perfectly. In prayer then respect is to be had to the Father’s appointment of Him. This gives ground for the soul to come as through the Advocate. In obeying the command to receive Him, the person keeps all the commandments; in disobeying in this one point, the person is guilty of all. This should weigh with two classes. Prayerless unbelievers. Whatever care you have to obey other commands, all is null and void without this. Rebels. So also with formalists and hypocrites, all their doings are cast away “as the dung of your solemn feasts” (Malachi 2:3). This should weigh with the people of God. When they are truly seeking, it is a prop under their heads. Thus far for the Father’s giving Him as an advocate for

sinner, and the right and obligation to ask in His name, as the Father's appointment to that very end.

2. Christ came freely Himself. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." As the Father goes round to everyone "whosoever," offering Him even to the very worst, so the Son offers Himself. He paid the debt of obedience and suffering most freely, His delight was with the children of men. His willingness appeared in His taking flesh, "the likeness of sinful flesh." Had we clothed ourselves in the skin of the vilest animal, undressed, it would have been nothing to this. His willingness appeared in His taking sin, the thing He most hated. Now if we believe not, we, so far as we can, render all that He has done useless to Him. His willingness appeared in His taking the curse. This is greater than if we had been accursed of all creatures, and more grievous, not only in the effects, but in the cause, and in the One offended. His willingness appeared in His coming through the flames of hell, nay, worse, of His Father's wrath. This is more than if we had known what is in fire and brimstone, and yet had been willing to go through them; and this He did just to hear and plead the causes of those who are made to come to Him. He is ready to take them up at a word, and carry them through at a look, a breathing, a cry.

Now when he takes up the case, He pleads on the ground on what He has Himself, and not what they have. They have guilt. 1. Then He has blood to wash it away. Whatever the disease, it is applicable. (1) His blood is spiritual. It is called, "Shed through the eternal Spirit." God is a spirit. It is the blood of God. Therefore it is suitable to an unclean dead conscience, to purge it from all spiritual sin. "Cleanse from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." "It is blood that maketh atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11). It is capable of cleansing the spiritual sores of all spirits which have flesh and blood to dwell in. Who has a bad conscience? (2) It is infinite in efficacy. It "cleanseth from all sin" the chief of sinners. It cleansed Paul, the chief of sinners, and is still pure and can do the same to any other. God is infinite. Who can find Him out? So this blood can go to whatever place where the person sinned. It went to hell *in effect*. It has dominion over the earth, and is sprinkled in heaven, so that wherever the person sinned, it can meet the sin. (3) It is eternal. It was offered through "the eternal Spirit." So those who have it once applied "never come into condemnation." However long the person has been sinning, if he is brought to this blood, it can blot out the deepest stain, and can keep it out! So once purged, for ever clean. So it seems it is an eternal inheritance that fadeth not away. All the blessings of the covenant are purchased by this. (4) It is unchangeable. "I change not." It never changes for the worse, nor loses the efficacy when once applied. Indeed the fountain will yet be shut, but those who have got it never become guilty to death any more.

3. He has righteousness to clothe; to fulfil the law. It is the righteousness of God; appointed by Him, wrought by Him, accepted by Him.

Sixteenth Outline. –

There is no other ground in which a sinner can ask with acceptance than "the gift of God." "There is salvation in no other." There is but one mediator, but the wonder is that in His name nothing that is truly good for the divine glory and the sinner's salvation will be refused or denied (Matthew 7:21,22; John 14:13; 15:7-16).

We mentioned some things in His name.

I. The Father's appointment of Him. He is not only worthy in Himself, but has the Father's authority to plead; and therefore He will not reject His plea. (1.) He gave Him, appointed Him, for all the elect, and therefore makes offer of Him to all. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5), and the prophet Isaiah sets

Him forth in chapters 52, 53, 54, as bearing their iniquities. Therefore plead, if among them, the certain fulfilment of their salvation, and the wide offer. (2.) The free invitation, “Ho, everyone,” etc., is addressed to all. Plead, “Draw me.” (3.) The gracious entreaty. “We pray you” (2 Corinthians 5:20). He is so condescending to enemies as to entreat them. Who then would oppose Him? (4.) His sovereign command. This command is of more weight than all others. (1) Because without Him we can do nothing, not one thing. Without faith we cannot please Him. (2) Because interested in Him we can do all things; beginning now and perfect hereafter. (3) Because it unites the soul to Him who fulfilled all righteousness, which fulfilment would otherwise, so to speak, be lost, so as far as we could accomplish it, to His glory. (4) This gives broad ground to honour Him even as the Father is honoured. In committing all our salvation to Him, we honour Him, even as we give the honour of rightly judging and condemning to the Father. The one is as broad as the other. (5) The heavy punishment of breaking this command. There is no cloak for our sins. This is our condemnation that we do not obey the gospel (John 15:22; 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17). Then venture your souls upon Him.

II. The second ground of pleading is what is in the Son Himself. When a person authorises another to ask for anything in his name, this implies that the granting of the request would be the same to the person asking as to the person authorising, if he needed it. Now, see the dignity of the Son as God-man. 1. He is God. And it was just He that was given by God the Father to man. He is of more value than all angels and men put together. It is implied that as He would not destroy His own Son, so not you for His name’s sake. Now, here there is need of caution not to presume, except on His free offer to the chief of sinners. 2. He is not only God, but the Father’s beloved Son. So near to His affections and heart, He is “with the Father,” in His presence; so near that He hears Him always. He asks for His people as if He were to ask anything for Himself in heaven. Now, they are the members of His mystical body; asking for them He asks for Himself. 3. He asks for the pardon of their sin. He pleads His precious blood. Hence it is called pleading blood. “Speaking better things.” Whatever the guilt of your sin, lay all on the weight of His blood, as shed already, and as not now to be required: “For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us.” When no outgate for weight of guilt, look here, look to the value of Christ’s blood. 4. See His righteousness. It is the righteousness of God. He fulfilled the law in His obedience. For whatsoever disobedience or omission the person is guilty of, see His fulfilment to magnify the law. All sin lies either in omitting to do what the law requires, or in doing what it forbids. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” Then, as His blood meets the transgression, so His obedience “makes many righteous.” And the clearer of his own merits the creature can go to the Lord, the freer to this source of merit. 5. See His actual pleading. He “maketh continual intercession for us.” Here notice (1) He is still in court. Many a want is before Him, but He is ever ready to take up the case. This is no encouragement to go on in sin. “But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.” But He is ready to receive a poor creature in need. He is never absent from court. “For what nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for” (Deuteronomy 4:7). (2) He has a golden censer with much incense (Revelation 8:3,4). Poor creatures are often very ill-savoured with the wanderings, coldness, unbelief, and other evils of their hearts, but He puts incense on them, so that in the sight of the Father as Judge they are perfect. “Ye are complete in him.” (3) He conceals all their imperfections. He says, “They have known, received my words, kept thy word.” Oh, wonderful! He speaks as if their faith and obedience and knowledge were complete. He meets all imperfections, and adds what they lack. Hence (4) He always succeeds in obtaining what they *really* need. He gets a hearing from the Father for them even before the answer (1 John 5:14). “We know he heareth; we know we have.” This means either we know we shall have, or that what we get,

is in answer to prayer. There are asking, hearing, giving. He deals as a father with children; He may not give the very thing asked, or, it may be, at the time; but for value He never fails. He is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20). Paul leaves the matter with the Lord, though many a time he might not get his own will.

[September 1899]

Outlines of Sermons.

By the Late Rev. JOHN SINCLAIR, Bruan, Caithness,
(Preached on 24th May and 7th June, 1840.)

“Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water” – John 4:10.

We have stated some things on the subject of asking in Christ’s name. 1. As the appointment of the Father. “Him hath God the Father sealed” (John 6:27). He was sealed by the Holy Ghost and by signs and wonders for the very purpose of giving the meat that perisheth not, but which endureth to everlasting life. As sure as ever He got the voice from heaven, as sure as the miracles which He wrought, so sure was Christ’s appointment to give

living water to them who ask Him. The Father has sealed none else. He has not by voice or unction or miracles given such a testimony for this end to any other, and therefore, ask not of any minister, angel, parent, saint, but go directly to Christ. Be baptised in the name of Jesus and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. No creature can put hands to that sacred treasury but He who was sealed by the Father. As we are authorised by voice, miracles, resurrection, and Sabbath, to rest on the Father's appointment, so we are authorised to rest on the name of the Son for what is in Him. 2. The Son's own intrinsic worth. (1) He is God. He is the only begotten of the Father. And He is so for us, in our room, to represent our persons by taking our nature and place. Hence, the Apostle Paul writes, "Who loved me and gave himself for me," and also, "Christ liveth in me." The oneness of the union is wonderful. (2) What he did. He made a complete sacrifice for all the sin of His people. There was no defect in the Lamb of God. So then guilt is not to keep us back. He fulfilled all righteousness so that no want of works may keep us back. What had Manasseh? (3) What He is doing. He died and is risen again; He also maketh intercession for us. And He knows how to take up a poor case, though it is not well ordered. We must come not in our own name; we must come to His advocacy. He has authority to plead, skill to plead, power to plead, eloquence to plead. His blood pleads and overcomes. He has righteousness also to plead. Oh, were we brought to pleading!

Now, as it is in Christ's name the plea is made, so there are some directions given for the manner of pleading. 1. In humility. "Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The poor publican succeeded well, and the reason is given. Our Pharisaical prayers! The Pharisee to the very life is the very death blow to prayer. (1) Our nature is but vile. "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Genesis 18:27). As the work of his hand, it is great and valuable; but, as to value in itself, it is dust. Hence, "Have respect to the work of thine own hands." They were wont to put on sackcloth and ashes. And it is to give beauty for ashes Christ comes (Isaiah 61:3). For this He is sealed and anointed. (2) The sinfulness of this vile nature. "Shapen in iniquity." There is not one faculty of the soul but is a monster in His sight. All are out of shape. Every faculty is misapplied. A devil in nature and of far less original value. Bent on the eternal destruction of everything, God Himself not excepted, but wished first out of being. Oh for humility! We are self-destroyed, and friend-destroyers. "No God" is our creed and desire. (3) No righteousness to cover this monster. All our righteousness are filthy rags. (These words we have repeated till tired.) Not one right act with our whole heart, soul, strength, and mind. Suppose you saw a person never doing anything but sinning. Now, so He sees, and says there is not one doing good, no, not one. This is needful for us to learn, so as to divorce us from the law by which many are under the curse. (4) Unable to do anything towards amendment in the true sense. "Without strength." But we are able to sin while we have any being. For every sin there are a fold of guilt and a fold of pollution; a curse, an eternal curse. And there is no deliverance by our own power. (5) To accept the punishment of our iniquities (Leviticus 26:41,43). To acknowledge Him righteous in all they may have suffered or can suffer. He passed by angels, other nations, other families, and members of family in which they are. Thus lie at the door of free mercy, sending yourself to hell. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

Eighteenth Outline –

In speaking on the subject of asking, we mentioned. 1. Humility. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble" (Psalm 10:17). It is promised that "he will prepare their heart and then cause his ear to hear." This we see in the case of the publican. He was justified and exalted. Job also was heard when he abhorred himself. Many a painful cry he had before, but it was then he was heard. The Lord prepares their heart. The heart has much need of this. "The preparation of the heart is from the Lord." He causes His ear to hear the humble, when

He prepares their heart. He will dwell with them (Isaiah 57:15). He does so “to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” He dwells to keep the heart in order. He gives grace to them (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). He gives to them who have nothing. He is very high, yet has respect to the lowly. He “resists the proud,” and “knows them afar off” (Psalm 138:6). He keeps a shut door to such, but where He dwells, He gives grace. (1) Now, this humility embraces a sense of unworthiness. “Dust and ashes;” “a worm;” “less than the least.” The creature shrinks into a nothing before the Lord. It is not merely a knowledge, but a feeling of worthlessness. (2) Guilt, and nothing but guilt. “God be merciful to me a sinner.” This is a part of humility which He will exalt. (3) Without righteousness. “Not for our righteousness” (Daniel 9:15). Guilt, and nothing to cover, to wash, to blot out. (4) Helpless. “No might;” “without strength.” Although he lie till the day of judgment in the case, he feels there is no help from any other hand but the Lord’s own. (5) Deserving no help. “Not worthy thou shouldst come under my roof.” So that the freest grace is needed; not only greatest, but freest grace. Now, this is the case with all in themselves; and as we cannot of ourselves exercise humility, apply for it. Humble thyself – yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6). Meditate often on your own case, and see need of humility. Consider what you were, are, and shall be, unless delivered. Pray for it. “Shew me mine end and measure of my days that I may know how frail I am.” Be clothed with humility (1 Peter 5:5). The word signifies to be buttoned up and down, or laced about with it. Be clothed with it wherever you go, for otherwise God will resist you, and this is dreadful.

2. Ask in faith. Believe that ye receive them (Mark 11:24). Faith is the hand of the soul, that which takes hold; and without it there is no receiving. Believe that He is holding out and giving. “Without faith it is impossible to please him;” and “all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). (1) See that it be according to His revealed will. “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us” (1 John 5:14). We do not repeat what we have already said. Only observe, He is pledged for the promise what He has said. See to have the plea, “Do as thou hast said.” “And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way” (verse 50). (2) Let it be for His glory. David against Goliath, Hezekiah against Sennacherib, Elijah against Baal. The pardon of sin; to conceal a thing; not to cut off; to hear prayer; to fulfil promises; everything a sinner needs. Let all be sought for with a view to the Lord’s glory. (3) Ground of faith. God the Father, the offended party, makes the offer. “This is my beloved Son.” “I am God, and there is none else.” The voice came from the excellent glory, and this at the very time of His baptism with the Holy Ghost, the living water. Hence, the Spirit is called “the promise of the Father,” as if the only one (Luke 24:49). Here, then, all the attributes of the Godhead are engaged in Christ; the fulness of the Godhead is in Him. Nay, the offer of His very self is made; “I will be their God.” (4) The Son is the ground of the offer. “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” He is full of grace and truth. And on the ground of all that is in Him the Father offers; and so on the ground of all that is in Him, the sinner is warranted and commanded to plead. And the Holy Ghost is His promise. There is not one for whom He purchased salvation but for whom He has received the gift of the Spirit, even for the rebellious. And the Spirit is very ready to come to glorify Christ, and not to speak of Himself; but what He hears, that He will speak, and will show things to come. Here observe the ground of faith in each person of the Godhead revealed as suited to the case of lost humbled sinners.

3. Ask in fervency. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). This fervency is called breathing, crying, shouting, burning. Now the promise is to this (Isaiah 30:18,19). There is much weight laid upon this, called desire; not merely the exercise of the natural affections, but “the groanings of the Spirit.” And what is kindled from heaven rises thither again. 1. Ask with the whole heart. “With all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29). This implies three things. (1) The bent of the heart on the object

alone at the time, as here. (2) Observing all the commandments with heart and soul (Deuteronomy 20:2). Some seem to get the one without the other, but both should be together. (3) Leaving all other things to the Lord. Forsaking father, mother, wife, children, &c. (See Luke 14:26,33). A sitting light to all other things, and leaving them to the Lord to take or give as He chooses. 2. Ask with earnestness. Christ prayed in earnest. If a mendicant turns away immediately, no one thinks he is in earnest. So it is when we rise and have nothing for the rest of the day. We are not praying “without ceasing;” this is not in earnest. “The one thing needful” would need to lie on the mind and heart always, without ceasing. 3. Ask with fixedness of heart. “My heart is fixed” (Psalm 57:7). This is so, when no other object can remove the heart from that which is wanted. Saul was armed in the mouth of the cave, yet David’s heart was fixed to praise the Lord. The soul will have many intruders. Drive away these fowls. In this case (1) endeavour to get a sense of God’s presence. This will be weightier one day than rocks and mountains. (2) Endeavour to get a sense of the weight of eternity. (3) Seek habitual fixedness. There is need of a staid frame. So some expound the command, “Pray without ceasing.” (4) Ask with perseverance and importunity. There is indeed a waiting for the Lord’s time, but see how often these words are used in the Psalms, “How long?” “Come speedily,” “Make haste.” Yet continue asking. In Kilsyth they waited seven years. David waited patiently upon the Lord. He did not go to any other: he did not make haste to other gods. Saul did so: he went to the devil. There is much promised to the waiting soul.

4. Ask, renouncing all sin. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6,7). 1. One sin regarded may destroy all our prayers. “If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18). It is a coming with a dagger against God, and at the same time seeking His grace. It is a seeking Christ to crucify Him as sure as ever the Jews were. 2. They provoke Him to answer in judgment their prayers according to the number of them (Ezekiel 14:4,8). This is very awful for a poor man to think he has so many prayers in God’s book, when nothing but so many sins. 3. Let not this discourage any person who is in earnest. Paul found evil present with him when he would do good, but he was mourning over the wretched man. Abraham had fowls to drive away (Genesis 15:11). 4. Attack the sins regarded first wherever they come. These lie in ambush ready to spring up; but while you do not lose sight of others, see to these first. 5. Know them and mark them at all times, and make a complete breach from them. 6. Seek to close with Christ in all His offices and relations for all you need. He is a prophet to instruct, a priest to atone, and to present all petitions, and a king to rule, defend, and subdue enemies. Desire to be taking Him for all in all on His offer. The end and sum of all is to have the Son and life.

II. If the Spirit would come, what would He do to us, if we get this living water? 1. He would convince of sin (John 16:8). O, if He were to come to this congregation to convince of sin, to arraign at the bar of conscience, to prove us guilty, to condemn one for one sin, another for another, and all unrenewed persons of unbelief, to make them cry out in the great congregation! Now, we need not be afraid of asking for this. For if we are not convinced of our sins on earth, the Saviour without the Spirit will yet convince us of them when there will be no remedy. “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14,15). (1) He will convince all that are ungodly before the whole creation, when all are gathered. The three persons of the Godhead will be there. All angels and devils will be there. The shame of the sins of the ungodly will never be wiped away.

They will be tormented in the presence of the angels, and all the shame will rest upon them of every sin committed against themselves, friends, neighbours, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. (2) There will then be none to flee to for help. No ordinance, Bible, sermon, or Saviour. They will be not only lost in themselves, “but lost from all help.” They will be certain they shall have no remedy, but be for ever under conviction of all the ungodly deeds which they have committed, not one omitted. (3) There will be no Saviour to go to. He who is now waiting with open arms to receive sinners will then be armed with the sword of state to execute vengeance, even He that embraced all who came to Him, and wept over them who would not. (4) There will be no ability to play the rebel any longer. No deliverance for ever and ever. They will be ever grieved, ever sorrowing; never hating sin with sweet repentance, but with doleful malice; clothed with shame for ever. Never any sin broken in the love of it, and yet never any gratified. No pleasure, all pain. Then, is it not better to be convinced of sin now, while help is at hand? 2. If the Spirit would come, He would guide us into all truth. (John 16:13). He would tell how things stand between God and the soul. (1) He would guide to the truth of our present state. He would tell us what it is by the covenant of works. People hear but do not believe the truth. (2) He would guide to the truth of salvation. He would guide us to Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life.” He would guide us to Him who is the power of God unto salvation. Not one whom the Spirit guides but will find the right way to heaven from the way to hell.

[October 1899]

(The end.)

[*Note:* These outlines are taken from the author’s own manuscript. Some abbreviations have been slightly enlarged. Further outlines on the same subject will appear in future. Mr. S. died, August 22nd, 1843. See “Ministers and Men in the Far North,” by Rev. Alexander Auld.]

[*Note:* The 4 outlines from May, August, September and October 1899, are grouped together above for convenience.]

A Sermon.

By the Rev. D. MACFARLANE, Raasay.

(Taken by a Hearer.)

“Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it” – Luke 13:18,19.

