

Notes of a Sermon

By the REV. JOHN MACLEOD, M.A., Ullapool.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” – Matthew 5:6.

Christ is a king. He has a kingdom; He is not a king without a kingdom; nor is it a kingdom without a king. His kingdom has its own laws, and the subjects of this kingdom have a certain character. The character of His subjects the Lord brings before us in these verses. He tells us who are blessed; He tells us who are happy, and as His kingdom is not of this world, the class that by Him are called happy or blessed is not that class which this world would pronounce happy. There is an inward antagonism between the spirit of this world and the spirit that animates Christ’s true and loyal subjects. They partake of the spirit of their Lord and Master, and measure things by the gauge and standard of His Word. His Word reveals His mind, and they are of one mind with Him. The world has its own standard. It strives as far as in it lies to throw off the yoke of dependence upon God, and measuring things by its standard, it does not consider those blessed whom the Lord pronounces blessed, while it pronounces blessed those that He pronounces accursed.

As in these verses the Lord describes the character of those who are blessed who belong to His kingdom – in these chapters He announces the spiritual character of the laws of His kingdom. He tells us that it takes to do with the inward thoughts and hidden motions of the heart. He tells us that fruitbearing is a necessary result of being under the influence of His law, and that it is not sufficient for us to be mere hearers of His Word without being doers of it. His law is righteous and His subjects are righteous, and being righteous they love righteousness. This is one of their distinguishing features, and under this description He brings them before us in these words – “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

In considering these words, let us look at: –

- I. – The character of those referred to.
- II. – What is said about them.
- III. – Why in particular this is said.

I. Those, about whom the Lord here speaks, are said to hunger and to thirst after righteousness. Now this at once tells us with regard to them that they are alive to righteousness and alive to God. Natural hunger and natural thirst are never present, where natural life is absent, and spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst are equally inseparable from and dependent on spiritual life. The dead never eat, and the dead never drink, but this is true equally of the spiritually dead. Spiritual food they never eat, and spiritual food they never drink. Did they but hunger and thirst after righteousness, they should give infallible evidence of being alive to God. And equally so, those that are alive to God, invariably bear this character, and have this true of them each one, that they hunger and thirst after righteousness. The question, however, may be put, “Can hunger for righteousness be taken as an infallible sign of spiritual life as distinct from spiritual death?” And this calls us to consider for a moment or two what is life spiritual and what is death spiritual.

It is not true of all mankind that they hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is not one of their natural characteristics. By nature, man is dead in trespasses and in sins, is an alien from the life of God through ignorance and blindness of heart, walks after the course of this world, and does the will of the flesh and of the mind. By nature, he is in the flesh, and the mind of the flesh, which is enmity against God, rules within him. This mind is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be. And seeing this is its nature, it is impossible that it should

submit to the demands of God's unbendingly holy law. But the law presses its demands upon us. We are God's creatures, formed by Himself, and formed for Himself. He claims that we should love Him, and He is all-worthy of the love that He claims. His claim is righteous, and His demand is righteous. He demands that we in all our thoughts, words, deeds, should conform to the standard of His spiritual law, and though we have broken it and cannot conform to it, yet instead of its demands being lowered they are rather increased. God is as worthy as He ever was of being loved, and so perfect obedience ceases not to be our duty towards Him. But He deserves also at our hands, that we should give satisfaction to the law that we have broken, that we should satisfy the justice we have offended. This is the law's claim, and it is a righteous claim. It claims righteousness at our hands, and such righteousness as it deserves at the hands of sinners. The mind, which cannot be subject to the law of God, cannot submit to its claim of righteousness, and thus of man by nature, small and great, rich and poor, it is true that they are destitute of this hunger and thirst after righteousness about which our text speaks.

If all men by nature are destitute of the love and passion for righteousness, while there are those who do love righteousness, we may enquire, how does it come about that there are such. Now the Word of God testifies to us with regard to the first man Adam, and with regard to the second Adam too. It tells us who and what we are, and it tells us who and what Christ is. It tells us our ruin, our guilt, our condemnation; but it also tells us of the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world, of the Lord from heaven the Saviour. Through one came condemnation; through one too comes salvation. Through one came death; through the other comes life. By nature we are the children of the first man and are in the flesh. Because of this we love not righteousness; we are dead in sins. But as the first Adam has his natural seed, the second Adam has His spiritual seed, and as we have borne the image of the earthy through natural generation, the church of God bears the image of the heavenly through spiritual regeneration.

Now the likeness of Christ is brought before us in such words as these (Psalm 45; Hebrews 1) – "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." He was made of a woman made under the law, and fulfilled as antitype the figures of the ceremonial law. As of old the tables with the ten commandments were in the ark of the testimony, so in Christ the Mediator's heart was the law of God: "That most holy law of thine I have within my heart," was His prophetic language through the Psalmist, and what was true of Him as the second man, the Lord from heaven, is true of His spiritual progeny. For Christ the king of Israel has not given the promise without having power to make it good. "I will give you an heart of flesh." As He has the power to make it good He has the will too, and time after time in each age and generation He calls from death to life, from darkness to light, and those whom He thus calls are born of the Word of God. They are born of the Spirit of God, and the new covenant is made with them in the circumcision of their heart, that causes them to love the Lord and to delight in Christ Jesus. The law of God is written on their heart in regeneration, and thus with a new heart and a renewed nature, they love the law of God after the inward man. Thus it comes about that these are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who have respect to the law of God. His likeness is, that he loved righteousness, and their spiritual resemblance to Him, whose they are and of whom they are, secures that they too love righteousness. They love it, because they have the law written on their heart, and loving it they hunger and thirst for it. Spiritual death and spiritual life are wide as the poles asunder. Spiritual death is hatred to God; spiritual life is the love of God. And all who love God submit to His law and its claims; so doing, they hunger and thirst for righteousness. Their hunger and thirst tell of their life to God, of their love of God, and correspond to the demands of His law as they are known to them.

Now, the law of God has a twofold claim. It may be viewed either as a covenant or as a rule of life. As a covenant of life and death it assigns death as the reward of unrighteousness, and gives life on the ground of righteousness. Its demand for a perfect righteousness was met by the work of Christ the surety and substitute, and all who love righteousness intelligently seek with Paul to be found in Him, not having their own righteousness but His. They love the righteousness of the law's demands, and loving it they count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him who is end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. But the law, viewed as a rule of life, still continues to claim personal loving obedience at the hands of those who have found its claims as a covenant met in the surety righteousness of Immanuel. In that righteousness they have acceptance, have a title to eternal life made over to them, and have the privilege of the indwelling of God's Spirit to sanctify them. Their own obedience never comes between them as sinners, and Christ as their Saviour. It is impossible either to increase or to lessen their righteousness in the robe of Christ's obedience. But though new creatures, they have not ceased to be God's creatures. Their new creation has not taken away God's original title to their love and homage. It has rather added to His claims on them. They are more obliged now to Him than ever to live holily in this world. They are called to be holy, and the rule of their obedience is the law of God. They obey it now, not to win life, but to please God, and in pleasing Him, they have their own highest pleasure. They walk in new obedience as in the royal law of liberty. This is true freedom, that they should be animated by the principle of love to serve the Lord as their God.

Their spiritual life is not haphazard; its aspirations are not aimless; they are guided by the promptings of an enlightened understanding; and hunger and thirst after righteousness does not mean hunger and thirst after anything that may go under this name among men. The righteousness that is hungered for by the children of God is quite distinct from all merely worldly righteousness and civil obedience. Whatever is truly righteous they desire, but their standard is the law of God and its claims, alike as a covenant and as a rule of life. Righteousness, meeting these claims as a covenant, they find in Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, and inward righteousness they get by the indwelling of His Spirit. In His strength, and to His glory, they obey. They do His will, and their desire is to do it. They hunger and thirst after righteousness.