There we have one of the parables spoken by the Saviour while He was in the world, and the parable is about the kingdom of God. He asks the question, “Unto what is it like?” Some of the Jews who did not understand the nature of the kingdom would have given a different answer from that which Christ Himself gave. They would have said it was like something very great. “No,” Christ says, “but like something very small, a grain of mustard seed.” And we shall endeavour to say something on two points: –

I. The kingdom of God; and

II. What is it like?

I. What are we to understand by the kingdom of God? It was a kingdom which was to be set up, and was set up, in New Testament times. The kingdom of God was in the world early in the history of the human race, but it was now to take a new form. The kingdom

under the Old Testament dispensation and the kingdom under the New are the same in substance, but not in form; and by the kingdom of God here we are to understand not the kingdom or cause of God in the world as it existed under the old economy, but as it was to be set up now by Jesus Christ Himself and His Apostles. And the change was to be so great that it appeared, to the Jews especially, as a great revolution. It was so great that the Apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, calls it a world, “the world which was to come” (Hebrews 2:5). There was a great change to be made – not a change in the nature or substance of the kingdom, but a change in the outward form of it; and this was like as if the existing world was to be destroyed altogether, and a new world created, for the Apostle speaks of it as “a world to come,” and he does not mean by the “world to come” the world of eternity, but he means by it the kingdom of God under the New Testament dispensation. Of this kingdom Christ Himself is the King, and His people the subjects, His Word the law. It is not necessary for us to say more in the way of explaining what Christ meant by the kingdom of God; it is just His cause as we have it now in New Testament times. “Old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). “I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Hebrews 8:8). And by the new covenant is meant just what we have here, the New Testament dispensation, or the kingdom of Christ.

II. What is the kingdom of God like? Christ tells us it is like a grain of mustard seed. It is on this comparison we intend to dwell this evening, and at the outset we may consider the grain of mustard seed. We find in the comparison that Christ does not liken His kingdom to a lifeless thing. A grain of mustard seed, although a small thing – a very small thing, has life, and so has the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is not a lifeless thing; there is life in it. The Head of the kingdom Himself, though He died, yet He rose again, and He ever liveth to make intercession for His people; and the true members, the true subjects, are living souls quickened by the grace of God. There are no dead members in the mystical body of Christ, no dead subjects in His kingdom. They are all living subjects, and the Word, which is the law of the kingdom, is a living Word, a quickening Word. “The word of God is quick and powerful,” and therefore it is able, as a means in the hands of the Spirit, to quicken the dead. But again, not only is that to which Christ compares His kingdom a living thing, but it is a seed, and a seed can be sown; and we were thinking that to understand the comparison of the grain of mustard seed, and in speaking of the kingdom of God as a grain of mustard seed, we must take along with us the Word of truth, for apart from the Word of God, there could not be the kingdom of God. We find that, wherever the kingdom of God may be, at the beginning of it there was the Word of God. The Apostle Paul speaks of faith – “Now,” says he, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” So that, in our thoughts and in our speech of the kingdom of God as a grain of mustard seed, we must take along with us the Word of God. In another parable He tells us that the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). Now, the kingdom of God is not only like a grain of mustard seed in that it is small, but it is also like a grain of mustard seed in that it is living; and however low the cause of God may become in the world (and at times it is very low indeed), still there is always the seed kept, always the seed. You see, the farmer does not send all his grain to the mill to be turned into meal for food; no, he takes good care to keep part for seed. And if he has but the seed, he will say to any person who wishes to be supplied with grain that he cannot part with the seed. And no matter how high a price may be offered, the farmer’s answer will always be, “I cannot part with the seed for any amount of gold,” and although many should come pleading that they and their families were starving, the answer would be, “More will starve next year if I give you the seed.” And so the Lord threatened to send a famine on the earth – not scarcity of

bread, such as is necessary for the support of natural life, but a want of the Word of God; and this is the sense in which Jesus Christ speaks of the grain of mustard seed.

We find that, from the first time the kingdom of God was set up on earth, however low the cause may have been at times, there has always been the seed. And where there is the good seed of the Word, there is always hope that the "kingdom will come." We are highly privileged then, my friends. Let us not despair of the coming of the kingdom in our midst, for the Lord has taken good care to preserve the seed, and the granary in which that seed is stored up is the Word of God, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It is indeed a marvellous thing that it has been preserved for us, and a blessing for which we ought to thank the Lord on a public thanksgiving day, that we have the whole truth preserved in the midst of all the attacks which have been made upon the Bible, that we have not only the seed but the granary also. We have the Bible, my friends, and the Bible has been used as a means by God to bring into His kingdom many a soul without the instrumentality of ministers or any man whatever. If you have the blessed Bible, though you should not have either minister or elder, the Lord may bless it to your soul, for He has blessed it to many. If you have the Word of God, if you have the seed of the kingdom, the Spirit of the Lord may sow it in your soul, and make you a new creature in Christ Jesus, make you a true child of God, a true subject of the kingdom. Then the seed, in order that the kingdom of God might come, was to be sown; and before we proceed further, we may observe that the seed is an incorruptible seed. The farmer is not sure that every grain which he sows shall grow. Why? Because some of the seed may have been corrupted. But every grain of the seed of the kingdom, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is incorruptible seed; it never rots in the ground. "The word of the Lord abideth for ever." It is so incorruptible that if souls in one generation cannot get spiritual good from it, it is incorruptible until the next generation. So it has been in the past. It was not at all because the Word of God was of none effect in itself, but because of the unbelief of sinners, that it had not the effect of bringing them to God through Christ. That is not the opinion of many now-a-days. They find fault with the seed instead of finding fault with themselves. They throw away the incorruptible seed, and substitute a seed of their own making, which can never have the effect of bringing one soul to Christ, of bringing one subject into the kingdom of God. There is no doubt, we think, that Christ had this in view when comparing His kingdom to a grain of mustard seed. It was by this incorruptible seed that sinners in the past were regenerated, as the Apostle Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23). O! then, let us prize this seed, let us prize the Word of God, let us seek that it may be blessed to our own souls; and let the sowers of this good seed of the kingdom be encouraged by the thought that it is incorruptible, and that if hearers are not benefited it is their own fault and not the fault of the Word of God.

But the seed is sown. The Word of God must be preached in order that His kingdom may come; that sinners may be converted; that believers, the flock of God, may be fed; and that they may be made to grow up unto Him who is the Head. And so Christ commanded those whom He sent forth, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Sow this good seed of the kingdom. "For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope" (1 Corinthians 9:10). It is God's prerogative to make the seed take root and grow, but it is the duty of ministers to preach the Word, to sow the seed. When Timothy was setting forth as a sower of the good seed, the Apostle charged him to "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2), to carry along with him the seed, and not to sow any other than the seed of the Word. Then, as this seed must be sown, there must be sowers, and Christ Himself is the great Sower. In His state of humiliation, in the days

of His flesh, not only was He engaged in working out everlasting redemption for sinners, but He was also preaching the kingdom of God wherever He went; in the synagogue, in the temple, in the towns and villages, in the open air, by the seaside, He went about sowing the good seed of the kingdom. He thus set an example before all preachers of the gospel. He Himself was engaged in this good work, and He commanded those whom He sent forth to preach the gospel of the kingdom, to engage in the same good work. Oh, my friends, it is a glorious work to be engaged in sowing the seed of the kingdom, preaching Christ and Him crucified, and not only that, but in declaring the whole counsel of God, to preach both law and gospel, for we find the seed in the commands and threatenings of the law as well as in the invitations and promises of the gospel; and none proclaimed both more largely than the great Master Himself.

Now, where was the seed cast or sown? Not only in a garden, but in *his* garden. The man who sowed the grain of mustard seed did not go to the garden or field of his neighbour – that would not be just – but he sowed it in a garden that belonged to himself. And “a garden” signifies two things: – (1) It signifies the individual soul, and (2) It signifies the Church. When God comes with His word to an immortal soul He has a right to do so.

The soul was created by God Himself, and no one may say, “You must not sow a grain of mustard seed in this garden,” for God made us and not we ourselves, and He has a right to deal with us as He pleases – and He has not dealt with us, my friends, as He has with some others of His creatures. Angels sinned and He dealt with them according to His justice without showing them the least mercy, and He had the right to do so; but he has dealt in a different way with sinners of mankind. He provided a Saviour who took upon Him not the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham. He became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. He assumed our nature and came as the Good Shepherd to save the lost sheep of mankind. He saw us all running on to perdition and ran after some of our race, redeeming them before they reached the place of eternal woe. Every sinner is the creature of God, and He has a right to come unto us in His sovereign mercy. He has the right to come to us not only to bring us to an account for our transgressions, but also to set before us the riches of His grace in the glorious gospel.

He has the right to come to you and me to show us what we are by nature, and by His Spirit through the Word to till the ground of our natural hearts, to take away the stony heart and to give us an heart of flesh; to prepare the soil for receiving the seed, that it may take root and spring up and bear fruit unto eternal life. This is true of the individual sinner: and let us remember, my friends, that God has come to each and all of us; that He cries in our ears and has long cried in our ears. “Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man” (Proverbs 8:4). And I was thinking that, if we had an ear to hear and a heart to understand, the first thing we would hear on entering this world would be the voice of God calling upon us to repent. So then, as the individual soul is His garden He separates it from the world, as a man who makes a garden separates it from the rest of his lands. And not only has God the right to come to the individual, but also to the family and to society, and He has made the Church, the visible Church in this world, His own garden. We have it spoken of under the emblem of a garden both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament Scriptures, Christ says regarding His true Church: “I am come into my garden” (Proverbs 5:1). Ah! He has not only made a garden of His own people by preparing their hearts, making them new creatures, calling them effectually from a state of nature and from the midst of others who are still lying in their sins and under the wrath of God, but He has separated a Church also. Here there is a great difference between the Church of God even as the visible Church, and the world. There are times when people are so blind

that they make no distinction between the Church and the world, but there is a vast difference. In this generation it appears that many, of whom better things might have been expected, make no difference between the garden of the Lord, His visible Church, and the world. There is an attempt now made to effect a mixture of Churches in this world. We do not speak of nominal professors just now, but of the true garden, the true Church. But such a mixture cannot be. The true Church of God is characterised by the means of grace which He has set up, and those means are the Word, the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and prayer. He has given us His own oracles. Paul asks the question, "What advantage hath the Jew over the Gentile?" and answers, the Jews have many advantages, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden." This is the garden then, and the Word of God is the seed that is sown in it by the instrumentality of men, and made to take root and grow by the Spirit of God in the individual soul. This work has begun in our midst long ago, my friends, and is still going on. The Word of God is still being preached to us (whatever errors some, yea many, are preaching in our day), still the Word of God is being preached unto us in its purity and in its fulness. And it is not for past generations we shall render an account, but for ourselves as a generation, and as individuals. But, again, we see that this seed grows: and there is another fact: – If any seed you sow in the ground lacks two things it cannot grow, that is, if it has no life, and if it takes no root. You see, however small a plant may be at first, if it has life and takes root, it may become a great tree. Very often you may see pieces of wood, such as are used in fences, fixed in the ground, and you find as you pass along from day to day and from year to year that there is no growth, and you wonder why, but you have only to examine them and you find they have neither life nor root. The seed of the kingdom must be accompanied by the regenerating power of the Spirit if it is to take root in the soul. Many bear the name of Christian who are not Christians indeed. Christ tells us that that which a man has in this respect shall be taken from him at the day of judgment if he is not found in Him. The professor who is not a Christian indeed shall be stripped of the name at death, and nothing will do for us, my friends, nothing will stand for us but to be Christians indeed; to be found in Christ not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but clothed upon with His righteousness; and Christ found in us the hope of glory. Well then, the seed, being living seed, though small, took root by the blessing of God, by the Spirit of God. Oh! my friend, if you are a Christian, the Word of God, the seed of the kingdom, was sown in your heart, the Spirit of God having prepared the soil, and it grew, for the kingdom of God is a growing kingdom – for the Word is the only seed that will grow. And if there is any growth, however small, it is a sign that the seed has taken effect, has taken root in the soul, that there is grace in the soul; and a Christian is not only a Christian in name, to remain like a grain of mustard seed, but he is to grow. The apostle Peter, exhorting and warning believers against the errors which threatened to take them out of the right way, put this remedy before them, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). This grain grew, my friends, it grew up to a great tree. Christ compared his kingdom, as we have already said, to a very small thing, a grain of mustard seed. "The least of all seeds," as He tells us in Matthew 13:32, but a small thing in which there was life, which was sown, took root and grew. There may be a great profession without grace, but the grace of God in the soul, small even as a grain of mustard seed, is infinitely more valuable than a great profession that may be made by a graceless soul. But Christ does not say that the kingdom of God is a small thing. There is nothing in the world so great as the kingdom of God. The world thinks it is the least thing in the world. Ah! it is the greatest thing in the world. Some one compared the Church of God to a building that was being erected in the world, and he compared the world in which the building was being erected to the scaffolding set up during the process of building, but there are many who

would compare the world to the building and the cause of God merely to the scaffolding. But it is not so. It is because of the kingdom of God that this world is kept in existence, and when the keystone is put upon this building, the world shall be reduced to nothing. "The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll" (Isaiah 34:4), when the last of the redeemed is ready for the kingdom above.

Let us now consider the comparison. The kingdom of God is compared to a very small thing, not that the kingdom itself is small – it is the greatest and the most glorious thing in the world in every aspect of it, whether we consider the Founder of it, the kingdom itself, or the subjects of the kingdom, the blessings of it, or the means of promoting the kingdom. Still it is likened to a very small thing, and Christ means by this that it is small at the beginning. Let us consider how this is so, and let us begin at the beginning. Well, we see the first revelation of the kingdom was a small one. We may go back to the beginning of the Old Testament, although this parable chiefly refers to the Church under the New Testament dispensation. We have now got the whole Bible, the complete revelation of God's purpose of salvation. There is nothing to be added to it, and nothing to be taken from it (Revelation 22:18,19). What was the beginning of that precious Book? It was just like a grain of mustard seed. The first appearance of the kingdom of God was not in many promises, as we have now in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but in one. There are many promises in the Bible, and I suppose none of you have ever counted them, even although you may have an interest, a saving interest, in them, but they all are only a development of what was contained in germ in the first promise. There are many large trees in the world, and when you look at some of them you wonder what was their beginning. Well, they were once enclosed in germ as a seed within very small compass. And, in like manner, the promises which we have now, and for which we ought to be thankful, have grown and developed from the first promise. The first promise was a very rich one. What was in it? Christ was in it, though the revelation was like a grain of mustard seed; the King of glory was in it, not only in His divine person, but also in His human nature. It was said in that promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). The grain of mustard seed was precious as it appeared in that promise from heaven. It was a promise of a Deliverer, promise of a Saviour, promise of Him who was to lead captivity captive, and receive gifts for men, even for them that were rebellious (Psalm 68:18). What was further in the promise? Not only was Christ in it as the second Adam and as the Head of the covenant, but the children of the covenant were in it also. What more? The whole revelation which God has given us, and which we now have in the Bible, was in that first promise. It was the grain of seed cast into a garden which belonged to the Lord Himself, i.e., the Church, in the garden of Eden. Here, then, is an instance of the smallness of the origin of the kingdom; not that it was small in itself, for Christ being in the promise it could not be said that He was small, for He is the Lord of Glory, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person.

Now let us come to the New Testament Church, of which the parable speaks. We have seen that Christ was promised, and we may say that, in a sense, the glorious Founder of the kingdom was the offspring of David; though as to His Divinity He was the root of David, yet as to His humanity He was the offspring of David. Then we see how the Lord brought about the fulfilment of the promise that Christ was to come from the royal family, how He brought about that the kingdom of God would be as a grain of mustard seed. It was not when the royal family of David was in its glory that Christ sprang from it. No. We have it in the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that "a rod was to come out of the stem of Jesse and a branch out of his roots." The tree of the royal family was cut down, and it seemed improbable that any good thing could grow on that tree; but the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed; and

a branch grew out of that stem, a glorious branch. Job tells us that when a man dies he fleeth as a shadow and continueth not; but that there is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Oh! my friends, in this case the kingdom of God was like a grain of mustard seed. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a representative of the royal family, which was then as a tree cut down; and when the branch grew out of this stem, the angels were sent down from heaven to announce the glorious event. "We bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10,11).

Then let us go forward to consider the persons employed by Christ, when He laid the foundation of that kingdom in His own blood, to advance the kingdom, to sow the grain of mustard seed, that it might grow up a large tree. Where is it we find the messengers to go out to preach the Gospel? Where is it we get the sowers to sow the good seed? They cannot be found in the palaces of kings; they cannot be found among those of high rank in this world. Why? Because the kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed – a little thing; and remember He spoke this parable before He said, "Go ye into all the world." He would teach the sowers to understand that they are not to be discouraged when they go forth on such a great and glorious mission. Where, then, do we find them? He himself went along the sea of Galilee, and found there men of low degree, but of honest occupation. He called fishermen; He called them effectually by His spirit into a saving union with himself, and He called them also to be chosen vessels to bear His name. "I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). You see, then, when the Lord has work to do and when He calls labourers to do that work, He makes choice of what instruments He pleases. You see when a king was wanted in Israel, the family of David was called, and the most likely were brought forward first; but it was said, "not this one" and "not that one," until David the stripling appeared, when it was said – This is the man that is to be anointed king over Israel; for God has chosen the weak of the world to confound the mighty (1 Corinthians 1:27). Well, the kingdom of God with regard to messengers of the Gospel is like a grain of mustard seed, not only as to their numbers, but as to the low condition from which the Lord takes them. Let us consider further, before we leave this point, who they were the Lord employed to sow the seed at the time of the Reformation, the seed that grew up to be a great tree. You find a Wycliffe in England, a Huss in Bohemia, a Luther in Germany, a Zwingle in Switzerland, a Calvin in Geneva, and a Knox in Scotland. The question might be asked – What are these among all the inhabitants of Europe? The answer is – "The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed." Some of these might have been despised as to their rank in society by some who professed to be Christians. I have heard that a certain minister – and it is not in retaliation I refer to it at all – spoke of some who are employed in connection with our Church as of no consequence to the cause of Christ at all; but the Lord Jesus Christ knew better where to find His sowers. He found the first Apostles among the fishermen of Galilee; He chose the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. This is our answer to that charge, my friends, and may the Lord grant us the language of the blessed John the Baptist – "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Now let us consider the grain of mustard seed as to the success of the Gospel. And, under the ministry of Christ Himself, what were His followers as to number? They were just a few, but those few were to be the beginning of the kingdom in winning souls to Christ. There is one thing to be observed and remembered about the success of the Gospel. It is this – the Founder of the kingdom converted those who were to be employed in preaching the Gospel after He had left the world. Some may be surprised that the thousands were not converted under the ministry of Christ that were converted on the day of Pentecost. Ah! the kingdom of God must be like a grain of mustard seed. Christ had power to do that, but

He said, as it were – “I will convert those that shall go forth with the precious seed, and I will leave the conversion of hundreds and thousands to their instrumentality.” I have often thought that at any time, when the cause of God is low and there is some revival, it is a hopeful sign if there are even a few raised up by the Spirit of God, not only to be members of His kingdom, but also to be chosen vessels to bear precious seed. The cause of the Gospel was growing, so that, in the days of the Apostles, there were three thousand souls converted on the one day of Pentecost. And what was this great success of which we have record in the Book of Acts? It was like the great tree to which I have already referred, which was at one time enclosed in such a small thing as a grain of mustard seed. It had a small beginning, and although the parable refers specially to the kingdom of God in the Church, we may say this with regard to the kingdom of God set up in the soul – When the believer, through the word of the Spirit conforming him to the image of the Son, comes up to the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, and when the crown of glory is put upon him – and we cannot conceive what weight of glory shall be granted the individual soul in the other world – all the unspeakable glory, which will then be bestowed upon him, has sprung from the small grain of mustard seed which was implanted in the soul.

This country was in great darkness prior to the Reformation. There is great need of another. The Bible was a sealed book. The door of the granary was never opened; no one was seen going forth bearing the precious seed of the word. It would be infinitely better to see sowers carrying the precious seed, weeping as they went along, than to have the door of the granary locked and no seed taken out. Such was the state of matters for at least a thousand years. If any had the Bible, he had either to part with it or part with his life. The Bible is God’s word. That could not be of God which made people burn because of reading God’s word. But Wycliffe got the key from heaven; he unlocked the door of the granary, and he unlocked it especially when he translated the Bible into English. Then the seed was scattered broadcast, and the Bible was given to the multitudes. The Spirit of God was sent down from heaven, for God blessed His own word, the incorruptible, the living seed. Go to Germany and you find Luther unlocking the door there by translating the Bible into that language, and the Germans could see and read the word of God for themselves. “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Me.” And so you find from a small beginning, Germany is a sample of the success of the Gospel. So were Switzerland and other countries, and Scotland also. My friends, when we look back upon the commencement of the kingdom of God in Scotland, we have an illustration of this parable with regard to the success of the Gospel. Before we leave this, I would say – Let us not despair as a Church: we have the word of God, and notwithstanding the apparent smallness of our success, it comes up to the comparison that Jesus gave of His kingdom. Let us not cast away our hope, let us look forward and remember that the kingdom has met with many reverses and oppositions in the past, but that it is a growing kingdom. It grew to be a great tree. I have not time to enlarge, but let me say that Christ, in giving out this parable, had the kingdom of God in view till the end of time; and when you consider what some of you heard to-day in the other language (Habakkuk 2:14) – “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” – you will find in these words the fulfilment of the parable in the latter days.

Let me notice in the last place very briefly the benefits which this tree affords to many. “The fowls of the air came and lodged in the branches of it.” As the time is up, I shall just mention a few but very important things. By the fowls of the air I understand men. In the 60th chapter of Isaiah verse 8, the question is asked, “Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows?” The following verse tells that the Gentiles are to come in, the gates of the church are to be open to them, and the sons and daughters of the

Gentiles are to be brought into the kingdom of God. You see how the Gospel gathers men when preached in its purity. Now-a-days, when ministers grow lax in their manner of preaching the counsel of God, and their congregations decrease, they hold meetings and consultations to devise means of gathering the people. But they cannot. If they had kept to preaching the Word in faithfulness they would have gathered the people of Scotland, and they would have kept the faith. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek" – (Isaiah 11:10). "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isaiah 2:2). The tree that grew in eastern countries from the mustard seed was much larger than that which grows in other countries; but the thing that is taken to signify the kingdom of God never comes up to the reality, as there is no tree that shall grow so large and spread so widely as the kingdom of Christ. But the fowls of the air shall come to this tree; they shall come by faith to believe in Christ; they shall be gathered into the church although they are not yet true believers in Christ Jesus. There is hope for sinners so long as they are connected with the true church of God and so long as they are in the world, for Christ calls upon the ends of the earth unto look to Him. I have no time to say more, but now come to the gathering. The gathering began long ago. Christ Himself gathered a few of His disciples, the apostles gathered more; the gospel shall yet have much more success in the world than it has had. There is another thing which Christ sets forth here. His people do not come merely to visit as some people go to see wonderful sights, returning home the following day. When "the fowls of the air" come to the tree they say with Peter, "It is good for us to be here." Here God has made the joy of Zion.

"One thing I of the Lord desired,
And will seek to obtain;
That all days of my life I may
Within God's house remain."

That was their wish; they were to be lodged there. My friends, when true believers come to the tree they make their dwelling there, not for a year or two merely, but they continue under the branches of it as long as they are in this world, and when they leave this world they shall sit down under the shadow of the Great King Himself. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (Song 2:3). There are such things as migratory birds in the world, birds which come when the season is warm, but when the cold comes on they fly away, and so do those who are not truly united to Christ. They like to be called Christians, they come for a time, but when persecution and troubles meet them they part company with the people of God. God is taking away many Christians just now, taking them to glory, but I know a man in Christ, whom I suppose to be 98 years of age; and from the accounts I have of him he appears to have been converted when very young. He was brought in his youth under the shelter of this tree, and he is still there; he is not like Demas, that migratory bird, who came for a time and then when it suited himself he left. There is another thing which I think it well to observe; fowls of the air make nests in the tree, as if they said, "We make a lodging not only for ourselves, but for our offspring." That is the disposition of the children of God. What are we as a Church? Outwardly, at least, we are under the shadow of the great tree. How so? Our fathers made the nest for us; and this is true of the kingdom of God from the beginning, most remarkably true. At the time of the Reformation a nest was made as a man builds a house which is not to be taken down, and for this house we may say the stones were taken from the Word of God. We have manifest tokens of the interest of our fathers in the Confession of Faith. They said, "We mean to make a nest not only for ourselves but also for our offspring, for generations yet to come." Now, there are some bad birds, birds of prey, that, when they come to the nest of a poor harmless bird, break the eggs, and then destroy the nest. There are some bad

boys who do the same thing. I have seen them do it, and may have done it myself in youth. My friends, the work of men in this generation is like that of those bad birds and bad boys. They seek to destroy the nest which our forefathers built under the shadow of the great tree. The cry to-day is, "Let us destroy the nest and we are sure the next generation will not be found in it." What we say now is – "Let us preserve the nest both for ourselves and for the coming generations." But there are some other things in the parable, and I will only mention them. There are spiritual blessings in it that we have no tongue nor words to express; those who are in the tree will see the salvation of their souls; they that are found in Christ will be found in His kingdom; they that have found the cross will find the crown. In leaving this subject, let me speak of another benefit; not only are there spiritual blessings to be found under the branches of this tree, but there are also many temporal blessings. What was the state of Europe before the dawn of Christianity? What was the state of Scotland, and especially of the Highlands of Scotland? Might was considered to be right, and the strongest robbers took away the life and property of the weak. But some may say that the civil law would protect life and property to-day although there was no gospel. Ah! but the gospel was the cause of bringing in law and order into all civilised countries; the protection which the civil law affords us we must ascribe to the glorious gospel of the kingdom. And there is one thing which I would like to mention on this point before I close. When the reformer Calvin was in Geneva translating the Bible and preaching the blessed Word of God, there were some who plotted against his life, and on one occasion they went to him. Calvin entered in amongst them, bold as a lion, and he addressed them thus: – "If it is my life you desire to take away, I am willing to suffer death for the sake of Christ's gospel; or if you wish to banish me from your country, I am willing to go for the sake of Christ and the gospel, but if you desire to save Geneva without the gospel you can try." When these men recollected the terrible state of society in Geneva, neither law nor order, before the gospel came to it, the enemies were turned to be friends, and Geneva was not deprived of the glorious influence of John Calvin.

[June 1899]

A Sermon

By the Rev: JAMES DURHAM, some time Professor of
Divinity in the University of Glasgow.

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” – Isaiah 53:1.

We have spoken somewhat, these days past, to sundry doctrines, from this part of the verse, and particularly of the sad complaint which Isaiah had in his own name, and in the name of all the ministers of the gospel, that the savoury report concerning Jesus Christ is not received; and that, though life and salvation through him be offered to many, yet there are but few, scarce here one and there one that do embrace it. This is the sad result, “Lord, who, hath believed our report?” Words that, being spoken by such a prophet, and so often mentioned in the New Testament, may and should, as often as we speak, hear, or read them, put both ministers and people to a holy demur, and to look what becomes of all our preaching and hearing, when this was all the fruit, even of Isaiah’s preaching, as to the greatest part of his hearers.

Ere we leave this part of the verse, it will not be unmeet that we speak a little to these three: –

1. To what may be the causes why, when the gospel is powerfully preached, there are so few believers.
2. How comes it to pass, seeing so few believe, that generally so many think they believe, and so few suspect their own faith.
- And 3. To the necessity that lies on the hearers of the gospel, to enquire at, and try themselves concerning their faith, and to have some solid satisfaction in it.

Although we mention no particular doctrines now, yet, considering the doctrines we spoke to before, these things will not be unsuitable to them, nor impertinent to you.

For the first, The causes why so few believe the gospel. We cleared to you already, that generally the powerful preaching of the gospel hath been with little fruit; so that Isaiah hath this sad complaint, “Lord, who hath believed our report?” and our Lord Jesus hath it also on the matter in Matthew 11:17, “We have piped to you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not lamented;” and in the same express words, in John 12:38. And when it is so with sweet Isaiah in the Old Testament, and with our blessed Lord in the New, that spoke with such power and authority, ye may see there is reason for us to enquire into the causes why it is that so few believe. In speaking to which, 1. We intend not to touch on all the reasons, that may be gathered together, of peoples not profiting under the gospel; but of these that ye have most reason to look to, and that are most obstructive of faith in you. 2. Though we might speak of reasons on the side of them that speak to you (for, who is sufficient for these things? and we shall not deny but we have culpable accession to your unfruitfulness) yet it were not much to your edifying to insist on these. 3. Neither will we speak to these sovereign causes on God’s part, who in his holy justice, gives up people to unfruitfulness, when they receive not the truth in love. Neither, 4. Shall we insist on these causes that may arise from the devil, who waits on, wherever the Word is preached, to mar the fruit of it, as we may see, in Matthew 13:19, the evil spirits like as many crows, when the seed of the Word is sown, waiting on to pick it up; and ye would know, that ye never come to hear the Word, but there are, as it were, flocks of devils attending you; hence it is that some are rocked and lulled asleep, some have their minds filled with worldly thoughts, some forget all that they hear ere they go out of doors; thus it is with many hearers of the gospel, their hearts are trod upon, as the way-side, by devils and fowl spirits, that never a word takes impression on them. And though ye may think such expressions uncouth-like and strange, yet they are sadly true; Satan waited on when Christ preached, and sure he will fear no more to do so at our preaching than he did at His; if he stood at Joshua’s right hand to resist him, he will no doubt be at ours; but we say we will not insist on these. But, 5. We shall speak a little to these causes that are common in you, which ye yourselves might know, if ye would observe them; and we would exhort you to take notice of them, when we tell you of them.

1st. Then we offer, or rather assert this for a cause, the want of serious minding the great concernment of the work of your salvation, and that this preached gospel is the Word of the Lord, by which ye must be saved. Alas! though ye have immortal souls, and though this word be the means of your salvation, yet there are hundreds of you that never lay it to heart, that your souls are in hazard, and that this Word must be it that ye must live by, and live upon; I appeal to your consciences, if ye think upon this seriously; want of this consideration fosters security, breeds laziness, and makes and keeps you careless and carnal. I shall instance the want of it in three respects: 1. Look how ye are affected towards this Word, and your own edification by it, before ye come to hear it; how few are hungering and thirsting, or preparing for benefit by it, or preparing to meet with God in it! In effect, ye come not with a design to profit; so that if it were known, it would be wondered at, wherefore ye come to hear the Word: as Christ says of some, “They came, not because they saw the miracles, but because they did eat of the loaves and were filled;” so may we say of you, that ye come not to profit by the Word, but on some crooked carnal design. 2. Look how ye carry when ye are come; how many sleep a great part of the sermon! So that it is a shame to look on the face of our meetings, when in every corner some are sleeping, whose consciences God will waken ere long, and the timber and stones of the house will bear witness against them.

Were you in any other meeting about ordinary business, there would be no such sleeping; but when ye are waking, what is your carriage? for ye may be waking and your heart far away, or fast asleep. How seldom can ye give account of what is said? though your bodies be present your hearts are wandering; ye are like these spoken of in Ezekiel 33:31, “who sat before the prophet as God’s people, but their hearts went after their covetousness;” how often, while ye are sitting here, is your heart away? some in their thoughts running after their trade, some after their merchandise, some after one thing some after another. This is one sad instance of it, that there are many of you who have had preaching forty or fifty years, that can scarce tell one note of it all; and no wonder, for ye were not attentive in the hearing of it. 3. Look how ye carry after the word is heard: What unedifying discourse will ye be engaged in, ere ye be well at the door! how carnally and carelessly do many rush unto, and go away from the hearing of the Word! and when ye get a word that meets with your soul’s case, do ye go on your knees with it before God, desiring Him to breathe on it, and to keep it warm? or do ye meditate upon it? Now, put these three together, your carriage before, in the time, and after your hearing the Word, ye will find that there is just cause to say, that the most part that hear this gospel are not serious: what wonder then that it do them no good! In the end of that parable of the sower in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8, it is said by the Lord, “Take heed how ye hear; for whosoever hath, to him shall be given,” &c., if ye improve well your hearing, ye will get more; but so long as ye take no heed how ye hear, ye cannot profit.

A 2nd ground or cause is this, That the most part of hearers never come to look on this word as the Word of God, they come never almost to have a historical faith of it; it is said in Hebrews 11:6, “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him diligently.” But when folk do not really believe that God is, what wonder they seek Him not, that they fear neither judgment nor hell, and that they study not holiness! They say in their hearts, they shall have peace, though they walk in the imagination of their own hearts, and that the way to heaven is not so narrow as ministers say it is, that God will not condemn poor christened bodies; this is the language of many hearts, and of some mouths. Need there any evidences of it be given? if ye believed that the way to heaven is so strait, and that holiness is so extensive, could ye possibly with any seriousness reflect on your heart and way, and not be affrightened? But the truth is, this word gets not leave to sink in you as the Word of God; therefore, saith our Lord to his disciples in Luke 9:44, “Let these sayings sink into your ears.” There are these things I fear ye do not believe, and let me not be thought to take on me to judge your consciences, when there are so many “that profess they know God, but in works they deny him,” as it is, in Titus 1:16, when we see such things in your carriage, we know that there is a principle of unbelief whence they spring. 1. There are many of you, that really believe not there is a God, or that he is such as His Word reveals Him to be, to wit, holy, just, powerful, &c., else ye durst not live at feud with Him. “The fool hath said in his heart, there is not a God, they are corrupt,” &c.; your practical atheism and profanity say ye believe not there is a God. 2. Ye never believed the ill of your nature: “Do you think (as James bespeaks these he writes to in chapter 4:5), “that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that is in you lusts to envy?” Ye do not think that your heart is deceitful and desperately wicked? Though we should preach never so much on this subject, yet ye lay it not to heart, ye take it not to you in particular. 3. We are afraid that many of you believe not a judgment, and your particular and personal coming to it; nay, there are among you, who are like these mockers spoken of by Peter in his second epistle, chapter 3:4, who say, “Where is the promise of his coming?” And as there were in Paul’s days some that denied the resurrection, in 1 Corinthians 15, so there are still, who do it on the matter at least; ye have the same corrupt nature. We would think that we had prevailed to some purpose, if ye were brought really to believe that there is a God, a life to come, and a day of judgment; and if ye did so, ye would be more serious in duty, and would come more hungry and thirsty to the Word.

4. The mean and ends of salvation is not believed, to wit, that the way to peace with God is faith in Jesus Christ, and that there is no way to heaven, but the way of holiness. If all your thoughts were spoken out, it would be found that ye have another ends than faith, and another way than that of holiness. And, to make out this, we need go no further than to your practice; we are sure many of you live in profanity, and yet we have all a hope of heaven: and what says this, but that ye think not faith and holiness necessary, but that ye may come to heaven another way? And this is an old fault and deceit; it was in Moses his days, for some are brought in (Deuteronomy 29:19), saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, and add drunkenness to thirst;" though I tipple daily at my four-hours, though I follow my lusts and pleasures, and take my fourth and fill of the world, we cannot all be saints, &c. "The Lord will not spare that man, but his anger and jealousy shall smoke against him, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven;" and though this be not now believed, it shall be found verified. There are many, when they come to judgment, that will know to their cost the truth of many things they never believed before, as we find in that rich man who says to Abraham, "Send some to tell my brethren, that they come not to this place of torment;" it says as much, as that he in his life-time did not believe how terribly tormenting a place hell is, and it is even so still; though men and women have immortal souls, yet they go on following their sinful way, and believe not that any evil shall befall them, till God's curse and vengeance overtake them.

A 3rd ground or cause is, That folk never think themselves in hazard, nor suffer their hazard to affect them, and therefore they seek not after the remedy. Hence the Jews, Scribes and Pharisees rejected Christ; why? they were righteous persons, whole, and needed not the physician. And thus it is with many of you, ye will take with it that ye are sinners, but not with the gracelessness of your nature; and this makes it, that when life and reconciliation with God are offered, we have almost none to accept of it; why so? ye are generally, in your own opinion, good friends with God already; none of you almost think that ye have hatred at God, and so ye carelessly and unconcernedly let the opportunity of making your peace with Him slip over, even like these Jews, spoken of in John 8:44,45, who when Christ said to them, "Ye have the devil to your father," answered, "He had a devil, and that they were come of Abraham, and were not born of fornication." So it is with many of you, ye could never endure to even yourselves to hell, nor take with it, that ye were heirs of wrath, as if ye had been born with other natures than the ordinary race of mankind is; and this keeps so many of you that ye get no good of this gospel, for it seeks sinners to pardon them, and enemies to reconcile them; and, till the feud be once taken with, the friendship will never be sought after, nor will it find merchants, though when once the enmity is taken with, the gospel hath many sweet, peaceful, and comfortable words to speak to the man afterwards.

A 4th ground is, The love of money and of the world, which is the root of all ill. This is given as a main cause, in Matthew 13, why the word profits not, "The seed is sown among thorns, and the thorns spring up and choke it, the cares of this life and deceitfulness of riches choked the word." This is not oppression nor stealing, but entanglement with, and addictedness to the things of this present world; folks allowing themselves too much satisfaction in their riches and self, counting themselves as if all were well if they have it, and grieved if they want it, as if there were nothing but that to make happy; being wholly taken up about it, and leaving no room for the concerns of their souls, for prayer, and seeking of God, nor for challenges to work on them, they are so wholly taken up with their callings and business; for they lay it for a ground, that they must be rich, and then they give themselves wholly to all things that may contribute to that end; and that chokes and suffocates the Word, that it never comes up, that nothing comes to perfection; therefore Christ says, in Luke 21:34, "Take heed ye be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life." I am

afraid that many more among you, who are civil, and esteemed virtuous and frugal, shall perish in this pit of worldly-mindedness, than shall perish by drunkenness, gluttony, fornication or the like, and yet there is nothing more frequent in the Scripture than words spoken to fear folk from earthly mindedness; "How hard is it (says Christ) for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven!" And such a man is he that is taken up with riches, and places his happiness and contentment in them whether he have more or less of them. We speak not this to foster idleness in any, but to press moderation in the use of lawful things. Ye think it enough if we cannot charge you with oppression, stealing, whoring and the like; but this gospel will charge you with the love of money; and if it find the love of the world in you, the love of the Father will not be found in you. Doth not your experience tell you, that it is not an easy matter to be much taken up with the world, and to win a suitable disposition for the duties of religion, and to be painful in them?

A 5th ground is, Folks little prizing of the gospel and the benefits that come by it. They look not upon it as their happiness to have communion with God: they who are invited to the marriage of the King's Son, in Matthew 22, will not come and the reason is given, "they made light of it;" The offer of the gospel hath no weight, it relishes not: if a market of fine things at a cheap rate were proclaimed, ye would all run to it; but ye delight not in the Word of God, ye prize not the gospel and the precious wares that it exposeth to sale amongst you. And to evidence and make out this, I would ask you these few questions; and 1. I would ask you, How often or rather how seldom have you sitten down purposely and thanked God for sending the gospel to you? ye have given thanks for your dinner, but how often have ye given Him thanks that ye have the gospel, Sabbath days and week days? 2. How little do many of you wait on the preaching of it? Were there a message sent to you but from some ordinary man, let be from a great man, ye would straiten yourselves and your business too somewhat, that ye might hear it; and yet it's a wonder to think how some in this place, except on the Sabbath, will hardly be seen in the Church from one end of the year to the other. 3. Had ye any evident to draw of house or land, ye would seek to have it drawn well and sure, but many of you never sought to have the evidents of heaven made sure. Ye know, how interruptions of and threatenings to remove the preached gospel from you, never troubled you. That business of the Tender gave a proof, that if ye might bruik your ease and the things of the world, ye cared not what became of the gospel and of the liberties of Christ's kingdom among you. Nay we may say, the gospel was never less set by, never more reproached, despised, and trod upon, than in the time wherein we live, and who lays it to heart? If it were well tried, there is more pains taken upon feckless particulars in a week than ye take upon your souls in a year; and (which may be spoken to the shame of some) more time taken up in tippling, drinking, and debauching, than in prayer, or any other religious duty. And is not that an undeniable evidence, that ye make light of the gospel? "They made light of it, and went their ways," &c., saying on the matter, Care for yonder invitation who will, as for us, we have somewhat else to do.