II. What is said about those that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Christ calls them happy or blessed, and so they are. Would you not yourself call them blessed? They are the friends of God and so love righteousness. They are not satisfied with what they have attained, but press forward. They are happy indeed, for they are partakers of the promised blessing of the Holy Spirit. By Him are they sealed unto the day of the redemption; and this sealing testifies to their being delivered from the curse. They could not be blessed indeed, as long as the curse held them in its grips. It has a desolating, wasting power over every one that lies under it, and because of this power, spiritual death reigns, where it reigns. Where spiritual death reigns, there are no living hungerings and thirstings after righteousness. Those who have such hungerings are not under the curse, the very fact of their so hungering testifies to the truth that they are freed from its power. There is no middle position, however, between the curse and the blessing, and in this sense it is true of one and all of those, that thus hunger and thirst, that they are blessed. Their standing is in the righteousness of their surety, and they are blessed in Him. But wherever there is this standing of blessedness, there is also the imparted blessing. There is the sealing by the Holy Spirit. This is accompanied with all the blessings of redemption, and those who are in the enjoyment of these are blessed indeed. The hunger and thirst for righteousness testify to the Spirit's sealing, and presence, and power, and in so doing testify to the blessedness of those who have them. For where there is one of the saving blessings of the covenant of redemption, there is the whole golden circle, and where this golden circle is, there is a crown of glory in time, that will but come to light in its

proper beauty, when the sunlight of eternity shall welcome within the veil the redeemed of the Lord, now come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. The crown is theirs already. It will then be seen without doubt to be theirs, and its beauty and glory will be made manifest. The beauty and the glory are theirs already, but while they are here they live as strangers and pilgrims, and the world knows them not. It knew Him not, and it knows them not.

Happy are they that have this hunger and this thirst. Hunger and thirst are proof of life, and usually of health too; but they are only relative blessings. The rich who have everything in abundance may lack hunger and thirst, and thus the choicest foods and drinks may be tasteless to them. Take away health and appetite, and food becomes a drug and an annoyance. We live here from to-day to to-morrow, from day to day. What we have to-day will not do to-morrow; what we had yesterday did for yesterday, but will not do for to-day. Our system needs to be upheld, and by hunger on the one side and food on the other, the wonderful providence of God secures that we are upheld. Hunger is the index of our need of sustenance. It gives us to know that we need food. Food we need; yet were there no such thing as hunger, we should not know our need of food. Hunger thus taken in connection with food is a merciful provision of our Creator for securing our maintenance in life and strength. But though a merciful provision, it may become a torture. Let hunger be with us, and nothing to satisfy it, then that which serves in conjunction with food, a good and merciful purpose, becomes a pain and a torment to us. Food without hunger is tasteless; hunger without food is pain. But take the two together, and like the two sides of an arch meeting in the keystone, they carry out the end of sustaining our being in this life. The rich man whose appetite is gone would say at once, "Blessed are they that hunger." He has plenty to meet the demands of hunger, when it comes, but the poor man, who is destitute of his daily bread, would not understand the blessedness of hungering and thirsting. Tortured with pangs of hunger, and wanting the wherewithal to allay them, he would rather not hunger than be pained as he is, but give him what will meet his hunger, and then he will appreciate the end that hunger serves in the economy of the human frame. So it is in connection with this hungering and thirsting. If it were possible that they could be in existence, and nothing provided to meet them, the very lack of supply would be torture. But there is no such thing as hungering and thirsting for righteousness without the provision of righteousness to meet them, for it is only as the reward of Immanuel's toil in bringing in everlasting righteousness, that there are among the sons of men any who hunger and thirst for that righteousness that God's law requires for its claims, and that God's law demands at their hands. As this is so, there is no hunger and thirst for righteousness without provision made to meet them. And this leads us to consider: –

III. The special reason why those that thirst and hunger thus, are pronounced happy or blessed. This special reason is that they shall be satisfied. Were this not provided, there would be dissatisfaction, and where there is dissatisfaction there is unhappiness. But the Lord has never given being to such hunger and thirst in order to mock them. He has respect to the work of His hands. They are the result and outflow of what He has already provided. He has made the provision, not that it might not be partaken of, but that it might; and for this end He declares its fulness and freeness in the word of the truth of the gospel. "Yea come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." There is a harmony in the works and ways of God. He works inwardly, and He works outwardly, and the task that His inward work gives fits in with the provision that He has prepared from without. There is the outward provision of righteousness in Christ. There is the inward working of hunger and thirst for righteousness; and this can be met only by what has been already provided in Christ. And there is, as a junction between the two, the word of the gospel, in which the Christ that is revealed, is offered; and on the ground of this offer, the faith of His people is able to lay hold of Him.

Their hunger and thirsting after righteousness are thus met and satisfied in the exercise of faith, laying hold of a crucified Redeemer.

The words of our text, however, speak not only of a provision made, but of the certainty of its application. They *shall* be satisfied. Not only is there mention made of this certainty; there is also underlying it the provision that the gospel reveals to satisfy the cravings of a renewed heart. The figure used is hungering and thirsting; not hungering alone, and not thirsting alone, but hungering and thirsting both; and the provision that God has made corresponds to that too. "My flesh," says Christ, "is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." He mentions His flesh and His blood. Not His humanity unbroken, but His flesh and blood apart from one another. When were they sundered? Surely when He poured His soul out to death. He bore the sins of many; He bore them in His own body on the tree; up to it and on it He bore them; and His bearing of them resulted in this, that the sword of divine wrath against sin reached to the dividing asunder of body and spirit. The veil was rent from the top to the bottom. Soul and body parted company, and through the rent veil of His holy humanity, the Divine Saviour entered into the holiest, not without blood. Body and soul parted company, but the alliance between His body and soul, each with His glorious person, secured that, by parting company from one another, death was spoiled of its sting. He brought in everlasting righteousness, while neither soul nor body parted company with His person. The human soul that left His body when He gave up the ghost, was His soul; and the body that His soul left was His body; but body and soul were indeed parted, for He died indeed. Dying He brought in everlasting righteousness, met all the claims of the law of death and life for His people, and thus is the end of the law for righteousness. His blood sealed His work. His obedience included death, for it was obedience to a broken law. His life and His death alike feed His people. In Christ living for them and dying for them, they find the righteousness that satisfies their conscience. It claims that they should render to God's law such righteousness as it demands. The law shows in the resurrection of Christ on behalf of those for whom He died, that it is quite satisfied with Him and His work, and what satisfies it satisfies them. Faith, appropriating this Christ, living and dying, and rising again as surety, substitute, head, and king, gives blessed satisfaction to the cravings of an enlightened conscience. It gives peace, and peace too on an immovable basis, for it is on no other basis than on that laid down when the Redeemer cried "it is finished."

But is there nothing in the satisfaction promised, but what the believer attains to in the exercise of faith here below? Far from it. Fuller satisfaction than ever faith can give is involved in the promise here given. But, before we proceed to consider this further, we may briefly notice the satisfaction promised as embracing provision, not alone for meeting the covenant claims of the law of God, but the claims that that law has inalienably in all God's reasonable creatures. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are zealous for good works. Their desire is to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. This is their desire, and while they live on this earth, however much the testimony of a good conscience may be theirs, that in all godly sincerity they spend their days in their Master's service, yet their eager, fervent desire to serve Him and to glorify Him more than keeps pace with any of their attainments in grace. They do not attain to what they would be, nor do they attain to what they should be, and this leaves with them a holy dissatisfaction with themselves – such a dissatisfaction as does not leave them in despair of ever attaining, but keeps them pressing forward. Cast down they are; not in despair. Such hope is theirs as mans them for continued endeavours and further efforts. Satisfaction is promised, however, and it is no such imperfect thing as what they attain to in the testimony of a good conscience. For the dissatisfaction with themselves that follows them through this life ever keeps them from being satisfied with their faithfulness or their attainments, and if what a good conscience testifies to is not sufficient to satisfy them, they are shut up for satisfaction here only to hope and hope alone. Drawing the

breath of hope through the tender mercies of their Lord, they have foretastes of satisfaction for their cravings after holiness. They cleanse themselves in purpose and design from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. They purify themselves, as He, in whom their hope is, is pure. But this satisfaction that they taste in hope, is but an anticipation of a fuller satisfaction that awaits them yet. The full satisfaction of the craving of their renewed nature is promised to them, and He, who has given them their cravings and has accompanied them with this promise, will see to it that the full satisfaction promised shall be made good to the heirs of the promise.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness embrace desire for imputed and desire for imparted righteousness. The faith that unites the believer to Christ gives him a standing before God in his surety's obedience, and perfect righteousness is his already. If faith were perfect, the enjoyment of a good conscience before God, on the ground of what Christ did, would be a source of unfailling satisfaction to believing sinners. But faith is imperfect. As God's gift, and in its nature, it is perfect – coming down from the Father of light; but in its measure it is ever imperfect here. It has its ebbs and flows, and so the measure of satisfaction enjoyed here is fluctuating. The title to the enjoyment of a consciousness of acceptance is perfect, but the light in which it is beheld is variable, and the hand by which it is held is sometimes limp and numb; so that, however rich the consolations of Christ's gospel are here, they give not the full satisfaction promised. They have no weakness, there is no shortcoming on their part, but the believer comes short. The clay vessel cannot hold the fulness of joy, and so the fulness of satisfaction has to be reserved for that life where there is no trace of imperfection, where sin is no more, and we know even as we are known.