A 6th ground or cause, though possibly it be not so rife, is a shifting of convictions and challenges, a quenching of any begun exercise in the conscience. Some of you have been made sometimes to tremble as Felix did, but ye shifted it, and put it off to another time, and went away to some company or recreation, that so ye might stifle it, and drive it out of your thoughts. Is there any of you, but in sickness, or under some other sad cross, or at a communion, ye have had your own convictions, challenges, and frights about your soul's estate and yet ye have smothered, extinguished, and put them out again?

A 7th ground or cause (which is as large and comprehensive as any) is folks resting and sitting down before they have any solid ground to rest upon, taking a counterfeit work for a real one, like these spoken of in Hosea 7:16, of whom it's said, "they return, but

not to the Most High.” Some attain to a sort of outside reformation, and they trow that on that account they are all well enough, and in good terms with God; and when such are called to return, they say as these do, in Malachi 3:7, “wherein shall we return?” they think they are returned, and that their peace is made already; they cannot endure to be bidden believe, or to lay a new foundation, for they think it’s laid already – in a word, as Laodicea did, “they think themselves rich and increased in goods,” when yet “they are poor, blind, miserable, wretched and naked,” but they knew not, and so are well satisfied with themselves as gracious persons, resting on these and the like grounds; as 1. It may be they pray, and think something of that. 2. They think they have faith enough, if they have a historical faith. 3. It may be that they have had some resolutions, and fits of a sort of tenderness, and these they rest upon. We shall not insist to shew the rottenness of these props, but shall only say, it were in some respect good for many of you, that ye had never had the little pieces of profession ye have. There is a sort of civil, legal, formal, fair-fashioned men and women among us, whose conversation and communication relishes to none but themselves; and, speak the Word who will, they think that they are without the reach of it. I must say this sad word, that I think many of you have as much believing as keeps you from faith in Christ; that is, ye have as much presumption and security as makes you that ye are never serious with the Lord to amend it, and to bring you indeed to believe; so that it’s a greater difficulty to beat you off from your rotten grounds, than it is to get you right, though both require the omnipotent power of God. Ye think ye believe always, and ye have no doubt about it, and therefore ye think ye have faith enough to do your turn. Ah! when will ye know that security is no faith, and that there is a great difference betwixt presumption and solid resting by faith on Christ?

8th. We think that this wrongs many of you, because ye are not among the worst sort, and others esteem well of you, ye think ye are well enough. And this makes us, that as to many of you, we know not whether to be more familiar with, or to stand at a distance from you, because ye are ready to rest on so very slender grounds. It is not the commendation of men, but the commendation of God, that ye should seek mainly after, and yet, if ye think good men esteem well of you, ye apprehend ye are good enough. This was it that made the foolish virgins so secure, because the wise took and retained them in their company; and this is the neckbreak of many, especially when they look about them, and observe some sin in others which they abstain from; as if it had been enough in Herod, and a sufficient proof of the reality of his religion, “That he heard John gladly, and did many things on the hearing of him.”

A 9th ground is (and it is a very poor one) folks sitting down on the means when they have them, as if when they have gotten the gospel they were in no hazard, and could believe when they list. I make no question, but where the gospel is powerfully in any measure preached there are many more secure and fearless than if they had it not. And it is very probable somewhat of this is hinted at, in Luke 13:26, where some are brought in saying to Christ, “We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;” who when He boasts them away from Him at the great day, they will in a manner hardly believe that He is in earnest, and they give this for the reason of it, that they have heard Him preach, and they have run out to the fields after Him. It were good to fear while ye have the Word lest ye miss the fruit of it; compare to this purpose Hebrews 3, at the close, with Hebrews 4:1, and we find this commended to us – “So we see,” saith the apostle, “that they could not enter in because of unbelief; let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” It is much, yea, the first step to faith, to get folks made suitably afraid to miss the fruit and blessing of the ordinances while they have them; it is good to be afraid, to come to the church, and not to get good of the preaching, or to go and read a chapter of the Bible and not to profit by it; always to put a difference

betwixt the ordinance and the blessing of it, and to be afraid in the use of the ordinances to miss the blessing of them.

There may be many other causes, and we would not stint and limit you to these, but sure these are causes why this gospel profits not. We may add these few – 1. There are some that stumble at the messenger, some at the message; some thought Christ a friend of publicans and sinners, and said he had a devil, and so they said to John the Baptist. There are some that can abide neither free nor fair speaking, and they think it is not the Word, but the speaker that they offend at; but prejudices against the carriers of the Word have never done good, but much ill, and ye would guard against them. 2. Sometimes there is a stumbling at the spiritual truths of the gospel, and a sort of new-fangledness in the hearers of it, that lasts not; John's hearers rejoiced in his light for a season; something of it also was in Christ's hearers, but they soon turned the back on Him, when He tells them of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and, of the necessity of it, else they could have no life in them; "This (they say) is a hard saying, who can bear it?" If we would consider these things we might see convincing causes of our little thriving, and they might also, through God's blessing, be made use of for directions to thriving; and if we could once bring you to be single and serious in hearing, and spiritually thirsty in making use of every sermon and Sabbath for edification, we had gained a great point of you.

[July 1899]

A Sermon.

By Rev. DAVID DICKSON, Minister of Irvine, 1618-42.

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" – Philippians 3:11,12.

Ye have heard Paul's coss [exchange], and quitting of all things to get Christ; and that from His example, a necessity is laid upon all to do the like, under the pain of not getting Christ. For if we love anything better than Him, He cannot be our God, neither can we look for any comfort in Him: if there be any idol tane in His room, pleasure, riches, honour, life – we shall not get Him. Therefore we must needs lay down all things that we may gain Christ. If He get not the highest room with us, we may not look for any room with Him; for it is impossible to be sincere, if all idols be not thrown down that would claim His seat. I grant, there will be great fight ere this be gotten done; for all our lusts will be on foot, to set up some idol in His room. But down must they all, that Christ may be set on His throne; for He has not redeemed us from the devil, that the devil should get a seat above Him in our soul; but He must be above all; He must be our delight, our wisdom, our riches, our glory, our life; and if He be not in His room, He will not have a room in us at all. Therefore ye who would be Christians indeed, I lay a necessity upon you, to get Christ the highest room and chiefest seat in your heart, else ye shall not get Him. And scorn Him not with your sins and purposes, but let your aiming, industry, and endeavours bear witness of it, in lifting up your hands to His commandments, as well as unto prayer.

Here the apostle shews the way how to behave ourselves, and sets forth to us his own sense of shortcoming in sanctification, and his aim to have it better. He wished for a more near communion with Christ, more than for all things; and for it he shews himself content to be rid of everything his soul affects, that he may feel it in the fruits of it.

"If by any means I might attain unto this resurrection." – "Here a fruit of his communion with Christ he would be at. Now, by resurrection from the dead, is not here meant the last resurrection at the great day (albeit I will not exclude that;) but by

resurrection from the dead here, is meant the same as in Romans 6:5, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." There he says, as Christ rose from the dead, so also we should rise from our dead works and ways, unto newness of life. So here, by resurrection from the dead, is meant complete satisfaction in newness of life. This is it which Paul here aims at, in quitting his own righteousness, and taking himself to Christ's; for he has won to some measure of sanctification. But he would be farther on to a higher degree of resurrection from the deadness of his nature, to the life of Christ, and complete stature of a Christian man. In a word, he desires to be a complete Christian (verse 11). And because the Philippians hearing the apostle say, that he wants of that measure of sanctification that he is striving for, might say with themselves, Would God we were as far on as he is! therefore he answers this their thought of him, and tells them, that he is not so far on in sanctification as they trow: for says he, I have not already attained it as if I were perfect; but I am following fast on, if I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ: that is, I have tane a grip of Christ, (to see if I can win to that measure of holiness wherefore he has gripped me (verse 12). Then he doubles [reiterates] the same purpose, and says over again, Think not so of me, that I am come so far on in sanctification; for I am not yet won to the mark that I would be at, but have many unmortified sins, many tatters and rags of sin hanging at me, which hold me that I cannot win forward. Yet I am labouring for it. I count nothing of anything that I have done, there is so much yet to be done. I reckon none of by-gones, but I am reaching to those before me. I am assaying if I can win to the thing I would be at; and what is not done, I am minding to it. This is set down in the similitude of a race (verses 13,14). Then he bids all honest men be like-minded, and come on the same way that he is striving (verse 15).

1. "If by any means." – In the former verse, he was seeking further communion with Christ: here, he is seeking further sanctification. Whereof we learn, that in quitting of our own righteousness that we may get Christ's, we may not quit a study to sanctification. But the more we grip Christ's righteousness, the more we should study to sanctification. But Satan has put a trick upon many men, that when they hear there is no justification but by Christ's righteousness, then say they, My holiness or righteousness will not bring me to heaven; and so, they run on in the devil's service. To whom I say, If thou be not holy, thou shalt never win to heaven. Therefore thou must so renounce, that thou also aim at righteousness or holiness in Christ; for Christ has not bought thee to be Satan's servant, and not His. If He has bought thee to be His servant, wilt thou devote thyself to thy own sinful lusts, and so serve Satan? If He has bought thee from the slavery of Egypt, why dost thou not follow Him into the Holy Land? Beware lest thou be an unwashed dog, if thou be not aiming at sanctification; and that thou be not deceiving thyself in looking to the blood which thou respectest not.

2. We see, albeit communion with Christ, and the knowledge of it be sweet, yet the sweetness of it alone may not be sought that we may rest upon it, except also we seek for fruit and virtue out of it to renew us, so as we may glorify our Lord. Do not seek so to repose thy mind on Christ, as if only ease were to be sought in Him; but so must thou rest in thy conscience, that thou stir up thyself to draw grace from Him, to glorify Him in thy life and conversation: for as thou gettest life in Him, so must thou labour in His vineyard, and labour for a new plantation of grace and virtue within thee. Think not, because thou hast been at the communion, thou may do as thou likest: but by the contrair, thou must be the more devoted to God's service, else thou hast eaten and drunken thy own damnation. Herein stands the difference betwixt true and counterfeit profession – the counterfeit goes from the communion as he came; the true aims at holiness and reformation, and is set more carefully to serve God. If thou hast gotten thy heart devoted to God's service, thou may be sure thou could never have done so, except the Lord had first accepted, and tane thee in His protection. If

thy heart be consecrate to His service, thou may be sure He is become thy Saviour: if hereafter thou scunnest [shudders with loathing] at sin, thou hast an evidence of a worthy communicant.

3. See the order he keeps. First, he would be at communion with Christ; and next, he would be devoted to sanctification, to teach us to seek sanctification in this order: First, take us to Christ, renouncing our own righteousness; then draw strength from Him, and in His strength bring forth good fruits, and so be renewed; come to Christ as a fool, a tint impotent thing that can neither think, say, nor do any thing of thyself, and get righteousness from Christ; then crave new strength from Him (for thou hast none of thy own), to be holy. Upon this order stands the contest betwixt God and His children: they not finding their own righteousness, they will not take Christ's, and take new strength, as fellowship, from His resurrection, sufferings, and death, and so get power to slay sin; and they know not that all the righteousness that can be in man before he get Christ's is but mere hypocrisy and an outward lustre, when the heart within is rotten. But from once they come to Christ, then holiness begins at the heart's roots, by the new power given by Christ. That first righteousness they would be at, holds aye a man proud; but this righteousness God would have them to embrace, holds them humble.

4. We see the apostle would be at farther resurrection after He is risen; which lets us see, that there is a first and second resurrection, and the first resurrection has a progress of time and degrees. It is like regeneration, which is still in working till it be complete; for as the regenerate are in a great part unregenerate, so those who are risen to newness of life, are not enough risen; but Christ is both come in, and yet standing at the door, knocking, so that there are degrees and intervals betwixt the one and the other. When they rise out of the grave of sin, death hangs on all the powers and parts of the soul: as there is a quick part of the heart, so also a dead part: at all parts rottenness hangs; not only pieces of the grave-clothes, but lumps of rottenness hang on, so that there is rottenness in their words, in their mind, and endeavours. But the Christian man that is risen, is still raxing [stretching] himself, to have the lumps of rotten flesh shaven off him: he is elevating his heart to Christ; and aye as he comes up nearer Christ, the clouts and rottenness of the grave fall off; and still he rises higher and higher, and grows by degrees in rising, till his head be in heaven – and at the doorposts of heaven all his filthiness and rottenness are stripped off him. Look then to rise more and more out of the grave of sin, piece and piece to rise after Christ, and seek of Him renovation and a new life; and albeit ye find the clouts of the grave hanging at you, discourage not, but aim still more and more to be freed of them.

“If by any means.” – It seems, that Paul makes a question in the matter. Was there any question but that Paul would attain to this resurrection? I answer, at first he knew he would not get all his will, but yet he is still aiming at it – albeit he see it hard to be won to, yet he aims at it. It lets us see, that the difficulty or impossibility of attaining full regeneration or newness of life while we are here, should not discourage us, or slacken our bensil, but by the contrair, it should animate and encourage us to strive to be at it; for albeit we attain not perfection at the first, yet by aiming at it, we get it in the end; and if we run fast to be at it, Christ pulls us in His arms, and lifts us there at a loup. As that ship wherein Christ entered, when the disciples had toiled long, was by and by at the shore, so are we carried to the race; and when we are aiming, striving, rowing, running, Christ helps us a lift, and pull us up to the shore. Yet it is only those who are running, contending, striving, and bachling [shuffling as in slip-shod shoes] on the way, whom he pulls in His arms and sets forward. Therefore let difficulties stir us up to run forward, especially seeing we have such helps and encouragements. Albeit at the first we cannot attain to the fulness of that we would be at, yet there is possibility to get it in the end; and if we win not so far on as we would, it shall make us go farther down in humility, and take a better grip of Christ for justification.

And so if we miss our purpose, God misses not His, when we are more humbled, and grip Christ better.

“Not as though I had already attained.” – The Philippians hearing Paul speak thus, might say, Before thou wast a Christian, thou lived blameless; and now, being turned to Christ, and having converted millions to Him, thy life seems like an angel for holiness. To this he answers, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” That is, I purpose not to sit down and rest me, for as forward as ye think me; for neither is all done: neither yet speak I of myself, as a man perfected; for I see more before me. Ye see me far on the way, but I see I must go far farther: ye think I have attained to mickle holiness, but I see far more to be sought after. It is true, when I was a Pharisee, I was a man of a blameless life, a man separated for God’s service; but all these things I counted loss for Christ: and when I came to Christ, I saw I behoved to repent more, and cast away all these things, as a man casts wares out of a ship, which he cannot brook with safety of his life. So I am content to quit all both before and after my coming to Christ, that I may win into His hospital, and bide there to be helped of my evils; and so, I am not come out to that measure of holiness that ye trow.

1. That he gives this for a reason of his strife for a greater measure of sanctification, because he is not perfect, he lets us see, that he who strives not to mend his hand, and to win to a greater measure of sanctification, says he is perfect, and has attained the prize. How great evils lurk here, let any man judge. Is it not a foul shame for a lukewarm Laodicean to say, “I am rich, increased in goods, and have need of nothing?” The same say all those who sit down, as if they were holy enough. I say to such, Rise again, or thou shalt never win to heaven; for none will sit down, but the Laodicean, or main counterfeit. Some will say, What would ye have me doing? I pray twice a-day; I read two chapters every day; I keep the kirk all the preaching days. These men have a temper of their own, and draw godliness to their own model, subordinate it to their own silly minds. They make God and religion serve them as they like, and not they Him as He likes, and so are right hypocrites. If any go beyond their measure, they call these hypocrites and precisians; and if any be below their measure, they are profane, and themselves only are the honest men. But they are sitten down in the race; not like Paul, who will not sit down, till he be at the race-end. If a man in a race should draw bridle and sit down, shall ever he win the race? As there is no stay in a race, till one win over the score, so there is no stay in a Christian man’s race till he be in at heaven’s door. Therefore make all to the way, ye who are late; start, run the faster, cry for the wings of faith, and lift up the hands of your Lord to help you. Ye who are run a piece of the way, sit not down; say not, I have done well; but still mend your hand, else ye will tine the race and reward; and shame and confusion of face, black burning shame shall come on you, for minting to go to heaven, and then sitting down in the way.

2. As a man would prove himself to be far from this pride, hypocrisy, and false deceit, so he must labour to make it known, by his study and endeavour to purge his mind from daffing [recklessness], and his life from rottenness; for it is the mark of an honest man ever to mend his hand, to grow up piece and piece, and to be still unsatisfied with himself. As contentment with a measure is a mark of hypocrisy and lukewarmness, so, discontentment with their case joined with an endeavour to more, proves uprightness; for that which is sown will still grow. As thou would be approven for sound, stand never till thou be at Christ; for if thou stand, thou dost that the apostle durst not do. If thou wilt sit down, or be perfect, thou sayest thou art perfect, and castest down all thou hast done.

“But I follow after.” – He proves, that he conceits not of himself as already perfect, by his diligence to amend his pace, to shew us we should rule that foul conceit of being perfect, and prove it by mending our pace, and striving to win to perfection. This following after, is a word

borrowed from a chace, wherein the man still sees before him the thing he is chacing, and still follows on it, and is still ready to grip it, and yet still it is running before him out of his grips. The comparison lets us see that God so holds out holiness in our sight, that he makes us to follow after it, and still it is out of grips, in the fulness of it, yet still so near that it is within sight, and ready to be gripped. Christ still runs before us, and holds out to us the crown of holiness and happiness, and bids us run and have it; and when we see we must either run at it, or else not win into heaven, we follow on still. And so, He trains us into heaven, holding out before us all the way that which He will give us in the end. Here, the wisdom of our Lord, that He is our forerunner in the race, and holds out in our sight the pearl we would fain be in grips with, and the prize that we would fain have, that we may run and get it. When ye see it, and cannot win to it, make not a claite ^[snatch] to it, a faird ^[bustle] only to be at it, and then leave it there; but still follow on, for it will fly no farther than heaven's door, and there thou shalt not miss it. Say not, What wot I if God has ordained it for me? What if He has ordained it for thee? – let the one *what* stand for the other. Never reason so, but go thy way, and do that which is clearly commanded; then thou may be sure, thou shalt not miss the thing promised; for Christ says, “Those whom the Father has given me, will come to me; and those who come to me, I will not cast out.” Therefore come thou to Christ, and fly from unholiness, so shall thou be made to know that God has purposed to call thee to a crown. Secret things belong to the Lord, revealed things to thee.

“That I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended.” This lets us see, that no man sets himself to the course of sanctification; but that we are gripped by Christ, before we can grip Him, or aim to grip sanctification through Him; and that whom Christ has gripped to draw to salvation, that man will grip Christ to win to sanctification. Wouldst thou know if Christ has gripped thee to salvation? Thou shalt know it by this – if thou be gripping Him for sanctification. If thou had rather be at holiness, than any thing, not caring what thou lose or gain if thou win to holiness, then, be sure that Christ has gripped thee to salvation. Therefore from this gather strength to look unto Christ, for if thou be set to have all known sin purged out, Christ has tane a grip of thee. As Paul was first apprehended, and then seeks to apprehend, so art thou. Christ has gripped and loved thee first, for all the work begins upon His side.

“For which I am apprehended.” – One of the ends of Christ's apprehending of Paul, was to make him a holy man, and to give him life eternal: and it lets us see, that one of the ends wherefore Christ grips us, and calls us from wickedness and vileness, is to make us holy. This serves to strengthen thee who aimest at holiness. Albeit thou, for weakness, cannot win to thy purpose, yet Christ shall not fail in His purpose; for having gripped thee for that end, He will not shed with His grip, till He have made thee holy, and caused thee to grip Him. Here is an encouragement to labour and not to loiter. Christ and thou shall not come short of his aim.

Christ's aim and Paul's aim are one, for both of them aim to make him a vessel of honour. It lets us see that Christ's aiming about us, should be our aim also. Aims Christ at this – to have us strong in the faith, to encourage us against doubting, to give us victory over foes, joy in crosses? – wherever He looks, look we.