The promise then here given points beyond the realm of time and sense. It partakes of the noble, spiritual nature of the divine affections, with which it is here indissolubly associated. There is a full satisfaction awaiting the children of God. They are His children, and He has richly provided for their needs. These needs He knows, and according to His perfect knowledge of their needs is the perfection of the satisfaction that He has provided for them. Here they see as in a glass darkly; there they shall see face to face. Here they see but in part, and know but in part; here they shall see and know fully. Their knowledge will know no lacking; their seeing shall no longer be dimmed. He has promised satisfaction, and He will give it too. When they awake they shall be satisfied with His likeness. They shall be satisfied with Him, and with His glorious image restored to themselves through grace. And while satisfied with themselves in His likeness with a holy satisfaction, they shall likewise be fully satisfied with the ground on which their glory and their beauty rests. They forget not what they were, and what they deserved to be, but they remember this only to see in its light the wonder of the love of God in the Cross of Christ. The blood of the Cross will be the theme of their praise. The love of God in His grace reigns through righteousness with eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord. His love has brought them where they now are, and they sound forth its praise. It has brought them *through* righteousness, and their whole nature approves of the righteousness; it has brought them *to* righteousness, and they praise Him for it. For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. Glory is His through the church; and glory is theirs in Him. For such is the blessed liberality of the love of God, that, when it is satisfied in their complete deliverance from sin, wrath, and death, they are completely satisfied too. It is glorified in them. They are glorified in it. When they are glorified, He is glorified who glorifies them, and thus what comes to them reverts to Him in ceaseless praise.

Happy indeed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be satisfied. Think you not that righteousness is as worthy of being loved, hungered, thirsted for by you, as by them. Rest in nothing less than this, "That I may be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness but . . . the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."

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An Exposition.

By the late REV, JOHN DUNCAN, LL.D., Edinburgh.

[Dr. Duncan appears to have given within the years 1864-65, a course of lectures on the first Epistle of Peter. They were delivered in the Clare Hall, Grange, Edinburgh. Of only three of these lectures have we been privileged to get possession. The first is an exposition of 1 Peter i. 13-16, the second of verses 17-21 of the same chapter. Then occurs a gap, and our final lecture is an exposition of 1 Peter ii. 1-3. One would like to have a complete set, but we

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” – 1 Peter 1:13-16.

The Apostle here proceeds to the practical exhortation founded on the doctrine which he had in the previous verses taught. For all Christian doctrine is in its tendency of a practical nature, even when it is most abstruse, and most mysterious, as there is no right practice unless when founded on faith – because founded on truth, the truth of God which He has made known; so there is no true knowledge of, and faith in that truth, and in Him who has revealed it, that does not lead to corresponding practice. So the Apostle connects what he had said before with what he is now saying by the particle, “Wherefore.” “Seeing these things are as I have said, let your conduct be such as I am about to inculcate.” “*Wherefore*” – that is to say, “Since things are as I have said.” And what had he said? I shall not take long in recapitulation; but it is necessary so far, in order to find the meaning of this little collocative word, “Wherefore,” to see how the one is based on the other.

He had spoken before of the great grace which God had manifested to these scattered strangers – in having begotten them again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead – in their being kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. Now, how much matter is comprehended in these few words! to how many objects are our thoughts in the recapitulation of these several particulars directed! The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead – the begetting of them by the resurrection of Jesus Christ unto a lively hope – God raising Christ, and raising them by the resurrection of Christ unto a lively hope – and to an inheritance, an inheritance most excellent – “incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away” – and so sure, “reserved in heaven for you” – so sure, “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” Now, round this first scene gathers first their joy in Him, as is most meet – “Wherein ye greatly rejoice – Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though *as yet* ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

The scene here connected with the first is – the believing, loving, rejoicing strangers. Then there is the third scene of their present state connected with all the past – “of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you. Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Now, as the first scene connects God in His blessings with the scattered strangers, and the second the strangers, in their faith and love and joy, with the risen Christ and with God – so this third scene connects them in their faith and joy of salvation, with all the prophets that went before; with the whole Old Testament Church of God.

Nor does the scene stop there – “which things the *angels* desire to look into” – with wonder and admiration. God raising Christ, and begetting them unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ – they believing, hoping, rejoicing – the prophets that went before having all prophesied about this time, and looked forward to it, and the angels looking down. The past and the present and the future – all earth and heaven – God and men and angels.

What a noble scene! a short panoramic glance of the great salvation!

“Wherefore” – since such is the state of things; since there is such grace in God – such joy bestowed on you – such a prophetic company with longing eye looking forward to this, awaiting till it come, and the angels fixing their interest and their gaze on this – “Gird up the

loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” The words which connect the exhortation with the doctrine are, “the revelation of Jesus Christ,” which he had spoken of in verse 5 as, “the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time;” as he had also again hinted at in verse 8, “Jesus Christ, whom though *as yet* ye see him not.” The present state of the lively hope which they were begotten unto – “an inheritance incorruptible,” to be revealed at the appearing of Jesus Christ; whom they had not yet seen, but whom they would see. Jesus Christ, by whose resurrection God has begotten you again unto a lively hope – whom having not seen, ye do love – in whom though as yet ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice – he says, He is about to appear; let your conduct and character be such as becomes that appearing, and your hope of that appearing.

“At the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ shall be revealed – Him, whom having not seen, the strangers loved and rejoiced in, He shall be revealed. He went up in a cloud, a cloud received Him out of His disciple’s sight – He entered into the holiest of all – He is clothed with glory and honour, and is set over all the works of God’s hands. He reigns in a glory which we cannot in our present state form an adequate conception of – we know not what we shall be, because we see Him not as He is.

He shall be revealed, revealed to all – revealed to those who knew Him not – and revealed to those who knew Him truly, but not perfectly. “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe,” – the apostle adding for the encouragement of those to whom he was writing – “(because our testimony among you was believed), on that day.” He comes, He shall shine forth, our eyes shall see the King in His beauty. “Ye are dead,” says the apostle, speaking also to believers – “and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Jesus Christ shall appear – grace shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And there is, as I have sought in part to show, a duty to be done in relation to this – “Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Such is the way we are called on to meet our Lord. And yet what is bestowed, though called the recompence of the reward, is the reward of grace – it is *grace* that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. For salvation is altogether of grace: not only in its commencement – the carrying forward and the entrance into the state of glory is all of grace – glory being the consummation of grace – the top stone being brought out, as well as the foundation laid, with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it.” “They which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” That grace, the apostle says, is to be brought unto you. The Greek word is more expressive, being in the present tense – “the grace which is being borne unto, being carried forward unto you.” We are called to be in a certain attitude of soul with regard to this grace; the grace is being borne forward unto us – we are called to gird up the loins of our mind and look for it – “Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.”

This grace then is represented as borne on toward us – “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness,” – the salvation is a salvation which is being rapidly borne on – it is rushing mightily onward to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As it were, this scheme of things is being hastened on – as it is said of the tribulations of the last days – “Except these days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake these days shall be shortened.”

Well, the object being put fully in our sight the grace that is to be brought unto us – if we are like these strangers, if, having not seen Christ, we love Him and rejoice in Him, this grace being placed full in view, the exhortation is given.

The duties which are commanded are three –

1. “Gird up the loins of your mind.” The ancients wore long flowing robes, which were apt to impede them in diligent action, and therefore they bound them round with a girdle. Binding with a girdle therefore was the sign of setting to determined action. “Gird up” – not your bodies, but “the loins of your mind.” These objects are fitted for the rational mind of man – the intellect of man. For Christianity, though founded on mysteries that transcend the comprehension of our intellect, presenting much in God’s way that to us is a great deep, is not irrational to thinking human reason; and presents to human thought, objects the most sublime, the most glorious, the most awful, bearing on all the deathless interests of human being. The mind therefore should not be scattered, nor left in torpidity and sloth; but directed to this glorious object of Christian hope, the revelation of Jesus Christ – the mind directed to it should have its loins girt. The grace is hurrying on to us – let us be preparing for it, let us meet the coming grace – “gird up the loins of your mind.” This expresses therefore the determined setting in of the mind, of the thoughts – of the whole soul, as directed by the understanding divinely enlightened by the spirit and word of God – the setting in of the mind for action – the loins girt.

2. “Be sober.” While setting to action, the avoidance of all the things that could distract or impede in the action – “being sober.” Which refers not to one disturbance or distraction only – but to all disturbances and occupations which could disturb the mind, and turn it away from one great object. For as the diligence of a girt mind is necessary in commencing, so the vigilance of a sober mind in prosecuting. For as the mind’s activity is required, and the loins must be girt; so there are many disturbances which would call away the mind. And this sobriety therefore has regard to all that would flurry and distract the mind – taking it away to other objects, and engaging the mind in an excessive degree; so that the mind engaged by these objects is not a sober mind – fixed in sobriety, on the glorious appearing, and on what is to be done in the meantime. Now that the loins are girt, be sober. You have to watch for the Master who is to return, being ready with girt loins; and are to be in such a state as that the Master, when He comes, shall find all in His house in proper trim; not saying, “My Lord delayeth his coming” – and beginning to eat and to drink and be drunken.

3. “Hope to the end (hope perfectly) for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Diligence, and sobriety – and the support of all – hope; if you would be kept sober, hope. Hope, hope, hope on. Fix your hope on the grace that is to be brought – that hope fix your soul on it, “as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil whither the forerunner is for us entered.” For the hope is that which sustains.

It is important to trace the connection between the three cardinal graces – faith, hope, and love. Gospel hope, I take it, may be considered in a two-fold point of view – First, that gospel hope which, acting along with legal fear, makes a sinner flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him. Such is the hope of the manslayer, with the city of refuge in his eye and the pursuer of blood’s sword behind him; he is not hopeless, or he would not flee.

And this gospel hope is what the spirit of God employs, along with legal fear, in the conversion of a sinner – driving him by the law, and alluring him by the Cross of Christ. This is hope *in view*.

But the apostle speaks of laying hold on the hope – on the hope that is in possession – the hope of the believer who has fled for refuge. This hope is founded on God’s sure promise and oath; as the other gospel hope is founded on the free invitation: the warrant of the first gospel hope having for its foundation the free invitations – the other hope having for its foundation

the sure promise of God to the believer. "Saying, surely blessing, I will bless thee. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." "Two immutable things" – even the word and oath of God.

Now, this hope has respect to the faithful testimony which has been received by faith – the faith which has been received. It is therefore not an uncertain and problematical hope; it is the hope which one has who has the pledged word of Him who cannot lie – and He who cannot lie has made him to hope on that word. It is not an uncertainty, but is called a hope because of the futurity of its object. "We are saved by hope; but that which is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Behold then these two graces, the connection of these two – the third I shall not enter on. "Your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope."

Well in what character are this diligence, sobriety, and hope to be exercised? In the relation of children. As obedient children, verse 14 – as children of obedience.

As children – for God has begotten us again by the resurrection of Christ. Jesus Christ being the eternal, only-begotten Son of the Father; not only God but that peculiar second person in the Godhead, the only-begotten Son of God; the relation of believers to Him being that of union to Him – ("I in them." "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"); through relation to the Son of God, not only are we justified, brought near to the throne, and to Him that sits upon it; but, as He who sits upon it is the Son of God, we are adopted in consequence of our union to Him who is the only-begotten Son of God. And so we find in Scripture various passages which seem to connect the adoption, not simply with the divinity of Christ, but with the filial relation of Christ, His sonship. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law; to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." God sent Him forth; and we who are united to the only-begotten Son of God, through union to Him, are His adopted children – which adoption, as you have it in your Shorter Catechism, "is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God." Therefore, by regeneration, by union to Christ, and by the adoption of the Father, ye are children; then be diligent, sober, hopeful – as children be obedient, children of obedience. Children of obedience as contra-distinguished from children of disobedience, as in the passage already quoted – "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth for which thing's sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;" and as in Ephesians – "The children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Children of disobedience – children of wrath.

But now, children of obedience – "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?"

"Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." Fashioning, or forming, scheming yourselves. The word relates to the formation of character; and every man is forming himself, is fashioning himself – and in fashioning himself, it is according to something which he sets before him. Formerly, it was the lusts in your ignorance – you fell in with them, you fashioned yourselves according to them, you formed your character more and more upon them. So now form your character. It is not here, you observe, the irregenerate to whom he is speaking – God has begotten these to a lively hope; has implanted a gracious principle in their heart. But they are called to the exercise of this, they are called to form the character; they who have learned of Christ have learned this lesson – "Put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man."

There is something from which we are deterred from, which we are to reject, in the formation of the character – “The former lusts in your ignorance,” the former inordinate desires in your ignorance. For the word translated ‘lust’ is just primarily ‘desire;’ and that may be either proper or improper. But the apostle here speaks of improper or inordinate desires.

What then are ordinate and what inordinate desires? God has given man a peculiar nature – an animal, intellectual and spiritual nature. The animal nature has desires in common with all animals. The intellectual has desires for knowledge – in the world in which we live and move, more wondrously than we know, is found its proper scene (sphere?). The spiritual hath relation to the spiritual world, and specially to God, who is a Spirit and the Father of Spirits.

Now, the regularity of our desires is according to the worthiness or unworthiness of the objects, and the relation in which we stand to them. Above the animal desire is the intellectual, above all, the spiritual – for “God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth” – “In his favour is life, and his loving-kindness is better than life.” Therefore God, His favour, is the supreme object of desire; and all other desires, like all other love, are to be placed in infinite inferiority to it, and in their own proper place subordinate to it. So, desire in us that is contrary is covetousness or lust. It is irregular when the object should not be desired at all or when the object may be desired, when it is lawful and proper to desire it, in a certain sphere and to a certain extent – but when it is out of that proper extent and sphere, when the whole desire is not subordinate to and consistent with the great end of our being, the glorifying and enjoying of God: now the soul is away from God the supreme object of its desires, and has to fix elsewhere, for the human soul is insufficient to itself; and ever feels this, that man must have a portion; and if away from God, elsewhere. Well, the desire that is irregular is lust. These lusts were in the ignorance – “The former lusts in your ignorance.”

Many were the disputes of philosophers about the supreme good; there needed be no contest, but the supreme good should be supremely desired; but what is the supreme good? that was the question after which the wisest men groped, and came to no true solution. They were lusts in their ignorance; they knew not what the supreme good to enjoy was, and therefore they knew not what the supreme good to do was.

But, says the Apostle, ye know this – to a lively hope ye have been begotten, to an inheritance ye have been begotten; Jesus ye know – for not having seen, ye love Him. These were “former lusts in your ignorance;” now there are other objects truly worthy of you and fitted to satisfy, and fitted abundantly to satisfy all your desires; yea, surpassing all you can ask or think. Still you have your former lusts in your ignorance; the old man, though crucified with Christ, with its desires, and with the objects that will tempt these desires still exists; the principle of depravity, though not reigning, exists in you; and your former lusts in your ignorance are seeking to claim your very being, to stamp and fashion you. But unto that stamp you must not be fashioned – not the “former lusts in your ignorance,” but this. For a man must be fashioning himself somehow. He must be fashioning his character some way or other. Therefore not in that way, in this other way.

The opposite of the lusts is the Caller – “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” He called you. The object of lust solicits; the principle of lust within going forth to the object that solicits. But not to thee must I go, a voice calls me away from thee. “Abraham, Abraham, and he said Here I am,” “He calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out,” “This is my beloved Son, hear ye him,” “God is faithful by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ.” Called outwardly in the gospel, as all are to whom the Word comes, and which outward call is the only warrant of faith; called not outwardly merely, but inwardly by the Holy Ghost, with renewing, efficacious grace, the only producer of faith.

He hath called you, and He hath called you to conformity, to form your character – “As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy. Because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy.” He who hath called you to His own fellowship hath done it to the end of conformity to His own character. “Be not conformed to this world,” “But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”

Jehovah is contradistinguished from all false gods by his being holy. So God speaking to Israel said, as is quoted here, “Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy;” and Moses laying the Sinaitic covenant before them, was commanded to say, ‘All the earth is mine, now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant, ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.’ So God is frequently called, especially by the prophet Isaiah, “the Holy One of Israel;” by Isaiah who, at or about the beginning of his calling to the prophetic office, saw in a vision the Lord Jesus sitting on the throne, and heard the seraphims proclaim, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts! The whole earth is full of his glory.” The holiness that is in God, ah! it is too high for us to rehearse; but to this we may look – to this infinite, spotless, moral excellence and beauty, the moral character of God. It is exhibited in the law, for the law is holy. We speak of the moral law; we call it *law*, and such it is – because it is the expression of the divine will, of our lawful, our only supreme Governor and Lord; but it is *moral*, as it exhibits his own character – as not exhibiting only His will but His character. It is law, because of the authority that is in it; it is moral, because of this perfection of divine holiness. So then you are called to have conformity to that in which the moral excellence of the divine nature consists, holiness. The properties of a being infinite, eternal, and unchangeable are incommunicable; but while God is a spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, man is a spirit – fitted not to be infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably, but to be *really* wise, holy, just, and good; to exhibit, to bear the image of God in all the communicable perfections. Not in the incommunicable ones of infinity, eternity, and immutability, but in this, to be holy.