“Already made perfect.” – He changes the similitude of apprehending in a race, to a proper speech; and the active word in attaining, is changed into a passive of being perfected, lest he should seem to take the glory to himself. It lets us see, that we are so employed in this work, as that there is another's hand to be looked to from whom the strength is gotten. We are so workers, as we are also wrought upon; we so run in the race, that we are also

carried, that we may not glory in our own strength, nor lean unto it, but may give glory to God in all that is done.

Verse 13. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.” – Here he expounds the similitude of a race in more clear words; and because the Philippians would hardly believe that he is come so far short of his purpose as he says, therefore he says, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.” As if he said, Keep what thoughts ye will of me, yet I have no such thoughts of myself, that I am so far forward as ye think. While he calls them Brethren, he ranks or matches himself with them, albeit they were behind him; whereby he shews his humility. It tells us that true Christians associate themselves to all who seek God. A truly holy man is humble, according to the measure of holiness, and aye the holier the humbler: as he grows up in holiness, so he grows down in humility and conceit of himself.

“I count not myself.” – There is a token of his humility. Whatever estimation others have of him, he labours to keep a true estimation of himself. It lets us see, that a truly godly man will be loath to foster any other body’s conceit of him, as if he were that which he is not. The proud man has clear evidence of hypocrisy; but the humble man, let others commend him as they will, he thinks the less of himself. Therefore the same apostle (2 Corinthians 11) is loath to bring out his revelations, lest any should think of him above that they see or hear of him. That foolish conceit that others have of a large measure of holiness in some of the godly, the godly have no will of it, lest, if their imperfections kythe, they discourage those who counted so highly of them. As for those who think worse of themselves than others, they have a token of greater holiness, and a greater measure of light, which discovers their filthiness; for the nearer they draw unto God, they will see themselves the more vile. Therefore Isaiah says, “Woe is me! I am a man of polluted lips.” 1. Take it for a mark of the augmentation of thy light, because the further thou be on in the way, and nearer God, thou seest more of thy own mischief to abase thee. 2. Foster nobody’s conceit, that would think more of thee than is meet. 3. And if thou cannot mend other folks conceits of thee, but they will esteem of thee, yet have a low conceit of thyself; so shall not their conceit hurt thee. This serves to keep men from being puffed up, and to teach them to walk circumspectly in their eyes, and abstain from all appearance of evil. When they think how short way they are come on in godliness, then all the commendation that can be given them, will not puff them up. What makes many a one walk on a while in the way, and then their heels are tripped up, and they fall by, but because they have an overweening conceit of themselves Their rottenness, which inwardly stank before, breaks out like a boil. While they were low in their own estimation, and still battling with their own evil nature within them, the world about would be less cumbered with it. The more pains in secret, the less shall break out; for those who deal with the root of sin, cannot but mar the branches of it.

“I count not myself to have apprehended.” – Before, in his words, he glances at the similitude of a race, while he was speaking of apprehending, attaining, and following; but here he evidently sets forth the similitude, and lets us see, that he is running a race. Therefore, in the similitude we learn, 1. That the Christian man’s life is like a race; whether he sit or stand, he is still running the race. The length of the way of the race is the man’s lifetime; the actions and passages of a man’s life are the steps of the race; our high calling is our starting and on-holding in the race; the prize we run for, is holiness and eternal blessedness. It is called a race, not for foolhardiness or hastiness, but for diligence, circumspectness, so contriving of all things, that one thing hinder not another. It is called a race, because we may not sit down in it all our lifetime. There is one that starts the race, even God, who call and starts all the runners by the voice of His Word: He goes on beside them in the race, and exhorts them to run this or that way, as may best further them in the race; while He bids them mend their pace; and if they fall behind, He encourages, as a friend that stirs up one whom He would

fain have winning the race. So God cries, “Run, my children; run, and get heaven and happiness!” Every direction from the Word is an encouragement in the race. In a race there are witnesses who look on: so here, God, angels, men, devils, are witnesses, but God is the chief witness or judge. Run this race; sit not down; run as in the sight of God. Remember that every action or word is a step of this race: words spoken to edification are steps; words of thy calling levelled at the mark are steps; for a man may speak of worldly purposes, but with a heavenly mind, and do worldly actions, being levelled by a spiritual rule. Therefore it is said, “Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.” Albeit God ordains to run this Christian race, yet He ordains no man to cast away his calling; the ploughman to quit his plough, the servant his service, or the tradesman his trade; but every man continue in his calling, and yet run on, holding his eye on the mark; for every point of a man’s service done as service to God, shall promote him in his race.

What is Paul’s behaviour in this race? “One thing I do.” – Being sensible of short remaining in the race, he sets himself to this one thing; he takes not many turns in hand, or if he did, he put them into this one thing: he laid aside all that might hinder or divert him from this one thing; whereby he teaches us to lay aside every weight that presses down. The care of lawful business, in as far as it draws from God, cast thou away the care, but do the business. In loss or gain, labour to further in this one thing, and be sure, tine what thou wilt, thou shalt get eternal life, and then, what locest thou? Cast away lumpish sorrow in common business; straight all things to the rule of the Word; and let all the points of thy calling and work be done, as parts of that one necessary thing.

“Forgetting the things that are behind.” – This is another point of his behaviour in the race. Had he many faults which he behoved to remember, for his encouragement to do more? He forgot things that were past, in the estimation of them; he conceived nothing of them, and forgot all things which might teagle [delay, impede] him in the way. It is true, thoughts of things done were encouragements, and things left undone were whips to drive and chase him forward, and so these teagle him not: he forgot all things that might slack his swiftness, or hinder him in the race; or he forgot things behind, as a runner of the race looks not how much of the race is to be run. Even so should we do, – forget things past that would teagle us. Look not how many things we have overcome, but how many we have to overcome; not how many good works are done, but how short we are come of that we should; what time we have to spend, that we may spend it well.

3. “Reaching forth to the things that are before.” – A third point is, he looks before him, how far he had to run; what sins there were to mortify, what he wanted of full sanctification and conformity to Christ. So should we do. Look what we want, follow to, and get that. We have little daylight, and a long journey – run fast! If ye have much pride and vanity to mortify, set yourselves to do it. Say, I must have this sin dead; this cankered nature borne down, that it break not out before men; then I must have it slain within, murdered in the hole, and my canker turned into meekness. So chase every sin to the root, and hold it out.

4. “I press toward the mark.” – A fourth point of his behaviour in the race is, he bended all his forces, stretched out himself like a man that is running, having his head before his feet, looking forward to the way; that is, he employed all his wit and pains in well-doing; set himself with might and main to overtake every good duty. So should we do, – strive with our whole heart, soul, strength, and mind, to do the duties required.

5. “On to the mark.” – As he held his eye on the mark, following all the rules of the race, so should we do.

6. “For the prize of the high calling.” – He held his eye on the prize for his encouragement: as a man in a race runs because of the gold, and the honour that is gotten at

the score; when he looks at these, it serves him for a pair of spurs. So when we look to the prize, or vantage that is to be had at the end of our Christian race, we will care nothing for many grieved hearts, crosses, troubles, in the top of the race; for all these further us. This reproves those who clog themselves so with the world, that they cannot run this race; therefore, God many times pulls off such clogs from the backs of His own, that they may run the faster. He holds riches, respect of friends, and the things of this world from them; and if, instead of these, He gives them sore hearts, disgraces, poverty, by these He is only helping them a lift, that they may run the faster. Albeit these things take the flesh off them, yet this makes them the lighter for the race, and speeds them to the end of it.

7. The prize he runs for is glory and immortality, the perfection of his soul and body in joy and glory incomprehensible, and being with God for ever; for when his flesh shall be perfected, it shall be like the glorious body of Christ: then shall sin, sorrow, pain, grief, be done away, and instead of these, eternal joy. What reck we then of pain, loss, disgrace, seeing eternal pleasure, durable riches, and a crown of glory abide us?

8. “Of the high calling of God.” – He held his calling to the work in high estimation, for his caller was the high God. He has his elsin [awl] and linyel [twine, packthread] for sewing of leather, for he was a maker of tents, to teach us to do our worldly calling, in packing it all up in our Christian calling.

“In Christ Jesus.” – He eiks this as the back-warrant. He has told of a race, and all the parts of it how it should be run; but here he tells, that all must be done in Christ. Christ is all his confidence. To get the race run, he takes himself to Christ, to get all made possible and easy. So should we do, that we may run the race well; and to get it easy and possible, take ourselves to Christ to help us, for He is the way, the truth, and the life. We must run all the race upon His ground; He is the new and the living way – the living way that makes dead runners grow quick, and tired men grow fresh, so that all the runners are carried by coach to the race-end. And when we know that Christ must cause us run at the race, the knowing of this makes us draw strength and courage from Christ, to draw on and run still, till we come to the end. If we be hungry or faint in the race, He is bread of life to refresh; He is the truth to direct; the life to hold in our life, till the race be run; He is also our guide and forerunner; the prize we run for; our swiftness, our strength, and perfection. For when we run on a while, as a young child that runs when his father bears him by the shoulders, he only pats and stirs with his feet, but his father bears the weight of him, – and when he comes to a mire, he only bids the child loup, but yet it is the father’s strength that carries him over the mire – even so Christ carries along all His children in the Christian race; and when they come to the last step of death, He having them in His arms, lifts them over death, and sets them safe into heaven. Therefore take courage, and be not dashed nor driven from Christ’s back. Let your honest carriage tell, that ye have been at His banquet: express the virtues of Christ in a holy life if so be. Then, as ye were ranked yesterday at his table, so shall ye be ranked in heaven, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Whatever task God’s Word has laid upon you, make use of Christ, and He shall do all your turn; else how should bond-slaves to Satan get this race run, were it not that Christ supplies all enlack, lifts over all impediments, carries them to the race-end, and sets them in heaven Himself? God write these things in our hearts. Amen.

[August 1899]

A Sermon

By the late Rev. John Love, D.D., Glasgow.

“Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?” – John 1:38.

My brethren, there was a time, when, with respect to the objective display of Divine glory, it might be truly said, that earth was richer than heaven. When Jesus was visibly in this world, it contained a more precious treasure, than was to be found in the highest heaven. His obedience and sufferings far out-shone all the brilliancy of the collected hosts above. In them, God was glorified by the noblest exertions of mere creatures. But here, the Infinite Godhead itself gave dignity to the obedience which was performed, and value to the sufferings which were endured. I wonder not, therefore, to hear of the frequent descent of angels. It became them, to pay homage to that Godhead which now appeared mysteriously in the form of a fellow-subject. But I wonder at the stupidity – the brutal stupidity of my fellow sinners. Why did not the attraction of the descending Godhead pervade all the regions this globe? Why did not the courts of princes – the schools of philosophers – the cities of the civilized, and the wilds of the savage tribes of men – pour in, to the then glorified land of Judea, millions of adoring, supplicating spectators, – while Immanuel tabernacled on earth? Ah! surely it was gross darkness, which now covered the earth, and held mankind in it’s chains.

But that power, which could have converted all mankind, did not lie entirely asleep. Amidst numberless visible miracles, Jesus secretly drew some souls to Himself, as the first-fruits of that vast harvest, which should follow the complete offering-up of His sacrifice. To condemn the general stupor, some few straggling sheep began, at the very entry of His public ministry, to know the Great Shepherd. The verse preceding the text informs us of two persons, who were moved by the testimonies of John the Baptist their former teacher, to inquire into the character of Jesus. The Saviour would not overlook their silent reverential attention to His person; yet, amidst general neglect, He was not to be deceived with the mere appearance of respect. This first opening of His lips, in His dealing with men, consequent to His entrance on His public ministry by the baptism of John, (for these are, in order of time, the first words belonging to His public ministry, which the sacred historians have recorded,) this first opening of the Redeemer’s lips, in the character of a public teacher, conveys much important instruction. For this short address, “What seek ye?” is expressive at once of the grace and of the wisdom of Jesus; – of His grace, displayed in His anticipating the desires of these two persons, whom modesty and reverence held in silence; – of His wisdom, in calling them to account, as to the inducements and design of their apparent respect and attention.

On this short question, considered in this light, I shall ground the practical truth, which, with a view to your important prospect of appearing before the Lord at His table, I shall, in the present discourse, illustrate, –

Namely, That every person who attends on gospel ordinances should consider the Lord Jesus Christ as appearing therein, to inquire into the design and motives of his attendance, or, as saying to himself in particular, “What seekest thou?”

This, my brethren, is the object of my addressing you at this time, – to impress you with a sense of the Redeemer’s presence in His ordinances, and of His solemn observation of your intentions, wishes, and pursuits, while you tread His courts. If, by the blessing of God, I am successful in this endeavour, it will have a happy influence to rouse your souls, into a frame of spirit suited to the awful and sweet mysteries of the Lord’s Supper.

For this purpose, I ask your serious attention to these two things,

First, The character of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great examining Inquirer, or Searcher, into the desires and designs of men, who appear in the sanctuary.

Second, What are those approved desires and designs, which may, with safety and confidence, be avowed before Him?

I. In the first place, my dear brethren, I must attempt to represent to your minds the character of Jesus Christ, as searching into the desires and designs of men, who appear in the sanctuary.

Do any of you begin to tremble at the first glance of this subject? I am glad of it: I wish to tremble with you, and to be under such impressions, as those felt by the prophet, who spake thus, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice; rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble.” I wish to partake with the beloved disciple in those solemn ideas of Christ, which filled his mind, when, at the sight of his glorified Master, he “fell at his feet as dead.” Were it so with us, – soon, my brethren, should we feel His right hand of love laid upon us, and that reviving sound penetrating our souls, “Fear not.”

The view of the Redeemer’s character, which we are now to take, is of a complex nature; suited both to alarm and to comfort. But that those terrors, and these consolations, may have sufficient energy, it is necessary,

1. That we realize the presence of Jesus, and behold Him as walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks.

We must realize the presence of the Godhead of Jesus, and we must realize the presence of His human nature. How shall this be done? By faith. Lamentable, indeed, is that insensibility of the presence and glory of Jehovah, into which our apostacy hath sunk us, and in which we naturally live at ease. From this horrible pit, our souls climb up by slow gradations. By little and little, a sense of the Godhead, and consequently of the Godhead of Jesus, takes possession of our minds. We acquire, after regeneration, a kind of new faculty, or habit, “to see him who is invisible, to set the Lord before us.” Let this faculty now be exercised; let the Godhead, in the person of Jesus, be now before our eyes.

In visions of old, in the ancient temple, there was a brightness – a visible, luminous splendour – produced by Divine power, and emblematical of Divine glory. When the high-priest entered the most holy place, he there moved with fear, and durst hardly turn his eyes towards the resplendent lustre which shone above the mercy-seat, lest a rash look should have been followed with instant death. At length, the incense ascending, formed an interposing cloud, which softened the brightness, and rendered it tolerable to a mortal eye.

What, my friends, if the Second Person in the Trinity were now, in this place, to create such a symbol of His presence, and you were to see, in the higher parts of this house, kindling at once, a brightness superior to the combined radiancy of millions of the noblest precious stones, though shone upon by a seven-fold light of the sun – should we not shut our eyes, and drop upon our faces, adoring, fearing the present God? But is He now less really present? And shall not death soon transmit us to the sight of tokens of His majesty, far surpassing the present feeble ideas of our minds? What is that essential, spiritual splendour of Deity, the glory of which is the ultimate end of the creation, the overflowing of which is an immense ocean of goodness, in zeal for which God is a consuming fire? What is that, which angels contemplate with joy, from which devils shrink back with constant horror? This fulness of incommunicable glory belongs to Jesus, the Son of the living God: and it imparts vivid majesty to those eyes of Divine Omniscience, which are bent upon you, when you come near in these ordinances. “These things, saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes as a flame of fire. I know thy works, – all the churches shall know, that I am He, which searcheth the reins and the hearts.”

Let us, my brethren, form a grander supposition than that mentioned a little ago. What, if the skies were to cleave asunder, and, amidst a retinue of seraphs, made visible in human forms, you should see hovering above us, the very man Christ Jesus, displaying, through His glorified form, gestures, and countenance, the Godhead dwelling in Him? With what spirit would you submit yourselves to His piercing eyes! What would be your thoughts, were you to hear Him commanding His attendants to strike us all dead at the end of this evening service, and to convey each one of us to the place of joy or of sorrow, according to His judgment of our present dispositions and character? Happy is the person, whose fear, in such circumstances, would be conquered by hope, by faith, by longing desire!

Our circumstances, my brethren – our ordinary circumstances, in the worship of God, are in some respects not materially different from what they would be, on such a supposition as I have made.

We worship before the eyes of Jesus as God, – before the eyes of Jesus as man. Some one will, perhaps, say, “How do you make good this last expression? We believe that Jesus, in His Godhead, is present; but how are we before His human eyes?” I answer, that though the humanity of the Mediator is, in respect of place, far removed from us, yet, in respect of knowledge, in respect of purity, in respect of love, the human nature of Immanuel is near, – exceeding near us. For, by the union of His Divine and human natures, what He knows, as God, of things transacted on earth, is, with ineffable rapidity, transmitted to His human soul in heaven. And hence, His human nature is employed in His acts of intercession, and dominion, suitably to the advancing series of events, as though it were on earth a present witness of these events; therefore, no sooner doth a worshipper stand forth, than it is known to Jesus, even as man, in heaven. This, my brethren, is a wonderful fact; and it is important to keep us in awe, for the holiness of the human nature of Christ is more easily apprehended by us, and is as a ladder, whereby we climb up to His Divine purity. So is it also as to His compassion and faithfulness; for which reason, the just faith of this fact is highly important for the encouragement of us miserable sinners.

Have you endeavoured, my brethren, to enter rightly and spiritually into these sentiments, and is Jesus before your eyes? Then, my work is almost done. It will impress you deeply, to consider,

2. That Jesus sees, discerns, and abhors insincerity, impenitence, unbelief, where these prevail, and yet,

3. While He sees and abhors these things, yet He is charged with the accomplishment of the purpose of free mercy, as to the quickening of many such souls: it is His work to create sincerity where He finds none; and,

4. He observes, with most compassionate and faithful tenderness, the desires and longings of true faith and repentance, from the first dawning of grace to its consummation.

Let us think of some instances of these things, which, in the days of His flesh, He exhibited as a sample or specimen of what He would do in His exalted state.

There came one running and kneeled to Him, and asked Him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Here was a fair appearance. But Jesus searched this young man's heart; and He found there, two deadly distempers secretly reigning; that of self-confidence, and of worldly-mindedness. To make way for thorough conviction, the wise Saviour aimed a stroke at this particular idol. But the young man could not endure so severe a lancing. He kept hold of his beloved riches, – parted with Christ – and, so far as appears, lost his soul. Perhaps he lived some years to enjoy his estate. But if he died in the same mind, he has already paid for his worldly, Christless comforts, above seventeen centuries of desperate horror and anguish. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus came skulking in the night, to meet with Jesus, and thought himself a very upright sort of character, when he paid the Redeemer that Socinian kind of compliment, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Jesus saw through his disguise, but there was a secret purpose of love towards him. Nicodemus, amidst many stupid cavillings, was instructed in the doctrine of regeneration and redemption; and at length came forward to confess Christ before men, when others deserted Him.

Behold the glorious narration on the next page! See the rude behaviour of the lewd, hypocritical woman of Samaria! Mark with wonder the gradual softening, illumination, conviction, and deliverance of this once miserable soul! How do the shades of darkness and the beams of light struggle with each other! At length, the captive is released; I think I hear her crying out to the men of the city, with a sweet forgetfulness of modesty, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

But who is this outcast, oppressed mourner? Her cry is very loud and piercing; for her distress is great: a monster of hell has seized her beloved child. But it is well that she now has the sight of the mighty Deliverer. He knows her cry, and feels it melting His heart. But He must hide this for a season from her. She must feel the weight of her burden. She must sink lower and lower in humiliation. Her faith must bear the silence and frowns of her adorable Saviour. But her faith cannot fail: her deliverance hastens, and it bursts in upon her with accumulated sweetness in those approving words, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

My brethren, these and similar examples teach us the procedure of the blessed Mediator, now in His kingdom, while He searches out the desires, and designs of those who come nigh Him; and says to each one of them, "What seekest thou?" For, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

Let us now consider, as we proposed,

II. In the second place, What are those approved desires and designs, which may with safety and confidence be avowed before the great Redeemer.