Now, He who calls, the person calling, stands out – “Be ye followers or imitators of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.” “Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

“He who hath called you.” God in His holiness, and He who is holy is your caller. He calls you – the Holy One says, “Come away from the lusts and the idols to me.” And why? “That ye may be like me, that ye may be more and more like me, in the exercise of this gracious principle which I created and will maintain and increase, that so you may form yourselves after me.” This is the high calling of the children of God in Christ Jesus. And can it be reached? It can; it shall. Not here in its perfection. Here must be toil and labour; here must be the loins girt; here must be the sobriety; here must be the hope, and the hope is not the state of perfection. “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” “Giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue, &c., for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” The inheritance, into which shall come nothing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or that loveth and maketh a lie, shall be revealed. This is the high calling of the children of God. He who falls running this race, working in this labour, fighting this battle, rises a crowned victor.

“Be ye holy, for I am holy.” What higher motive! What nobler end! Satan told a lie – “Ye shall be as gods;” but this is the true saying of God: “When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Need I insist any more, then, on the duties? Are they not most fitting, most appropriate? May God give us to look to the high calling, and to ask ourselves in the sight of God –

“Seeing we look for these things, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”

[June 1900.]

The Majesty of the King of Kings

A Sermon

By the late DR. JOHN LOVE, preached on the subject
of the Revolution, 9th November 1788.

“He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth.” – Psalm 76:12.

That wisdom which enables us to magnify the works of God enters into our souls by means of His Holy Word. This is true, even in reference to the ordinary appearance of things in the material universe. The vestiges of Divine Perfection are there so manifest, that the eye

of reason hardly can avoid seeing something of God. But the ideas of God, which are obtained in this manner, even when the industry of meditation, and the investigations of philosophy have been applied, are too languid, confused, and destitute of majesty. We must hear the voice of God Himself describing His own works; then will our sentiments be similar to those which Job expressed in consequence of his being divinely enlightened to contemplate the universe: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Still more sensibly is the feebleness of our disabled reason felt when we turn our attention to the spiritual government of God, and consider Him as the lawgiver, the disposer, and the judge of creatures endued with intelligence, and formed with endless duration. All men feel cause to confess their foolishness and stupidity with respect to these high matters. That light alone which shines in the sacred oracles, reveals in such a manner the throne and perfections of the Great King, as to produce in us holy, becoming, and heart-satisfying thoughts of His works and ways in His spiritual kingdom. While the heart remains shut against this celestial light, the ordinary course of Divine Providence is frustrated of its salutary tendency. In vain does day utter speech to day, and night unto night. Prosperity destroys, adversity hardens and irritates against God. To the unenlightened soul even the most solemn miraculous interpositions are in vain. The ancient Israelites gave sufficient evidence of this, of whom the psalmist complains in a humble address to God; "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt:" as Moses had done long before when he gave this warning to those stupid spectators of God's wonders, Deuteronomy 29:2-4 – "Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles: yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." What darkness and perverseness reign in the heart of man! How necessary and how precious are Thy illuminations, Thou Almighty Spirit of the living God!

Some works of God give a complex display of the glorious character of their author in its general and leading features. These are peculiarly consecrated to the remembrance and instruction of mankind through all ages. At the creation of the world, the wonders of Divine Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Goodness, All-sufficiency, and Sovereignty, were held forth to view in the original state of human nature. With new and superior splendour, the glories of the invisible God shone upon the ruined world in the face of Jesus Christ, the second Adam.

But besides these most public appearances of Jehovah, there hath been, in splendid succession, a series of particular signal interpositions, which hath diffused, through the different times and societies of the church, His majesty and His praises. With a view to these subordinate displays of Divine glory, David utters a prophecy, which includes a long train of remarkable events, not to be finished till the end of the world, in the following words: – Psalm 145:4,6,7, "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. Men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts; they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness." These words inform mankind, that, from time to time, they shall see coming forth to view such events as shall give further evidence of the divinity of God's Word, of the certainty of its promises and its threatenings, of the eternal counsels and the supreme power of the true God, and of the subjection of all events to His control, His designs, His glory, and the happiness of His people.

Such was that great public change in Britain, which the completion of an hundred benign years has lately brought back, with fresh delight, to our memories and mouths. God Himself doth observe, and will bring into judgment, the thoughts, words and conduct of those who profess, or who decline to profess, a grateful recollection of that magnificent period.

That I may promote such sentiments on this subject as shall be honourable to God and profitable to us, let me endeavour to apply the light of God's Word to that event: for as the pieces of burnished metal, placed on the summits of high buildings, however bright in themselves, yet hardly appear till they are kindled into splendour by the beams of the sun; so, till we are specially enlightened by the Word and the Spirit of God, our ideas will fall exceedingly short of the dignity of this, and every other Divine work. I find therefore in the Scripture history, that the record of signal events is frequently accompanied with particularly inspired compositions, which celebrate the glory of God displayed in these events. Such compositions were of important use for directing and animating the praises of those persons who witnessed the occasions of them. By means of these compositions, believers, in succeeding ages, not only are excited to remember the great events, but are enabled, in the sympathy of faith, to enter into the feelings of those who were then present. And a third use of these sacred compositions is, that they remain in the Church's treasury, to be applied to new occasions, in some respects similar to the original occasions of their being written.

The words of my text are the conclusion of one of those inspired songs, which breathe wonderful sentiments of gratitude and triumph. We shall then do some justice to the memory of God's interpositions at the Revolution, when we feel something of that sacred fire which animated the writer of this psalm. It was composed, most probably, on occasion of that stroke, inflicted by an angelic arm, which repelled the blasphemies, and disappointed the bloody designs of Senacherib, the Assyrian monarch. This deliverance is recorded in three different places of the sacred book. Those who duly consider the mischiefs which were prevented by the Revolution, the blessings introduced thereby, together with the surprising concurrence of circumstances giving birth to that event, will not blame my application of this psalm to the present subject, as being over-strained or unnatural.

In attending to the words of the text itself, I feel something which peculiarly awakens to awe, and inspires with humble boldness. I wonder how any worm of the dust can venture to decline giving due glory to Him, whose majestic voice is here uttered. "He shall cut off the spirit of princes; he is terrible to the kings of the earth."

In handling this subject, I shall,

- I. Inquire into this awful work of God, respecting earthly kings and governments.
- II. I shall take a view of the Revolution, particularly in reference to Scotland, as implying in it a Divine work of this kind.
- III. I shall show how these magnificent operations of God's holy providence should now be recollected and improved.

I. I am to make a short inquiry into the awful Divine work which the text describes in reference to the kings and governments of this earth.

In prosecuting this inquiry, I shall endeavour, in my thoughts and words, to maintain that reverence for civil government, as being the ordinance of God, which I know is required by the fifth commandment, and in many other places of the Scripture. I wish to be far from the spirit of those, whose ungovernable wickedness is thus characterized by the apostle Peter: "They despise government; presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." But while I stand here, by commission from Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, I must be still more afraid, lest he should be dishonoured by a grovelling timidity. I must endeavour, by grace, to ascend far above the carnal fear of whatever is earthly: I must speak with an authority becoming those majestic truths, before which the highest worldly powers shall bow and shall tremble, either in submissive obedience, or under the wound of avenging wrath.

Gird Thy sword on Thy thigh, Thou illustrious Prince of the kings of the earth! go forth conquering and to conquer!

“The powers that be are ordained of God; there is no power but of God.” This is true, in a certain sense, of all civil governments that ever existed under heaven. If, independently of God, a sparrow falleth not to the ground, much less can any degree of civil power be by any means attained, without at least a permissive ordination from above. Psalm 75:6,7, “For promotion cometh neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the south: but God is the judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another.” Nor is the intrinsic dignity of civil government, as enstamped with the majesty of God, entirely removed, even when governors take many wrong steps, both in acquiring and in employing their power. Hence the Redeemer spake thus to Pilate, John 19:11, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above; therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” Here the guilt of the Jews is aggravated from their attempting to pervert the civil power to their detestable purposes; which civil power, even in the hands of the ambitious Romans, and managed by such a man as Pilate, still was, upon the whole, as is intimated by these words of Christ, a Divine ordinance for the good of mankind. Still, however, the beauty, majesty, and Divine origin of civil power, are then most clearly conspicuous, when that power is in such a manner obtained and used, as is marked with the approbation of the Supreme King. Beautiful are the words of David on this subject, 2 Samuel 23:3,4, “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”

These general remarks make way for the proposed inquiry as to that awful work of God which the text denounces. That we may think more accurately on this subject, I shall divide the inquiry into these three parts.

1st, What are those sinful provocations which rouse up the Divine vengeance against princes and governments?

2nd, Wherein consists the execution of vengeance denounced in the text?

3rd, What are the ends for which God is pleased to exhibit in this world, at some times, such spectacles of his wrath?

1st, To raise up and establish a civil government of any tolerable kind, and much more such a one as is peculiarly excellent, is the work, as has been already observed, of God Himself. The dignity of such Divine works is represented in that noble allegory: – “Thus,” says the monarch of Babylon, “were the visions of mine head in my bed: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.” – Daniel 4:10-12. Here is a grand production of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. Why then doth God destroy His own work? Why should such a stern command be issued from on high? “Behold a watcher, and an holy one, came down from heaven! He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches,” verses 13,14.

I answer, though God giveth not account of any of His matters, yet there are usually in such overturnings some remarkable transgressions, either on the part of subjects, or of governors; or of both, which sufficiently vindicate the justice of God’s ways, and should stop the mouths of men from murmuring against His procedure.

Agreeably to the infallible Word of God I mention the following articles of guilt, as furnishing a just cause for visitations so dreadful and astonishing.

1. A spirit of pride, independence of God, and carnal confidence. Wherever this spirit is found, whether in rulers or subjects, it is like a conductor held up to attract the lightning of vengeance from the eternal throne. A wish, an imagination to be like God in dignity and independence threw down myriads of angels from their celestial seats. No throne of government on earth is so firm and sublime as that such a spirit indulged will not sooner or later lay it in the dust. If kings rule without fear of the Supreme Majesty, and trust in the multitude or courage of their subjects, and become too lofty for an humble subjection to the Great God; or, on the other hand, if subjects place an idolatrous confidence in their rulers, or in their political constitution, or in their soldiers, or their sailors, or in their flourishing trade, or in their well-fortified situation, or in the friendship of other earthly powers, then both rulers and subjects lie like chaff to be driven off by the whirlwind of Divine wrath. "God resisteth the proud – Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord," Jeremiah 17:5. "But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him," Daniel 5:20. "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee: thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord." – Obadiah 3, 4.

2. A spirit of tyranny, oppression, and cruelty, on the part of governors; or a turbulent, ungrateful, and seditious temper, generally prevailing among subjects, draw down such strokes of wrath from the Almighty judge of the world.

3. When civil government and its blessings are perverted from their proper subserviency to the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, and are sacrificed to the gratification of worldly lusts.

4. When the favour and encouragement of civil power are prostituted to the support of false and blasphemous religions.

5. When the awful mysteries of the true religion are debased, and rendered vile in the eyes of men, by their being used merely as tools for carrying on political schemes: and so the throne of the eternal and dreadful God of heaven is considered and treated as though it were a kind of footstool for miserable mortals.

6. When the sceptre and sword of civil power are managed in a directly hostile opposition to the truths, the ordinances, and the faithful people of the most high God.

In case of these, or the like provocations, God hath just reason to exhibit solemn and terrible testimonies of his indignation, to pour contempt upon princes, to sprinkle his garments with the blood of kings and kingdoms, and to raise up the glory and renown of his own name upon the ruins of all that is in the eyes of worldly men great, glorious, valuable, and impregably secured.

These things might be largely illustrated and established by incontestible principles of reason, by the light of God's infallible oracles, and by the history and experience of past ages. But the design of this discourse requires me to hasten forward to the

2nd part of my proposed inquiry; namely,

Wherein consists that execution of vengeance which the words of the text pronounce against ungodly men, even when placed at the summit of earthly power?

"He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth."

It is to be remembered, that usually Divine judgments, when inflicted on the great and powerful, extend their influence to the inferior orders of men, especially when God has a principal view to the sins of the people at large in stretching out His hand upon their rulers. When governors and subjects are combined in revolting from God, it is perfectly just that great and small should be chastised or destroyed together. The description which I am now to give of God's work of judgment will be most completely applicable to such complex and

extensive visitations of Divine anger as involve all the different ranks in society. It will afterwards appear what part of this general description belongs most immediately to the important period which I have in view to illustrate.

When the God of judgment comes near, then, instead of that excellent wisdom imparted from above to kings, nobles, and judges, enabling them to rule and to decree justice, instead of this there succeeds a dark and confounding infatuation, which secretly seizes the thoughts and counsels of those whom God designs to bring low. The majesty of this Divine operation is frequently celebrated in the Holy Scripture. So, in the book of Job 12:17,20,24,25, "He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged: He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

This paralytic stroke on the political body is attended with another, whereby the hearts of kings and of their subjects are disarmed of their former courage, and melt down into unusual and effeminate cowardice. This humbling degradation hath often been manifest in persons and countries once remarkable for invincible fortitude. So the prophet Nahum denounced concerning the once warlike inhabitants of Nineveh, Nahum 3:13, "Behold thy people in the midst of thee are women: The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies, the fire shall devour thy bars." And concerning Babylon, another prophet spake thus: "All hands shall be faint, and every man's heart shall melt; and they shall be afraid: Pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: They shall be amazed one of another; their faces shall be as flames." And another peal of prophetic thunder sounds thus: "The mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day, shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs."

Then comes forth the alarm, and the wound which reaches to the vitals of those persons whom celestial indignation pursues. Those calamities which were most the objects of their aversion and fear rush down upon them. Their idols, their beloved idols, are violently torn away from the mad embraces of their hearts. Forlorn helplessness, subjection to hostile and hated power, contempt and ignominy, pain and torment, complete the catastrophe.

But something must be added here, which is more dismal than anything hitherto mentioned. The remonstrances of a troubled conscience, the terrors of God, the gloomy forebodings of future unknown misery, the terrible glare of certain and eternal damnation; these where God withholds repentance and grace, brood with sable wings over those kings and kingdoms that, in its full extent, experience this vengeance.

I proceed to the 3rd part of the proposed inquiry:

What are the ends or reasons for which God is pleased to exhibit in this world some such spectacle of His just wrath?

To this I answer in a few words that, The Holy Scripture assigns such reasons as the following –

To revive in the minds of men an awful sense of God's Being, Perfections, Presence, and Dominion over this world:

To confirm the promises and threatenings of His Word:

To realise the approach of the universal, perfect, and eternal judgment of mankind:

To comfort, establish, and embolden, the children of God in their present warfare and tribulations:

To make way for more benign exertions of civil power, under which the interests of the Redeemer's happy kingdom are cherished and widely extended.

Having thus finished the doctrinal illustrations of the text, I come forward to recollect (which should be done with a mixture of humble awe, gladness, and gratitude) that about a

hundred years ago some drops of the wrath which my text declares, fell down on this island; they fell down, but in such a manner as that the people then living, and the succession of inhabitants to this day, have had cause on that account to utter shouts of sacred joy. Terrible things were done in righteousness: there was a stroke of wrath; but it was wrath, subservient to mercy: it was a gracious flame of Divine justice which carried off the pernicious materials; a flame which purified the throne and court of Britain, and left behind it a clear æther; and, in comparison of former times, a glad sunshine of truth, virtue, peace, mercy, and prosperity.

The general doctrine which hath been explained in this discourse might be largely applied to the memorable period which is now the subject of our thoughts, and much correspondence might be traced between that combination of events which issued in the Revolution-settlement, and the leading sentiments already delivered. This, however, I shall leave to the leisurely meditations of those who either already know the true history of those times, or have it in their power to become acquainted therewith.

But that all present, the young as well as the old, may so far be instructed in this matter, as to be able, if rightly disposed, to entertain some proper sentiments of gratitude for a deliverance which we are enjoying every day, I shall take one short look of that period, in correspondency to the inquiry which hath been now prosecuted.