My brethren, I beseech you, as you value your everlasting salvation, bring your minds close to this part of the subject. Consider your prayers. Search out the innermost desires of your hearts. It is my duty to set before you, from the Scriptures, the nature of such desires and designs as shall be acceptable in the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. It is your duty to make an impartial application to your own consciences, and to try the nature and quality of the chief breathings of your own souls. Let us now preach and hear for eternity; let us hold fast nothing which will be swept away by the light, majesty, and terrors of the Redeemer's second coming. "O thou Spirit of truth, save me from daubing with untempered mortar!"

I hear some one saying, "Alas! alas! I need not try my desires and prayers. I already know them to be those of the wicked, which are an abomination to the Lord. For my heart is dead as a stone. I have no relish for the things of Christ. How can I hope for that salvation, which I cannot so much as heartily desire? Pride and enmity on one side, and on the other side carnal worldly lusts, overpower and imprison my soul; and, which fastens all my miseries upon me, I have no view of the Redeemer, I have no faith in Him, I can hardly historically believe that there is a Christ or a God."

Is this the situation of any person now present? I say to that person, in the name of Christ, Thou art not far from the "kingdom of God:" But take heed lest these convictions miscarry. I say not that they are conversion. I will admit all to be true, that thou allegest against thyself. Thou art yet an unconverted person; and consequently hast no spiritual desires of a right kind, no faith, no heart or ability to come to the Redeemer. Though the gospel invitation is addressed to thee, thy corrupted nature prevents thee from improvement. Thou canst no more believe or repent, by thy own strength, than create a world. And though thou shouldst pray ever so much, with an unbelieving and impenitent heart, the Lord is not obliged by any promise to regard thy prayers, or to give thee converting grace. I admit all this. What counsel shall I then give? Shall I say, Since thou canst not pray in faith and in sincerity of heart, therefore thou mayest let it alone? God forbid. Should I say so, I should be the mouth, not of the merciful Saviour, but of Satan the destroyer of souls. I say then, pray and strive as thou canst. Look as thou canst to Jesus Christ, and cry to Him, "Lord, I cannot believe in thee, I cannot desire thee aright, but thou canst create faith in me. What a wonder will it be, if ever my stubborn heart opens to thee? Lord, perform that wonder, for the glory of thy power and mercy." Hold on in this way, and, though I dare not say, that this is saving faith, and infallibly connected with salvation; yet I will say, that, continuing in this way, thou art likely to become a subject of converting grace. For, besides the general call to the unconverted, there are promises of drawing, converting grace. And though no man, while unconverted, can warrantably conclude with certainty that he shall be converted; yet, he who groans under the power of Satan, and perseveres in seeking for conversion, looks like one whom the Lord designs to deliver. And, therefore, I say again, continue, in spite of delays and discouragements, to pray and to strive for faith and conversion. Meditate much on the Gospel call, and on the promises of converting grace, and consider the contents of the following passage of Scripture. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely, after that I was turned, I repented; and after I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded. – Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:18-20).

I have enlarged, my brethren, upon this situation of mind, because it is of the utmost consequence, that the passages between the state of nature and the state of grace be kept clear.

I shall now deal with those who, having seen the separating gulf between nature and grace, have got over it. Let me briefly trace out some of the chief of their spiritual, approved desires.

When a poor sinner hath been waiting upon God for converting grace in the manner already described, there is a particular moment, when the regenerating Spirit descends into the soul, causing it to pass from death to life. I say, the thorough change is produced in one important moment. For there is no middle state between spiritual death and life. But, as to the effects of the change, and it's being made manifest to the regenerate person, there is room for great variety: there is variety also, in the manner of the progressive advancement of the work of grace. I shall, however, endeavour to mark out some of the chief operations of spiritual and accepted desire in renewed souls.

Sometimes, – when the Spirit of life begins to breathe on the soul, and afterwards, in the course of the spiritual life, – there is felt in the soul a strange confusion and complication of distress; and a painful indistinctness in its views of Christ and salvation. Yet, there is in general a new sense of a helpless, undone state. The person cannot, indeed, distinctly reckon up in order his miseries, or tell what the salvation is, which he is pursuing after; yet he is compelled, by a kind of irresistible impulse, to roll himself over, with all his complicated burdens, on Jesus Christ, for a kind of unknown assemblage of deliverances, leaving it with Him to find out and unravel his perplexities, and to apply to each of them it's proper remedy. Such a person's exercises will often be very silent, expressed in looks and groans, or, in short, broken expressions like that of Hezekiah, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me:" or that of the poor woman, "Lord help me:" or that of David, "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul." Will Jesus Christ reject such confused addresses? No, my brethren; the heart, truly touched with grace, is an excellent orator in His ears, though the tongue should falter, and cleave to the roof of the mouth. "Hide not thine ear," says Jeremiah, "at my breathing." In such situations, the evidences of special grace appear in such things as the following; – a new calm, stillness, and acquiescence of the soul in the sentence of condemnation, instead of sullenness or murmuring; a new leaning upon the Lord, and a refusing to let Him go; a new breaking of the heart, in unextinguishable desires and longings after Christ.

I would to God, my brethren, that none of us were in a worse exercise of soul than this, though there are more comfortable situations of the mind to be attained in the due order.

Sometimes, the faith and desires of the soul are more directly fixed on Jesus Christ as "the light of the world;" and the cry of the heart is like that of the blind men, who applied to Him that they might receive their sight.

And when, in answer to such cries, the shades of inward darkness are removed, and the face of God's throne is uncovered; when the invisible King shines forth in His boundless majesty, and the malignant nature of sin is disclosed; when the vast expanse of the horrid deep of eternity opens to view, and hell, becoming naked, flashes horror upon the conscience; then, the desires of the soul are expressly pointed towards the sacrifice of Jesus, the expiation of sin by His blood, and the justification of the guilty soul before the awful Judge. Shall the soul, thus coming to the High Priest of the church, be cast out? Will the holy Lamb of God say, Depart thou worker of iniquity? No, verily. He will say, "Welcome, thou trembling

criminal. See what I suffered for such as thee; yea, for thee in particular. I repent not of those agonies of body and soul: were it necessary, I would go back again to the cross for thee. Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven; thy pardon is sealed in heaven; thou art safe; thy safety, thy transporting joy, makes me amends for all my pains: I see the travail of my soul, and am satisfied.”

And now, the doors of the banqueting house fly open, and the banner of triumphant love is unfurled. The believing, wondering soul is melted with holy desires, which are poured forth with boldness and vehemence, like that of him who said, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” What is the subject of these desires? All that the busy soul can collect together respecting time and eternity. The love of God cries out, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory;” “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples.” The sense of inveterate corruption exclaims, “Deliver me from the body of this death.” Sometimes, the soul, conscious of infinite obligation, longs for higher powers of praise and gratitude; and sometimes, nobly forgetting the concerns of self, pours herself forth in disinterested, passionate longings for the glorification of the God of glory. Sometimes the little concerns of time, and then the vast prospects of eternity – sometimes the care of particular souls, and then the extended interests of the tribes and generations of mankind, – furnish the materials of supplication: in these seasons, the adored Lover of souls imparts a kind of sovereignty to the humble supplicant, and yields Himself and His treasures to the importunities of faith, saying, “Thou hast ravished my heart, – turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.”

Thus far I have illustrated the second part of the subject. If, my brethren, you understand and relish these truths, there will be little occasion for my enlarging on the application of them.

APPLICATION.

The whole of what hath now been spoken, may be collected together, to give force to the three following conclusions:

1. Dreadful shall be their condition, who, in the grand issue of things, shall be found to have missed the right aim, in their attendance on Divine ordinances! O my soul, enter thou not into the secret of the dead formalist, the self-confident legalist, or the more subtle, seemingly evangelical hypocrite. May none of you, my brethren, feel those horrors which shall hereafter confound multitudes of sinners, now loquacious, but then speechless; when the Judge of quick and dead shall, by the flames of His coming, bear home upon them the sense of such declarations as the following: “What hadst thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatedst instruction, and castedst my words behind thee, – thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself, but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes;” “He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol; yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations;” “He that heareth my sayings and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

2. Great shall be the final felicity of those, the leading desires and designs of whose hearts, are found to have harmonized with the heart of Jesus the Prince of Glory. He will fulfil and exceed all their wishes: “He will do,” throughout eternity, “exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think.”

3. Glorious is the procedure and character of Jesus, in both parts of this work, in tracing out the intricacies of the hearts of men; in creating, approving, and honouring that which is precious, in discovering, rejecting, and separating to dishonour, that which is vile.

“His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into the garner, but the chaff he shall burn up with unquenchable fire.” To Him be glory everlasting. Amen.

[September 1899]

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A Sermon.

By the Rev. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

(Taken from his treatise – “Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himself.”)

“Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying,
I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again” – John 12:28.

Here is the last article of Christ’s prayer, “Father, glorify Thy name”. 2. The return of Christ’s prayer, by an audible answer from heaven.

This prayer, Glorify Thy name, Father, is of an higher strain: Father, I am willing to die, so Thou be glorified in giving to me strength to suffer, and Thou redeem lost man by Me; and by so doing, glorify Thy name. Christ never in His hardest sufferings would be wanting to glorify God. Now, how far the glory of God, in doing and suffering, should be intended and desired by us, in these considerations I propose –

1. We are to prefer the Lord’s glory to our own life and salvation: no point of self-denial, and renouncing of self-pleasing, can reach higher than this, when Christ is willing to be the passive object of the glory of God; Put me, Father, to shame and suffering, so Thou mayst be glorified. Paul and Moses are not far out, but they are far out of themselves; when the one for the glory of the Lord, in saving the people of God, willeth his name be razed out of the book of life; and the other, to be separated from Christ, for the salvation of his kinsmen, God’s chosen people. When Abraham is willing, that glory to the Lord should be written with the ink of his son Isaac’s blood; and the martyrs, that their pain may praise God, they then level at the right end; for that must be the most perfect intention, that comes nearest to the most perfect. This is nearest to God’s intention; for He created, and still worketh all for this ends that He may be glorified (Proverbs 16:4; Revelation 4:11; Romans 11:37). Now, if Christ put all to sea, and hazard all He hath, to guard the Lord’s name from dishonour, and made His soul, His life, His heaven, His glory a bridge to keep dry and safe the glory of God, that it sink not; and if God would rather His dear Son should be crowned with the cross, and His blood squeezed out with His precious life, than that any shame should come to His

name; then are we to interpose ourselves, even to sufferings and shame, for the glory of God. Suppose a saint were divided in four, and every member with life in it and torment of pain, fixed in the four corners of the heaven, east and west, and south and north, and the soul in the connexity of heaven, under the pain of the torment of the gnawing-worm that can never die, these five were obliged to cry with a loud voice in the hearing of heaven, of earth, of hell, of men, and angels, and all creatures, Glory, glory be to the spotless and pure justice of the Lord, for this our pain. And when the damned are too noted to speak against their sentence of condemnation, When saw we Thee hungry and fed Thee not, &c.? (Matthew 25), it is clear they are obliged to acquiesce to this, that they are made clay-vessels, passively to be filled to the brim with the glory of revenging justice, and ought in hell to praise the glory of revenging wrath, as the saints in heaven are bottles and vessels of mercy, from bottom to brim, filled with the glory of mercy, to praise His grace in heaven, who redeemed them; the one psalm is as due and just as the other. What the damned do not, or do in the contrary, 'tis their sin. One prayed, his death, pain, torment, sad afflictions may out-run him, ere he escape into the grave; yea, that his hell might with his own good-will be a printed book, on which angels and men may read the, glory of inviolable justice.

2. We love that the holiness and grace of others were ours, that we might glorify God, but we glorify Him not with that which He hath given us; yea, we have a sort of wicked emulation and envy if others glorify God, not we. Moses acquiesced to God's dispensation, the Lord might be glorified in the peoples' possessing of the holy land, though he himself should not be their leader; but not at the first. There is a cumbersome piece called, *I, Ego, Self*, that hath an itching soul for glory due to another.

3. O how unwilling are we, that the Lord's glory over-weigh our ease, and humour! Master, forbid Eldad and Medad to prophesy, saith Joshua. No, Moses will have God glorified, be the instruments who will.

4. There is a twofold glory here due to God. 1. Active; the glory of duties to be performed by us. 2. Passive; the glory of events, that results from the Lord's government of the world; we are to care for both, but we do it not orderly. We are more careful of God's passive glory, which belongs to Himself, than we ought to be. Hence, say we, What confusions be there in the world! Nation breaks covenant with nation; heresies and blasphemies prevail; Anti-Christ is yet on his throne; the churches over sea oppressed; the people of God led to the shambles, as slaughter-sheep, and destroyed, and killed; hundreds of thousands killed in Ireland, many thousands in England, and very many thousands about the space of one year taken away in Scotland, with the sword and the pestilence: and the Lord's justice is not yet glorified, nor His mercy in avenging the enemies: the cry of the souls under the altar is not heard, the Church not delivered. We would here yield patience to divine providence; God hath more care of His own glory, than we can have. What men take from God, He can repair infinitely another way. But we are less anxious for the Lord's active glory, to do what is our duty, and serve Him, and glorify Him in the sincere use of means. Some learn their school-fellow's lesson better than their own. For God's glory of events, we are to be grieved, when He is dishonoured; but not to take the helm of heaven and earth out of His hand, but leave to God these, who would plunder Christ's crown off His head. We have nothing to do in the glory of events, but pray it flourish; but we take too much ado in it, and we do too little in the other.

5. There is a glory of God, twofold also; one of holiness and grace, another of bliss and happiness. This I consider, either as in the kingdom of grace or of glory. In grace's kingdom, the saints for their holiness, and Titus and the brethren are the glory of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:23). I will place (saith the Lord) salvation in Zion for Israel my glory (Isaiah 46:13). Faithful pastors take in cities, and subdue crowns and kingdoms to Christ. Paul conquered

many crowns to Christ. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thessalonians 2:19). Christ wears the Church on His head as a crown of glory (Isaiah 62:3). How glorious is it to be for holiness, Christ's garland, His diadem, and crown! But in this there is a rent of the crown of heaven, a sovereign peculiar flower due to the king of ages, that no man must seek after; in this, the contexture and frame of the work of redemption is so contrived, "That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29). No man can divide the glory of grace with Christ. In the higher kingdom, there is a glory ordained for saints. The gospel is a glorious piece, which God hath ordained before the world was, unto our glory (1 Corinthians 2:7). God hath called us into His kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12). "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). This is the reward of faithful elders that feed the flock of Christ. The heaven of glory is called the holy heaven (Psalm 20:6). The Lord will hear from His holy heaven; and the new Jerusalem, the Church, hath a brave crown on her head (Revelation 21:10,11). She comes down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Grace, grace is a glorious thing.

6. O, but we come short in doing and suffering; when our doing, suffering, eating, drinking, dying, pain, abasement, shame, wants this end of the glorifying God; that adds an excellent lustre, beauty, and glory to all that we do. When Christ, the Father, heaven, are tied to the furthest end of all our actions, we are above ourselves. But we differ little in our aims from beasts, when the intention riseth no higher than this side of clay and time. That our houses may continue (Psalm 49:11). That we may be placed our alone on the earth (Isaiah 5:8).

In this answer, observe these. 1. The answer. 2. The airth it came from; from heaven. 3. The way and manner of its coming: by an audible voice. 4. The matter of the answer; I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Christ is always answered of His Father; either in the thing He sueth (John 12:42). Or, in that which He fears (Hebrews 5:7). Or, by real comfort (Luke 22:42,43). Or, in a full and perfect deliverance (Psalm 20:20,21, compared with Psalm 14:10,11; Acts 24:25; Acts 5:31). Or, in supply of strength for His suffering (Isaiah 50:7,8).

It is a proof of the worth of Christ's advocacy and intercession. If I know myself to be in Christ's prayer-book, in His breath, among Christ's askings of the Father; 'tis comfortable. "Ask of Me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8). When Christ asketh souls of the Father, He gives Him His asking: the Lord cannot withhold from this King the desire of His heart (Psalm 21:2). He asked a wife of His father, and it was granted. Christ will have them all in one house, to be co-partners of the crown of heaven with Him: for, it is His prayer (John 17:24). The king and the queen in one palace. We cannot fall from grace, for we stand by Christ's prayers (Luke 22:31,32; Hebrews 9:24).

We have many diseases, in the matter of the return of an answer. 1. We wait not on an answer; we speak words, we pray not; we breathe out natural desires for spiritual mercies; we have no spiritual feeling of our wants, and there is an end. The wicked cry, but there is none to save (Psalm 18:41). They do not pray, but cry. 2. We storm, and offend that our humour, rather than our faith, is not answered, either at our own time, or that the thing which we ask to spend on our lusts (as in James 4:3) is not granted. 3. We are more careful, and troubled, that we are not heard, than anxious to offer the rent, and pay the calves of our lips, in praying, which is God's due. Were we as serious in worshipping in prayer, as we are desirous of seeking wants, it were good; but there is more seeking in our prayer for ourselves, than there is adoring for God. 4. We employ not Christ as mediator and High Priest in praying, and exercising faith so much, as we put forth pith and strength of words, that we

may extort rather our needs, than obtain grace; as if praying, and the hearing of prayers, were work and wages, rather than begging, and giving of mere grace. 5. We consider not when we pray, and prayer is not returned in the same coin that we seek; that the Father hearing Christ's prayers, virtually and meritoriously answered all our prayers in substance, and for our good. For 1. Christ can cull out, and choose petitions more necessary and fundamental for my salvation, than I can do. 2. He is answered in all points; we are answered often in the general, and in as good only. 3. Christ could with more submission and sense pray, than we can do. Nature in Christ cannot boast and compel God to hear prayers: often our zeal is but natural boasting and quarrelling, as if we could force God to answer. Grace in Christ (and grace is the most lowly and modest thing of the world) prays with all submission, Not My will, but Thy will be done. 4. All prayers are heard for Christ; therefore His prayers are better heard than the prayers of the saints; except our prayers be folded in His prayers, they cannot be answered. The perfume, the sweet odours of Christ's prayers are so powerful and strong, as coming from Godman in one person, they must be both asking and giving, desiring and granting, praying and hearing, flowing from the same person, Christ. When our prayers go to heaven, Christ, ere they come to the Father, must cast them in a new mould, and leaveth to them His heart, His mouth: though the Advocate taketh not the sense and meaning of the Spirit from them; yet Christ presenting them with His perfume, He removeth our corrupt sense, so as they are Christ's prayers, rather than ours. Let us by Him (as our High Priest) offer the sacrifice of praise (then of prayers also) to God continually (Hebrews 13:15). The offering is the Priest's as well as the people's (Revelation 8:3). And far more here, because Christ, by His office, is the only immediate person who maketh request to God for us (Romans 8:34).

“FROM HEAVEN.”

Hence, Christ troubled in soul, and afflicted believers on earth, keep correspondence and compliance with heaven.

1. Christ's prayers, in His saddest days, have their return from heaven. Posts and messengers fly with wings between God and a soul in a praying disposition; possible, ten posts in one night. Prayer hath an agent lying at the court of heaven, and an open ear there. He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even unto His ears (Psalm 18:6). Christ takes care that the messenger gets presence, and be quickly dispatched with a return, The Lord (ere the messenger come) looked down from the height of His sanctuary (verse 20) to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death (Psalm 102:19). So (Lamentations 3) – Tears lie in heaven as solicitors with God until He hear. Mine eye trickleth down and ceaseth not. “Till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven” (verse 50). Hear Thou in the heaven, Thy dwelling place, and whom Thou hearest, forgive (1 Kings 8:30). Saith Solomon: Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness (Isaiah 63:15). Our Saviour hath appointed the post-way in that prayer – Our Father which art in heaven. We have a friend there, who receives the packet; An High Priest set at the right hand of the throne of Majesty (Hebrews 8:1); who hath passed into the heavens (Hebrews 4:14); and is made higher than the heavens (Hebrews 7:26); and liveth for ever to make intercession for us (verse 25).