Let it be then considered that such high provocations had been in those days committed against the majesty of the Son of God, as that it became a righteous thing with Him to remove the house of Stuart from the British throne.

I am now to speak of things chiefly relative to the kingdom of Scotland, the native country of a good part of my present hearers. There, as is too well-known to admit of being denied, in consequence of royal ingratitude and perjury, a bloody persecution was fomented, and carried on for almost the third part of a century. Of this persecution the chief avowed ground was a claim of power and authority made by the then reigning kings as wearing one of the Pope's titles, that of the head or supreme governor of the Church of Jesus Christ. A sinful creature having dared to intrude into the title, dignity, and power, which belonged to Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the glorious Trinity, the alone Head and Supreme Governor of His own Church, those who were not stupid and impious enough to approve of that sacrilegious usurpation were persecuted to death. On this point, the sufferings of many were expressly stated.

The big and fallacious words of prejudiced bigots, or of infidel scoffers at the majesty of the Son of God, may have influence enough on many in the present dissipated age. Many may be taught to look upon those children of God, who then suffered for the tenderness and zeal of an enlightened conscience, as a race of rebels who made a sacrifice of their lives to their own blind and perverse humours. Stand still thou proud censurer of the upright, thou child of Satan, the accuser of the brethren! Thy calumnious misrepresentations may sound sweetly enough in the ears of an effeminate race of professors, who would soon be scared away from the Redeemer's standard by the first whisper of the trump of persecution. But there is a judge in heaven whom the opinion of worlds cannot bias, and whom the strength or solicitations of the universe cannot move aside from the path of righteous judgment. In his ears, "under his altar, the souls of many who were slain" in Scotland "for his testimony, are yet crying aloud," Revelation 6:9,10, and the answer of their cries is likely to alight in part on the heads of those in the present age, who serve themselves heirs to the deeds of their predecessors by justifying their sacrilegious cruelties, and by defaming the memory of those whom in their life and at their death God did glorify with His manifest presence, power, and salvation.

But leaving the contentious to look wise in their own eyes, I might here enter into a description of the dreadful cruelties exercised for the support of that presumptuous usurpation. I might bring into view the dark procedure of blood-thirsty counsellors and

judges; the instruments of torture; the number of executions. I might shew you troops of licensed and cowardly murderers dispersed through the country; the sincere worshippers of God hunted like wild beasts; their sacred assemblies alarmed and violated; immediate death inflicted for attendance on Divine ordinances. I might overwhelm your feelings by representing the situation of persons under terrors of conscience and fears of eternal wrath, seeking in the appointed means, for some dawn of saving mercy from above, but overtaken by heaven-defying ruffians, and in their departing moments troubled with the wantonness of cruel and blasphemous stupidity: or, I might point at a condition of persons dying in the pangs of obstinate despair, in consequence of having been ensnared into criminal compliances against the voice of conscience and of Scripture, through fear of torments and death. But these things I only hint at, their full investigation belonging to the Supreme judge, who hath said, "The earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

That you may form some idea how much the heart of a savage persecutor was possessed by that king who was by the Revolution driven from the British throne, I shall recite only one fact recorded by an English bishop who lived in those days, and who had no excessive partiality for the sufferers of that period. But, in order to your understanding the fact I have in view, it is necessary to be observed, that an instrument of torture was then frequently used, called *the boot*. This was a piece of iron (emblematical of the hearts and faces of those who used it), a piece of iron having the figure which its name denotes. The leg of the sufferer being put into this machine, wedges of iron were driven between the iron boot and the leg, by repeated strokes, till the marrow was pressed out of the bone. You will now see the importance of the account I am now going to repeat. "When any," says the historian, "are to be struck in the boots, it is done in the presence of the Council, and upon that occasion almost all offer to run away. The sight is so dreadful, that without an order restraining a number to stay, the board would be forsaken. But when the duke was in Scotland he was so far from withdrawing, that he looked on all the while with an unmoved indifference, and with an attention, as if he had been to look on some curious experiment. This gave a terrible idea of him to all that observed it, as of a man that had no bowels nor humanity in him." This is the testimony of Bishop Burnet. I know not what may be the judgment of this enlightened age, as it modestly chooses to entitle itself: but I hope there is no person now hearing me so depraved as not to abhor such a character.

Such was the man who, having furiously supported the bloody intrusion of prelatial power on the Church of Scotland, at length attempted to stab the political constitution, and to deliver up the whole island into the hands of the blaspheming bishop of Rome.

His attempt was blasted. Infatuation, cowardice, and confusion (blessed be the God of heaven!) attended his counsels and efforts. He fled and melted away at the presence of God, and left the throne to be possessed by one whom God had brought forth to be the instrument of deliverance, and of lasting rest to His Church in this island. This was a spectacle suited to instruct that and all after ages.

It remains that we consider how these magnificent operations of God's holy Providence should now be recollected and improved.

First of all, let us endeavour, by the teaching and power of the Holy Spirit, to bring our souls under solemn and deep impressions of those glorious excellencies of the infinite God, which were manifest in those events.

In the gloomy period which preceded the Revolution, the God of glory had veiled His majesty from carnal eyes, though He was all along manifest to spiritual observers in the operations of His invincible grace among the seemingly miserable sufferers. Many signal triumphs of the Redeemer's power in baffling the externally successful fury of hell-enkindled persecutors had been exhibited. The gates of heaven had been wide opened, and the sweet

savour of glory descending into redeemed souls, had so perfumed prisons and gibbets, that the demon of persecution was almost fatigued and ashamed.

Still, however, some visible interposition was necessary, to shew that earth, as well as heaven, is the Mediator's territory, to justify the hopes of dying martyrs, to make way for the fruit of their sufferings in the church below, and to silence that profane insult, "Where is now your God?"

Such a visible interposition did appear in the Revolution, bearing upon it a glorious engraving of the faithfulness, wisdom, power, mercy, and justice of God.

"O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: Have I been a wilderness to Israel? a land of darkness? The man of wisdom shall see thy name."

2nd. Our thoughts being spiritualised and exalted with a sense of God's glorious name displayed in that great crisis, let us, from that beginning of peaceful days, take a wide range through a century of prevailing prosperity. I shall not speak of inferior improvements respecting the transitory affairs of the present world. It is of higher importance to think of what the God of salvation hath been doing in this long season of order and tranquility. The long-suffering and forbearance of God in suspending deserved calamities, and in continuing abused blessings, is a glorious object of contemplation. But it is more deeply pleasing to wise and humble inquirers into the ways of God, to trace out the bright progress of salvation, and of peculiar love shining forth and conquering, amidst the black shades of human licentiousness, ingratitude, backsliding, and incorrigibleness. Much of this kind is to be ruminated upon in our review of the series of things since the Revolution. What multitudes of souls have been in this period converted and prepared for heaven, either in a more silent and unobserved manner, or in seasons of remarkable Divine influences, will not be fully manifest till the second coming of the Lord. But the work of God in raising up, in different parts of the island, able and zealous ministers of the gospel, in continuing the dispensation of His ordinances, and in exhibiting, at some times, signal evidences of His presence and power attending these ordinances, gives fair occasion for charity to expect a happy meeting with multitudes of saved and perfected spirits in the world of light, who shall look back to this period with endless and joyful thanksgivings.

3rd. Let us look to the present times. In many respects they are evil. The valuable fruits of much deliverance are devoted, by the lusts of men, to the will of the prince of darkness. We see around us not only the budding and blossoming, but the maturity of wickedness. Infernal sights, sounds and reports, distress and overwhelm all who have sensibility enough to be moved with whatever is monstrous in vileness. To a refined and spiritual discernment, a putrid mass of hypocrisy, of spiritual delusion and incorrigibleness, is manifest.

Is there then amongst us no remainder of the ancient glory which dwelt of old in this island? Blessed be the Lord of Hosts all is not yet gone. The power and excellency of the truth is yet known amongst us. Monuments of converting power are yet here and there to be found. Amidst various corruptions and irregularities some clusters of enlightened and upright souls are yet to be traced out. There are some who mourn in Zion. Some of the unconverted are still overawed with the majesty of God's ways and ordinances, and continue seriously to attend the vital sound of the Redeemer's voice. There are some who contend earnestly for the true faith and power of Christianity. Precious are these stones and this dust of Zion. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." And His dispensations have somewhat corresponded to the words recorded by the prophet: "Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all." – Isaiah 65:8.

4th. What are the present duties becoming the faithful people of God, when the Mediator summons them around Him; saying as it were, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me."