2. In Christ's hardest straits, comfort came out of this airth. When he was in His saddest agony, there appeared unto Him an angel from heaven strengthening Him (Luke 22:43). In His lowest condition, when He was in the cold grave among the dead, heaven was His magazine of help and comforts. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and rolled away the stone (Matthew 28:2). Heaven came, to His bed-side when He was sleeping in the clods.

3. The saints have daily trafficking with heaven. O my dear friend, my brother, my factor is in that land. Whom have I in heaven but Thee (Psalm 73:25). What, are not angels, prophets, apostles, and saints there? Yea; but we have no acquaintance by way of mediation in that land but Christ: He is the choice friend there. The second man (both first, highest, second and all) is the Lord from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47).

4. All our good, every perfect gift comes from heaven (James 1:17). Manna came not from the clouds: how then? My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven (John 6:32). We are ill lodged in bits of sick and groaning clay; our best house is in heaven. We groaning, desire to be clothed with our house from heaven (2 Corinthians 5:2).

5. The earth is but the believer's sentinel, or, at best, his watchtower; but our hope is in heaven. We wait for the Son of God from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Our life and treasure is there. Lay up treasure for yourselves in heaven (Matthew 6:20). Our (Gr. *politéuma*) our city-dwelling and our haunting is in heaven (Philippians i. 21).

What acquaintance have ye in heaven? What blood friend have you in that land? The wicked man (Heb. *Enosh minhaaretz*) is, the man of the earth. Save me from men of time, men of this life (Psalm 17:14). Are you a burgess of time, or a citizen of the earth? Or a man of the higher Jerusalem? Imagine there were a new found land on earth, and in it there be twelve summers in one year, all the stones in the land are sapphires, rubies, diamonds; the clay of it the choicest gold of Ophir; the trees do bear apples of life; the inhabitants can neither be sick nor die; the passage to it, by sea and land, is safe; all things there are to be had for nothing, without money, price, or change of commodities; and gold is there for the gathering: if there were such a land as this, what a huge navy would be lying in the harbours and ports of that land? How many travellers would repair thither? Heaven is a new land that the Mediator Christ hath found out, it is better than a land where there is a summer for every month of the year; there is neither winter nor night there; the land is very good, and the fruits of it delectable and precious; grace and peace, righteousness, joy of the Holy Ghost, the fruits of that kingdom – (Romans 14:17) – are better than rubies, sapphires, or diamonds. Christ the tree of life is above all lands on earth, even His alone; and there is no need of price or money in this kingdom; grace is the cheapest thing of the world; wine and milk are here without money, and without price (Isaiah 55:1). 'Tis a land that stands most by the one only commodity of grace and glory. Oh, there is little trafficking with heaven; when was you last there? It is an easy passage to heaven. David, who often prayed, even seven times a day, was often a day there. Prayer in faith is but one short post thither. Oh, we have too much compliance with the earth.

“A VOICE.”

The third particular in this return, is the manner: in an audible voice the Lord answereth Him. The multitude heard this voice, though they understood it not. We read not often of an audible voice from heaven to Christ; only at His baptism, there was a testimony given of Him from heaven (Matthew 3:16,17); and at His transfiguration (Matthew 17). Of which Peter speaketh: And this voice we heard when we were with Him on the holy mount (2 Peter 1:18). The Lord, in the hearing of men, gives a testimony of His Son Christ and His good cause. He was accused because He made Himself the Son of God; He prays to God, and calleth Him Father openly; a voice from heaven openly answering, acknowledgeth Him to be the Son of God; though they knew not the Lord's testimony from heaven. God maketh a good cause, though darkened, to shine as day-light, if men would open their eyes and see. Roll over thy way upon the Lord, and trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass (Psalm 37:5). But flesh and blood saith, Innocency lieth in the dark, and weepeth in sackcloth in the dungeon, and is not seen. The Lord answereth, “And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday” (verse 6). It is true (Heb. *Vatza*) signifies to go from one place to

another; it is here applied to the sun, and elsewhere to things that grow out of the earth (Judges 13:14). The sun in the night seems dead and lost, as if there were no such thing; yet the morning is a new life to the day and the sun. The grape of the wine tree sown in the earth is a dead thing, yet it springeth in some days, and cometh to be a fruitful tree. Christ was crucified and buried, yet the wine tree grew again. "And he was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). The gospel and a good cause seems buried, and weeps in a dungeon. Joseph in the prison, and a sold stranger; yet in the eyes of his brethren he is exalted. The Lord cleared Daniel's cause. Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart (Psalm 97:11). The light and joy of the saints are often under the clods of the earth.

1. The reformation of religion goes veiled under the mask of rebellion, and of subverting fundamental laws; but God must give to this work, that is now on the wheels in Britain, the right name, and call it, The building of the old waste places, the rearing up of the tabernacle of David; and cause it come above the earth.

2. The cross is that great stumbling-block, for which many are offended at Christ and the gospel. It is a sad and offensive providence, to see joy weep, glory shamed; this is the gall, the wormwood, the salt of the cross, that the Lord of life should suffer in His own person; yet here is heaven and the Father speaking, and returning a comfortable answer to Christ, in that which He most feared. The cross maketh an ill report of the gospel and Christ: for this the apostles are made a theatre, a gazing stock to men and angels, a world's wonder; and Paul would take this away, Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at My tribulation (Ephesians 3:13). Then saints may fall a-swooning at the very sight of the cross in others. And Peter saith (Gr. *mè xenizesthe*), Be not stricken with wonders, or astonished as at new things and miracles, when ye are put to a fiery trial (1 Peter 4:12; Acts 17:20). The comforts of the cross are the sweet of it, and the honey-combs of Christ, that drop upon that sour tree.

3. That the Father saith from heaven, There shall grow the fairest and most beautiful rose that ever higher or lower paradise yielded, out of this crabbed thorn was much consolation to Christ. Here grows out of the side and banks of the lake of that river of fire and wrath that Christ was plunged in, many sweet flowers. As 1. A victorious Redeemer, who overcame hell, sin, devils, death, the world, 2. A fair and spotless righteousness. 3. A redeemed, a washed and sanctified spouse to the Lamb. 4. A new heaven and a new earth; behold, He hath made all things new, and hath cast heaven and earth in a new mould. 5. A new kingdom, a new crown to the saints, a choicer paradise than the first that Adam lost. 6. Riches of free grace, unsearchable treasures of mercy and love; all these blossom out of the cross.

4. The cross is bought by, and in its nature much altered to the saints. 'Tis true, it is become a necessary inlet, and an inevitable passage, and a bridge to heaven; but the Lord Jesus, not Satan, keeps the pass, and commandeth the bridge, and letteth in and letteth out passengers at His pleasure. But (1) Christ hath strewed the way to heaven with blood and wars, and forbids us to censure his sad patrimony, in that the servants are no worse than the Lord and flower of all the martyrs. Though blood hath been, and must be the rent and income of the crown of the noble King of kings and the consecrated Captain of our salvation, yet it is short and for a moment, and Christ hath a way of outgate, that none of His shall be buried under the cross (Revelation 7:14; Psalm 4:19). (2) Christ hath broken the iron chains of the cross and the gates of brass: that the cross hath but a number of free prisoners, who have fair quarters, and must go out with flying colours, and be ransomed from the grave (John 16:33; Hosea 13:14). (3) When you are in glory and in a place above death, there shall be neither mark nor print, no ceatrix of the sad cross on back or shoulder, but the very furrow of tears wiped away, and perfectly washed off the face with the water of life, for the former things shall be done away (Revelation 21). (4) Yea the saddest of crosses, the utmost and last blow

that the cross can inflict, is death. I should think that Christ is the saint's factor in the land of death; He was there himself, and though He will not adjourn death, yet hath our factor made it cheap and at an easy rate – all toll and custom is removed, and He hath put a negation upon death. He that believeth shall not die (John 11:26). Much dependeth on our wise husbanding of the rod of God, yet if Christ did not manage, order, and oversee our furnace, it could not be well with us.

“I HAVE BOTH GLORIFIED IT, AND WILL GLORIFY IT AGAIN.”

This is the fourth considerable point, the matter of the answer. Here is a Lord-speaker from heaven, testifying that the Lord's name shall be, and was glorified, as (1) in Christ's person and incarnation, the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory (John 1:14). So the angels did sing at His birth, Glory to God in the highest (Luke 2:14). Christ's laying aside of His glory, and His emptying of Himself for us, was the glory of rich mercy. (2) His miracles glorified God. This first miracle did Jesus to manifest His glory (John 2:11). When He cured the paralytick man, they were amazed, and glorified God (Luke 2:12). When He raised Jairus his daughter there came a fear on all, and they glorified God (Luke 7:16). (3) In all His life He went about doing good, and sought to glorify His Father (John 8:49). (4) In His death God was in a singular manner glorified. When the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God (Luke 23:49). The repenting thief preached Him on the cross to be a King; and this was a glorifying of Christ in His greatest abasement and shame. Yea, His glory was preached by the sun, when it was, contrary to the course of nature, darkened; and by the rocks when they were rent, and the temple cloven asunder, and the graves opened, when men weakly or wickedly denied Him, and would not only not preach His glory, but blaspheme His name. (5) He was glorified in His resurrection, being declared to be the Son of God, and obtained a name above all names, and was, by the right hand of God, exalted to be a Saviour and a Prince, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Philippians 2:9; Ephesians 1:20; Acts 5:31; Acts 3:13). (6) He shall come again in His glory (Matthew 15:31); and shall be glorified and admired in all His saints (2 Thessalonians 1:10). The fairest and most glorious sight that ever the eye of man saw shall be when Christ shall come riding through the clouds on His chariot of glory, accompanied with His mighty angels, and with one pull or shake of His mighty arms, shall cause the stars to fall from heaven as figs fall from a fig tree, shaken with a mighty wind, and blow out all these candles of heaven with one blast of His ire; and a fire shall go before Him, and burn up the earth with the works that are therein; when the higher house of heaven and the lower of the earth shall meet together, and when mystical Christ shall be glorified.

Use 1. – If there be so much glory in Jesus Christ and His sufferings, as He must bear the glory (Zechariah 6:13); and all the glory of His Father's house be upon Him (Isaiah 22:24). His crown of glory on His head must be so weighty and ponderous with rubies, sapphires, diamonds, that it will break the neck of any mortal man, king or parliament, to bear it. None on earth have a head or shoulders for this so weighty a diadem; parliaments have no necks worthy to carry Christ's golden bracelets, nor a back to be honoured with His robe-royal; if they will but take His sceptre in their hand, it shall crush them as clay vessels: this stone, hewn out of the mountain without hands, shall crush the clay legs of parliaments, and then how shall they stand?

Use 2. – God properly glorifies Himself; angels and men are but chamberlains and factors, to pay the rent of His glory; and because He will give Himself, His Son, His Spirit to us, and His grace, and yet will not give His glory to another; let us beware to intercept the rents of the crown.

Object. – The Lord giveth grace and glory. And He hath a crown of glory laid up for His saints in the heavens (Psalm 84).

Answer. – The glory is but matured and ripened grace; God's glory is the eminent, celebrated, and high esteem that men and angels have of God, as God, or the foundation of this; to meddle with this is to encroach upon the crown and prerogative-royal of God. Glory imparted to saints in heaven is but a beam, a lustre, a shadow, or way of that transcendent and high glory that is in God, and is as far different from the incommunicable glory of God, as the shadow of the sun in a glass, or in the bottom of a fountain, and the sun in firmament. We may desire the chips and shadows and rays of glory; but beware that we meddle not with that which devils and men always seek after, in a sacrilegious way.

Use 3. – We are hence taught to admire the excellency of the unsearchable knowledge and skill of Divine providence. (1) Out of Christ's abasing Himself to take on Him our nature. (2) Out of His miracles, that were just nothing to blind natural men. (3) Out of His death and shame, the Lord extracteth the most eminent and high glory of His name. That omnipotency should triumph in the jaw-bone of an ass, in a straw, in a crucified man, commends the glory of God and the art of His workmanship; to make gold out of clay and iron, diamonds and rubies out of the basest stones, would extol the art of man. A creation out of nothing, and flowers, roses, forests, woods, out of cold earth, is the praise of the wisdom and power of the Creator; the baser the matter be, the art of the author is the more glorious, if the work be curious and excellent.

God here (1) out of death, shame, sinful oppressing of the Lord of glory, raiseth the high work of man's redemption. (2) When we spill business, and marr all through sinning and provoking God, then Israel must bring a spilt business to God, that He may right them (Judges 3:10,11). God can find the right end of the thread when matters are ravelled and disordered. We see now nations confounded, enemies rising against us; but blood, wars, confusions, oppression, and crushing down of Christ and His Church, are good and congruous means when they have the advantage of being handed by omnipotency. When we work, the instrument must be as big as a mountain, and then our eye cannot see God for the bigness of the instrument. God regardeth not the nothings, and the few that He worketh withal. Dead men can fight when God putteth a sword in their hand – men shall fall under wounded men. Beware of robbing God of His glory. Did ever a decree or a counsel of God part with child? Or can omnipotency bring forth untimely births or prove abortive? You see Christ now in the death-house of Adam's sons, and wrestling with hell; yet God, by Christ at the weakest, works His ends; death is a low thing, sin is far more base, but when God acts at the end of either, they have a scope and end as high as God, to glorify God.

(3) If God hath been, and must be glorified in all that is done, what do we do to trouble ourselves to seek glory one of another? We are created for this end, and 'tis our glory to fetch in glory to God. What? can the airy applause of men be golden stilts for cripples to walk to heaven withal? Or, can the people's poor hossanas be silken sails to our ship, or golden wings, that by these you may sail and fly up to heaven? Where is Belshazzar who but built a house for the glory of his own name? Where is Herod, who did receive one word of a god, which the people did steal? Do not these fools take little room in print, and, at this day, as little in the clods of the earth? The Roman state would not permit Christ to be a God; what was their doom? Must not a kingdom cast its bloom, fall, and wither, that will not suffer Christ to be a king in His Church?

[October 1899]

A Sermon

By the Rev. NEIL CAMERON, St. Jude's, Glasgow.

For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them" – Psalm 44:3.

The Holy Ghost spake many things in David to confirm the faith of the poor church in every age in the faithfulness, mercy, love, compassion, and truth of God. He often puts before her what He did for His in the past to raise her drooping hope in what He promised to do for her in the future. In this psalm He reminds her of His kindness and faithfulness to the fathers in bringing them out of the bondage of Egypt, and in bringing them into the land of Canaan. David makes an acknowledgment that it was the Most High that helped them to take possession of it, and that they could never have achieved it by their own power or wisdom. This will answer the church's state in every land, but we think most particularly in our own beloved land. We are to treat the text under this impression.

In our meditation upon this portion of the Word of God, and in dependence upon the guidance of the Holy Ghost, we will endeavour to consider four heads therefrom: –

- I. – The land mentioned in our text.
- II. – How the people of God got possession of this land.
- III. – The secret of their success.
- IV. – The duty devolving upon us relative thereto.

I. – We read in the holy Scriptures that God called Abraham when he was an idolater in Ur of the Chaldees, and said to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. So Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him" (Genesis 12:1-4). We read again, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:8,9). Further we read, "And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came. . . . And the Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this *land*" (Genesis 12:5-7). There were four hundred and thirty years between the giving of the above promise to Abraham and the time when his posterity got possession of the land of Canaan. That the text, in the first instance, refers to the land of Canaan cannot be doubted. It is also seen that Abraham knew not whither he was going till the Lord, by the

infallible guidance of His providence, brought him into the land of Canaan, and there pointed out that land to him as the inheritance of his posterity. The question may be asked, Why did the Lord separate this land from all other lands, and give it to the seed of Abraham? Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the reason which will appear palpably to every careful reader of the Word of God is, that God purposed to take Abraham and his posterity into covenant with Himself, and to set up His church among them, and in that land. Concerning this people, and this land the Old Testament is almost entirely taken up, because “the adoption pertained to them, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever and ever. Amen” (Romans 9:4,5). This caused Canaan to be kept separate from other lands till the time appointed for the coming of Christ in the flesh. When the Lord Jesus Christ, by His atoning death on Calvary’s cross broke down that middle wall of partition that separated the Jews and the land of Canaan from the Gentiles and the rest of this earth, His command to the apostles and to all His messengers since was, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” The land of Canaan was to be no longer the only place chosen by the Most High for a repository for His church. The actual beginning of this new development we see recorded in Acts 13:1-4, “Now there were in the church that was in Antioch certain prophets and teachers. . . . As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia.” After passing through several places of Asia Minor they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and while there Paul preached a sermon to the Jews which the Gentiles desired that it should be preached to themselves next Lord’s day. When the Jews saw that the gospel was preached to the Gentiles they contradicted and blasphemed. “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have sent thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:46,47). On Paul’s second journey from these parts of Asia towards the coast of the Mediterranean, “He was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the Word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul by night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them” (Acts 16:6-10). The above will make it quite clear that the Lord directed His gospel to be brought to some lands, while He, in His sovereignty, caused it to pass by other places. We can trace the same unerring guidance as to the planting of the gospel which we observed above directing Abraham to the land of Canaan. The gospel never came to any land except by the guidance and power of the Holy Ghost. How many lands and peoples there are who never had the gospel among them to this day! Is this by any chance? No, dear brethren, this is in accordance with the adorable will of the Most High.

Passing by many clear evidences of the sovereign selection of lands, peoples, and times by the Lord for setting up His own church among them, let us come to the time of the Reformation. At this time the whole world lies before us sunk in idolatry. How did the Lord point out the land or lands which He intended to bless with that Reformation? He

took the same method that He had taken in the case of Abraham. Luther, in the convent of Erfurt in Germany, was called effectually by the Holy Ghost, and after passing through the pangs of the new birth, left Rome with its idolatry, and was the instrument in the hand of God's Spirit to make Germany a land of promise. Woe to Germany that they are going back to the bondage of Rome again! If we turn our attention for a little to Scotland, the same thing meets our eye. John Knox, after passing through terrible pangs of conscience which the fasts, vows, penances, confessions, masses, etc., of the Church of Rome failed to assuage, found by reading the Word of God, peace with God through faith in the Lord Jesus, and felt that the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God can cleanse from all sin. He was from that day separated from idolatry. This was most clearly a work of the Spirit of God, and by it He pointed out that our beloved land was to be favoured from heaven by the light of God's truth. Who can, without closing his eyes to most convincing facts, deny that the Holy Ghost called John Knox as He had called Abraham, Paul, etc., to show him a land which was to be taken possession of for Christ and His church? Thus we conclude that Scotland may be taken as the land in our text, which prior to all other lands, demands our deepest sympathies and real concern that it should continue "Thy land, O Immanuel."

II. – How the people of God got possession of this land.

Under this head of our text we have two negatives, and three positives; two negatives on the people's side, and three positives on the Lord's. Let us briefly consider these.

(1) "They got not the land in possession by their own sword." When the Lord's people came with the ark of the covenant to the river Jordan we are told that it ran over its banks. The Lord opened a passage for them through the flood. This first step was not by their own sword. Again we read, "And it came to pass when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. . . . And the Lord said unto Joshua, See I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns; and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him" (Joshua 5:13-15 and 6:2-5). Here are their marching orders. It was not Joshua who gave them, but "the captain of the Lord's host." It was not their swords that was to gain the victory, but the sword of their captain. This was a very unusual kind of warfare. The people of Jericho, standing on the wall would at last begin to deride such tactics. On the seventh day they went round the city seven times, and with one shout of the people, after hearing a long blast from the trumpets, the walls of the city fell from the foundations. Might it not be truly said that they got not the land in possession by their own sword? But I refrain from giving more instances of how the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and of how He made the worm Jacob a threshing instrument to beat mountains. If we turn our thoughts for a little to our own land at the time of the Reformation, what do we find? A Jordan in full flood running over its banks, of superstition, idolatry, spiritual darkness and ignorance, with every form of unrighteousness. Was it by their own sword, the witnesses of God brought the ark of the covenant through this

flood? No. Was it by their own sword they caused kings, princes, and nobles to fall before them? No. How was it then accomplished? By the mighty supernatural power of God. The preaching of the gospel of the grace of God, which is foolishness in the eyes of the wise men of this world, caused the fortifications of the Church of Rome to fall from their foundations.

(2) “Neither did their own arm save them.” We take “their own arm” to mean two things. First, their physical strength, and second, their mental powers. First, Was it by their physical strength they got possession? No; for is it not written, “For the Lord hath driven out from before you great nations and strong; but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day (Joshua 23:9). While they kept the laws, statutes, and judgments of the Lord they had the promise that “five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight.” The physical strength of the people of God is like that of Samson: the Philistines could not understand where his great strength lay. When they looked upon him, he was not in their eyes but like other ordinary men, but when they had an encounter with him he slew them in heaps. His great strength was in his head. Faith in the omnipotent power of God was the arm by which they were saved, not their own arm. Christ the power of God was their strength. Second, Was it by their mental endowments? No; not that we are to grant to their calumniators that they were weak men, on the contrary, the Reformation period produced men of rare mental capacities, and the most profound of them were in the church. Their enemies were never able to refute their reasonings, while every word they spake entered deeply into the minds of their fellow-men leaving an indelible conviction behind it. The words of Luther in Germany, and of John Knox in Scotland were like arrows that no armour of Satan or the carnal minds of men could quench. Every statement they made brought supernatural light to the reason and conscience of the reader or hearer. Is it so to-day? You may read the writings of these men to-day and feel nothing in them of this power. How can we account for this? Just by the words of our text, “Neither did their own arm save them.” The gospel was not brought to this land by the physical strength or mental powers of men. The Most High made John Knox like a wall of brass against which the enemy could not prevail. When he began to reform all seemed to be against him, but that caused him to lean more upon the strong arm of the Lord. In our day we are too much given to look to the *multitude* of followers; but the Lord looks to *the man* whose heart trembles at His word. He dwells with this man. “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers” (Isaiah 40:22). When did Isaiah get this view of the Most High, and of the nothingness of the inhabitants of the earth? He answers that query thus: – “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. . . . Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king the Lord of hosts. . . . Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people” (Isaiah 6:1-9). This was it, and not their own arm that saved and supported the messengers of the Lord. Was it only in Judah’s land that God was well known, and that His name was great? Was not the same thing true of our beloved land in the past? Most certainly it was. Though we, as a church, may look despicable in the eyes of men, yet believing with all certainty that we are contending for the same truths and principles for which they did contend, let us take courage in the same unchangeable God, not trusting in the least to our own arm, and the day may come when He will give His truth possession in this land again.

(3) “But thy right hand.” While thinking of this statement of our text, it came before my mind that the Lord Jesus Christ is meant by it. He it is that sits at the right hand of God. All power in heaven and on earth is given to Him by the Father. Was it not by preaching Christ crucified to guilty sinners, as the only way to obtain peace with God,

that men in this land threw away all the idolatrous worship of the Church of Rome? Most assuredly it was. "It is confessed that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead at the last day, and the everlasting joys, and eternal sorrows, that shall succeed it, as they are described in the New Testament, are a very awful sanction to the gospel of Christ, and carry in them such principles of hope and terror as should effectually discourage vice and irreligion, and become a powerful attraction to the practice of faith and love, and universal holiness." – *Isaac Watt, The World to Come*. When the law of God deals with the conscience of the sinner he at once believes that he is under the wrath and curse of God. Nothing can save but the blood of Christ. The doctrine of the Atonement is so essential to salvation that sinners must inevitably perish eternally when it is ignored. Till Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, "many," we are told, "of the people perished." The Lord provided this remedy for them, "and as many as looked were healed." So it is under the New Testament dispensation. They had the type, we have the antitype. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14,15). The Reformers declared the whole counsel of God to their hearers; that nothing but faith in Christ could save them from perishing for ever. Indeed, faith in Christ and Him crucified, was the fundamental doctrine of the whole Christian religion to these godly men. They taught the impossibility of salvation in any other way. Good works, as they perceived, and that most correctly, followed faith. All man's merit and natural goodness had no place in their creed. They took a firm hold of the truth that God is just when He justifies the ungodly that believe in Jesus. This was a joyful sound in their ears, and by declaring it, the right hand of God gave them possession of the land, i.e., of its inhabitants. Christ cannot be preached without the two covenants: for take away the awful state of man under the broken covenant of works as he comes into this world, and you have no room for the covenant of grace.

In our day the total depravity of man's nature is denied. They find so much of the image of God in man as that "he has a knowledge of God, and of duty, and is capable of actions which in themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy." Thus they have put a foundation of earth under the feet of perishing men; and therefore the tried, sure, and precious stone laid by God in Zion is set at nought by these builders. This land is going back to anti-Christ with the most alarming speed. What is the only remedy? Nothing can gain back the people but the Word of God; if that fails we are lost. Keep before men their lost condition from the truth of God, and faith in Christ as the only remedy.

There is also a false Christ put before people in our day – a Christ that will go with his professors to the theatre, the ball room, to profanation of the Lord's Day, to cheat their neighbour, to undo the whole work that had been done in this land in the name of Christ, to declare that the Bible is mostly made up of fiction, to turn the House of God into a den of thieves. Brethren, is this the Holy One of God? This is of a truth a false Christ. Therefore the more necessity is laid upon us to hold forth the true Christ. The Lord give us grace, faithfulness, and strength to do so, in love to our fellow sinners and to the truth of God.

(4) "And thine arm." The arm of the Lord here I understand to mean the Holy Ghost. For it is written, "By his spirit he garnished the heavens" (Job 26:13). In Psalm eight He says, "When I consider the heavens the work of thy fingers" (Psalm 8:3). The Lord Jesus, in warning the blasphemous Pharisees of the awfulness of their sin against the Holy Ghost, says, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils" (Luke 11:20), and in Matthew 12:28, "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." In Ezekiel we read, "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of

bones” (Ezekiel 37:1). The whole vision represented the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity. Who were they of the Jews that rose out of these graves to come back to the promised land? “Then rose the chiefs of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:5). In strengthening the hands of Zerubbabel, the Lord says, “This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain” (Zechariah 4:6,7). From all these truths we conclude that it was by the Spirit of God they got possession of the land.

This is most observable in the history of the Church of Christ, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations, that there never has been a quickening of the dead in trespasses and sins but by the power of the Holy Ghost going forth through the truth. On the day of Pentecost it was so. This was the arm of God fulfilling the promise to Christ, “Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psalm 2:8). It was by this awakened arm of the Lord that the Apostles took possession of many peoples and lands; not by their own might, nor power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.

At the Kirk of Shotts five hundred were converted in one day under the preaching of that eminently godly man, John Livingston. This was the arm of the Lord taking possession of this land, and the very men and women who were quickened by the Holy Ghost at the Kirk of Shotts, faced bravely the great mountain of prelacy, and before them it became a plain. Could they accomplish this by any power of their own? I cannot conceive of it. Why is it, when Christ in the Gospel is set before sinners in our day, that so few are awakened to realise their lost condition, and their need of the Saviour? Because we, in this land, have provoked the Spirit of the Lord, and therefore we are left to wander in the vain imaginations of our own hearts. As rational men we are bound to keep “the form of sound words;” but without the Holy Spirit’s power, orthodoxy will not save. This shows how undone we are, and shall be, without the blessed spirit. What then can we do? Let us, with the Church of God in the past, cry, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?” (Isaiah 51:9,10). The presence of the Spirit is promised to the Church of Christ till the end of time. Christ says to us, “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall send you the Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth” (John 4:15-17). The Holy Ghost, instead of Christ’s bodily presence, is promised, and the results of His being sent foretold. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. . . . He shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he shall show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:7-14). Brethren, here is abundance of encouragement; therefore let us not fold our arms and say, there is no hope. Let us declare the whole truth. God, the Holy Spirit, can make it quick in the immortal souls of our fellow sinners. “Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30).

(5) “And the light of thy countenance.” Mankind lost the light of this glorious and benign countenance through sin. Our sins separated between us and our God, and the whole human race fell under His awful wrath and curse. He would have been just in

leaving man in that state, as we can perceive from the terrible doom of the angels that sinned. But instead of this, He reveals His purposes of mercy, as the truth records; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The giving of Christ is here directly attributed to the Father. This proceeded from the free sovereign love of God – Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. But we understand this part of our text as referring directly to the Father. Christ, as the second Adam, took the place of the people whom the Father gave Him. In doing this He had to bear their sins, the wrath and curse due to their sins, and the punishment which sin deserves at the hand of a righteous God. Thus, as surety and substitute of His elect people, God the Father did hide His face from Christ. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1) was the cry of the Son of God when He was numbered with the transgressors on Calvary's cross. Christ died to satisfy justice, and the clearest proof is given that justice has been satisfied, in that He rose again. There were no hidings of the Father's face from Christ after the Resurrection; He was made exceeding glad with the Father's countenance. In Christ, their living head, the light of the Father's countenance was lifted upon them. God looks with the utmost complacency on the seed of Christ, and gives them all His blessing. In the light of His countenance is comprised His eternal love towards them, all His counsels and purposes in order to their being saved, His freely giving of His Son for them, and His giving them in Him all things. Among all the things given them in Christ by the Father was a right to worship Him, according to His revealed will, in the places of His earth which He, by His providence, might allot to them. The land of Canaan was one of these places, and we have endeavoured to prove that Scotland was another. Thus, the fountain of all the favours bestowed on them, was the reconciled countenance of God the Father, through Christ, and by His Spirit and Word, impressed upon their minds. Through this light of His countenance He opened up a way for them through the Red Sea, while He frowned upon their enemies. Was it not the same light of His countenance which gave the Reformers in this land a passage through the midst of the sea of difficulties, which met them on the threshold of their deliverance from the Egyptian bondage of Rome? What was it but the frowning of this countenance that caused the kings, captains, and whole army of their pursuers, to be lost in that confusion? Yes, brethren, it was the reconciled countenance of God the Father, raised upon our godly ancestors in Christ, that gave them possession of this land. Let us, their sons, be aware of losing it.

III. – The secret of their success. "Because thou hadst a favour unto them." This favour is recorded in His word. And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt: to drive out nations from before thee, greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day. Know therefore this day, and consider in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. Thou shalt therefore keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may be well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever" (Deuteronomy 4:37-40). Again – "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the land of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keepeth his commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to

him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face” (Deuteronomy 7:7-10). The sovereign love and faithfulness of God, confirmed by His oath, was the secret of their success. The almighty unseen hand, which supported them, but which confounded His haters and brought their counsels and intrigues to nothing along with themselves, was the secret of all the success of the Reformers.

Take Mordecai and Haman as an illustration. Haman, from malignant hatred, plotted the destruction of Mordecai, and of all the Jews along with him. He got on so far that the day was fixed for the execution, and the gallows set up upon which Mordecai was to be hanged; but instantly the tables were turned. Ahasuerus, the night that Haman had all things ready for Mordecai’s execution, could not sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of the records of the chronicles; and they were read before him. And it was found that Mordecai had told of two of the king’s servants who sought to take the king’s life. Early next morning Haman came to ask of the king that Mordecai should be hanged, but was asked the question, “What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?” Haman takes the man to be himself, and gives his answer accordingly. The king tells him, make haste and do even so to Mordecai, the Jew. It had to be done. The next fall is Haman hanged upon the gallows which he had erected for the other. Mordecai and all the Jews are raised to great honour. None but Atheists can ignore the favour of heaven in the above; and we have instances of the like interventions of the favour of God in Scotland. Take the poor, persecuted Covenanters as another illustration of the same favour. They were sentenced to death, pursued for several years upon the hills and in the caves, rocks, and ravines of this land, by about eighteen thousand soldiers. Hundreds of them perished by the sword, upon the gallows, and at the stake. At last the tables were turned. The tyrant, King Charles, had to abdicate the throne. All these soldiers, who were persecuting the godly Covenanters, turned now their arms against their former abettors in Scotland; and they had to make an appeal to the Covenanters to come to the rescue of the nation, which they did by sending, under arms, eighteen hundred men to defend Edinburgh. The men who were looked upon as traitors and not worthy to live, were made the defenders of the nation, and instantly raised to a most honourable position. Why? Because God had a favour unto them. He may allow His poor people to be exceedingly tried and put to very severe tests for the faith, but He will not withdraw His favour from them. Let those who endeavour to maintain His truth in our day be strong; for there never has been yet a groan uttered on a death-bed by any for what he or she had done in defence of the truth. That cannot be said of those who, in order to keep the favour and the applause of the enemies of God’s truth and of His poor afflicted Church, connived at, or assisted wicked men to ruin them both. Any one who desires to follow Christ must count the cost. The cross is bitter for flesh and blood, but it is the only way to the crown. The cross and the favour of God are inseparable. Therefore we ought to count His favour none the worse for the cross.

There are two things in this favour which causes the living soul to thirst after it.

(1) “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life” (Psalm 30:5). Everlasting life is meant. This life is in the favour of God. This life is given to His people in Christ Jesus our Lord. When He desired life, as the Mediator, of God the Father, He gave Him life. He needed no life for Himself, for He was the fountain of life; but He needed life for the people whom He came to save, for they were dead in trespasses and sins. Christ is the life and light of men, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). This life which God the Father gave to the Son for men is bestowed on them by the Holy Ghost. Christ said to the Jews, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63).

(2) “Because thy loving kindness is better than life” (Psalm 63:3). Does the psalmist mean that the favour or loving-kindness of God is better than eternal life? We don’t think he means this; for His favour is life eternal. He is speaking of the natural life, and that if the two things were offered him, to part with the favour of God or with his natural life, he would choose the latter. What did the martyrs mean when they preferred to die rather than renounce their faith, or recant their profession of the gospel of Christ? Was it because they were fanatics and did not realise the value of their own natural life, and their responsibility to preserve that life by all lawful means? Their dying testimonies abundantly prove that they valued their own natural life and that of their fellow-sinners very highly; but when they could keep it only by losing the favour of God, they made choice of God’s favour and temporal death. It is related of that eminently godly minister of Christ, Robert Bruce of Edinburgh, that because he would not, from the pulpit, give an intimation exculpating King James VI. of a charge of murder, he was banished for five years. The reason he gave for not giving the intimation was, that he could not speak a word in the pulpit in the name of Christ, but what he was certain to be truth. At the end of five years he was allowed to return to his flock, but no sooner did he come back than the king demanded of him to give the intimation. He refused, though he confessed his mind had undergone some change in favour of the king’s innocence. One of the chief men at court came to plead with him to give the intimation producing many reasons why he should do it. At last Robert Bruce said to him, “I was for seven years studying for the law and the Most High pressing me to study for the church. At last I had to yield. Before I would pass through such troubles of conscience as I then passed through I would, were it possible, pass through a lake of fire and brimstone knee deep, for two miles. There is peace between my God and my conscience; therefore do what you will with my body, but I beseech you don’t interfere with that peace.” As I am quoting from memory I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the very words, but I do give the full sense. These were men who knew the value of God’s favour, and who would not for flattery, threats, or worldly advantage, or even life lose the same; these were the men who overcame all obstacles and made Scotland free. Their motto was, “If God be for us, who can be against us” (Romans 8:31). Christ says to such, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Again, “Fear not little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

IV. – What is our duty in relation to these things. This psalm begins with the words, “We with our ears have heard O God, our fathers have told us, what works thou didst in their days, in the times of old.” The above brings our duty before us. It was the duty of the fathers to teach their children, and to acquaint them with the doings of the Lord. This is most certainly our duty. It is not our duty to teach the rising generation new things founded upon the vain imaginations of our minds or that of others, but the laws, statutes, and judgments of God as we find them recorded in the Bible. It alone must be the light of our feet, and the lamp of our path as to what ought or ought not to be taught. “For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation” (Psalm 78:5-8). Let us hold fast the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of our church, and let us do our utmost to inculcate these grand old doctrines of the truth of God upon young and old. Let not even a pin of the tabernacle be lost. The Lord be praised for His goodness to us for that we have in our hands the creed and principles of His church, and for that holding the same intact, as we have done hitherto,

outwardly at least, we have a clean conscience, and need not be ashamed before the world for saying one thing in their defence and doing another.

(1) The first object we should have in view is the glory of God. This glory reveals Him a God of justice, holiness, and truth, also a God of mercy, love, compassion, faithfulness, and long-suffering. Our duty is to declare His whole counsel, keeping nothing back for the frowns or applause of men. We must do our utmost to lift up Christ and Him crucified before our fellow sinners. Let us declare that God has a glory from His grace through Christ in saving perishing sinners from eternal death, which exceeds the glory of His justice in the punishment of the ungodly. That the offer of Christ in the gospel is freely set before each sinner to whom the word of God comes; that if he or she accepts that offer by faith and repentance he or she is immediately saved; but that to refuse it is to be lost for ever. To place the conditions of peace before rebels is the duty of an ambassador, to continue in rebellion or to accept of the terms is in the hands of others.

(2) In declaring the truth we must have a vigilant eye upon our own corruption. To be the messenger of a holy, zealous God, and upon such an awful errand as the everlasting welfare or misery of men, demands great reverence and godly fear in the person sent. It needs a single eye to the glory of God, and the eternal well-being of sinners. All other motives will ultimately end in shipwreck of the faith. Therefore we ought to stand aloof from the vanities of the godless world, admonish them to seriousness and godliness, and do our very utmost to prove to them from the truth that the end of these things is death eternal. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

(3) In speaking the word of God to men, we should aim at their conversion; seek that they should set their hope in God, and suffer not His mighty works to fall out of their minds. Certainly it is the Holy Ghost that reproveth of sin, righteousness, and judgment, but He uses means. We should aim at the reason and the conscience, making free use of both law and gospel, while taking good care not to confound them. The spiritual state of this generation is very deplorable. An awful flood of irreligion from hell covers the land to the tops of the highest mountains, and unless the Spirit of the Lord shall raise up a standard against it, the efforts of creatures will avail nothing. That does not mean that God's witnesses are to hold their peace and fold their arms. No, they must tell the wicked that it shall be ill with him if he continues in his wickedness, and the righteous that it shall be well with him.

(4) The presence of the Holy Ghost is promised; and His power is infinite. When the prophet Ezekiel was brought in a vision to the valley of bones, dry and whitened though they were, and when the Lord asked him, "Can these bones live?" his answer was, "Thou, O Lord, knowest." The power of the Spirit accompanying the word of God caused a resurrection among them. He is the same still. Our duty is to cry for the breath to come from the four winds and breathe on the slain that they may live. Though our sins as a people reach up to heaven, the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is above the heavens. It is just for Him for Christ's sake to save the guiltiest. The merit is all in Christ, and He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by Him. O that we had the voice of a thousand trumpets in one, to set Christ on high and to declare His mercy to perishing men! Nothing will save us if the blessed Gospel fails. It is the Holy Ghost alone that can make it effectual. Let us therefore look to the infinite merit of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin and uncleanness, and to the infinite love and power of the Spirit to apply it to ourselves and others. These things are impossible with men, but with God all things are possible.

Lastly, whatever the purposes of the Most High may be concerning us, we desire to keep His truth as the godly of the past brought it to our hands by the good hand of their God which was upon them. What else can we do? Can we, with our eyes so far open, associate

with the enemies of God's truth and of His cause in this land? May the Lord keep us from doing this! We have very great sympathy with some of our people who are alone, in some cases one only in a family, in a few cases, one only in a township. The tempter will whisper, or may be speak out through the mouth of one of his agents, Are you better than others? Are such not as godly as any of you? Tell him or her that the question is not about godliness, but about the defence of God's truth; and that every reasonable creature ought to buy it and not to sell it. Abraham was alone, but he held and professed the truth in his day. If John Knox were to say, because other people are not standing for the truth, what will be the use of my weak efforts? No, he never gave room to the thought. Let us not be ashamed of Christ, nor of His word, in this sinful and adulterous generation. Christ is more than a match for millions of men and devils, and though there were but one in Scotland who would hold fast the word of His mouth, He could bring all that one's enemies to bow at his footstool. We are not at all fighting under a weak captain, neither is the cause unrighteous, and the victory will most certainly be on Christ's side.

[November 1899]