Our sounds of heart-felt gratitude for ancient and long-continued deliverance should be loud, frequent and joyful. But what if that majesty which hath formerly appeared to deliver, to shield, and to comfort us, should appear to cast us down, to chastise, and to terrify us? Are we in no danger of this? Are we indeed so much better than our fathers who felt the rod of God? Or is God become less holy, less jealous, less righteous, or less able to disturb the sinful peace of the world, than in former ages? Is not the Divine majesty and excellency of gospel ordinances in a great measure removed and are they not very generally dwindled down into a kind of human contrivance for a little weekly amusement, or something less than amusement, when more important business cannot decently be attended? And shall the protecting arms of God continue to encircle and to cherish a dead trifle? Is it worth while that the sun should shine over the heads, or the light of reason in the breasts of a people who have buried in oblivion the glory of their Creator? Should not the offers of mercy be withdrawn from those who like swine trample them under their feet? Should not the courage and vigour of those persons be tried by the feeling of infinite wrath, who have defied that wrath viewed at a distance? Should not the temples of rational brutality be laid in ruins? Should not blaspheming breath be stopped? Should not “the faces of the proud be bound in secret, and hid in the dust together?”

Loud and solemn is that voice of offended majesty which, in the unflattering oracles of Jehovah, hath long sounded against this perverse island. It would well become God’s children to listen to that voice in such a manner as was done by the holy prophet, when meditating on deliverances wrought out for the church many ages before by the overthrow of enemies, not worse than those who in his days assumed the sacred name of God’s people. “When I heard,” says he, “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: When he cometh up unto the people, he will cut them in pieces with his troops.”

“Is there then no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” There is. The insulted Son of God, by His merit and power, is able, consistently with the glory of infinite justice, to heal those breaches which are great like the sea. Here, therefore, we who fear God, and love mankind, take up our wrestling ground. We try what may be done by the importunity, and perseverance, and fervency of prayer, in improving the precious blood of Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah, the Supreme God, and therefore mighty to save. We try whether God may not thus be prevailed with to lengthen our tranquility, and to grant such effusions of His Almighty Spirit, as should produce in all corners of the land a general reformation of heart and of life.

But should we fail of success, should the wickedness of men, and the sovereign decrees of God, obstruct that answer of our prayers which our hearts desire, then we know what to do. In that case we shall learn, through grace, to say with sweet submission, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!” “True and righteous are thy unsearchable judgments!” That reward of our work shall meet us in heaven which could not be found on earth. There shall our eyes see a full world of holy and blessed worshippers of God, and of the Lamb. There shall the secret and deep reasons of God’s procedure in withholding, as well as imparting His mercy, be gloriously disclosed to our perfected understandings. In the meanwhile, amidst the tempests of judgment, as well as in the calm of God’s patience, we shall solace ourselves with such strains as these: “O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. Thou hast a mighty arm; strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful

sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defence: and the Holy One of Israel is our King.” – Psalm 89:8-18.

Now, to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the King of the ages; immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

[July 1900]

A Sermon

Preached by the Eminent and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ
Mr. JOHN WELCH, Minister of the Gospel in Ayr.

“Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick.” Revelation 2:5.

In this treatise of repentance, which hitherto we have handled, well beloved in the Lord, these are shortly the heads we have spoken of to you.

First, I told you the names repentance gets in the Scripture.

Secondly, The sundry ways it was taken. As first, for the pricks and terrors of conscience, that is wakened with the sight of sin, after the conviction or condemnation of the law or of the gospel; therefore I shewed you these terrors are partly legal, and partly evangelical, and both the elect and reprobate are subject to both these sort of terrors; but the one sees an outgate, and therefore he waits patiently, he hopes above hope, and he would be gladly freed from them, and be reconciled to God, and in these terrors he is sustained by the secret power of God; that suppose he sees not, nor feels not the love of God in the meantime when he is under these terrors; yet he knows afterward that it was the almighty hand of God that did uphold him, and saved him, that he was not his own currier; but the reprobate he sees no outgate, therefore he has no patience to bear it, he has no hope to overcome it, he has not so much as an earnest desire to get out of it; and therefore he falls into the depths, and the more he plunges in them, the more he drowns.

Thirdly, I shewed you that repentance is taken for the whole conversion of a christian man, that is, when he has all the essential parts, of the image of God drawn upon his soul, suppose not perfect; this is when a man has true faith, contrition, love to God and His saints, and a begun obedience to the whole law of God; and this is that repentance that is spoken of in Luke 15:7, “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance;” and this is conversion and repentance, when thou mayest say, grace is not begun only, but all the essential parts of grace are formed on thy soul, and thou that hast this true conversion and repentance, thou wilt also have a true dolour and sorrow because thou hast offended God; and this sorrow is joined with the hope of remission, it is joined with a will to be sanctified, it is joined with a purpose to leave every sin, were it never so dear to thee.

This repentance is double, the one is in the first time of thy calling, the other is after thou art called, and when thou hast fallen from grace; and this is more difficult to be gotten, for the house must be swept, and the ashes riddled, and the candle must be lighted, and thou must be sought and found again after thou hast lost thyself; after thou wast once put up in the bag, as the woman did her piece of silver; and the shepherd must leave his flock, and go through moss and muir seeking thee wandering in the wilderness, till he find thee out, and when thou art found, he must lay thee on his shoulder and bring thee home, and set thee in his own sheepfold, and have a care of thee as of a lost sheep; but when thou art found and brought home again, then the Lord rejoices more of thy conversion, nor of other ninety and nine that never went astray; for when thou hast been once called, and at home in thy Father’s house, and thou wilt away with thy portion and lose thyself wilfully, the travel will be great in gaining thee again, and it will be long ere thou be brought home again, for it must be plain necessity that must drive thee to it; but no matter of that, thou shalt be welcome whenever thou comest; yea, suppose thou hadst stayed twenty or forty years out of thy father’s family, and he shall be twice so glad, that when he had lost thee once and had found thee again, and he shall say of thee as he said of the forlorn son, this my son was dead, and is now alive again; as if he would say, this my son was dead, and he is my son as well as thou, he desired to go away and I gave him leave, Luke 15:12. He wandered far, and I thought never to have seen him again, but now he is come again ragged and hungry bitten, yet I will not cast him off, I will put my best robe upon him, I will slay the fatted calf, and will be merry and rejoice; because a poor lost sinner is found and brought home again.

Now, my brethren, you are all of two ranks you that are here this day, for the one rank there are many that are yet out, and have never yet been in the Lord’s fold, nor family; nor have never received the Lord’s livery; nor have borne His circumscription in your hearts; here is Jesus Christ dealing: but if you will come home by repentance, and will you now renounce your sins, and put on you now the Lord’s livery (well it is) come your way, you shall be welcome, but if you will not come now, but you will delay your repentance till another time when you get more leisure; take heed what you do to yourselves, take heed and behold your own misery, for as long as you repent not, you lodge in your souls the foul spirits, and you make your hearts cages to the devil, you lay your souls and carcasses open to the wrath of God, that is a consuming fire; ye expose yourselves to all His judgments, both temporal and eternal, bodily and spiritually; and you that repent not, neither yet are come within the compass of the blood of Jesus, there is nothing that bears up the wrath of God off your heads, but the lenity and patience of God, that says, I will give yet a day or yet a year to you sinner to repent, and if he pass over the date appointed, my mercy has done with him, but my justice shall overtake him, for I give him over to it; thou that repentest not, beware of thyself, for the devil has laid a snare before thee, smoozing sin with some sweet pleasure, the which snare is made of three cords.

With the first, he traps thee in a sin, and so makes thee offend God. With the second cord, he driveth thee on piece and piece, that the more thou sinnest, thou delightest in sin.

And with the third cord, he fangs and fetters thy feet hard and fast, that thou canst not get out again; then he makes thy own conscience accuse thee, convict thee, and condemn thee, and it shall be the first that shall be ready to put hand in thee, and it shall be the currier to hang and quarter thee in pieces, as thou that hast not yet repented, this net is set before thee ready to fang thee, and if thou abidest so, it shall be able to bind thee hand and foot, and thou shalt be casten in that lake that burns with fire and brimstone: thou that repentest not, thou hast all thy sins at thy heels, like as many mad dogs barking and biting thee; thou that repentest not, as many blessings as thou hast gotten from God, they shall serve for as many suburbs of hell to thee. For hell is compared to a city out of which ariseth a smoke, which blinds the eyes of them that are therein, after this smoke follows a flame, that kindleth the conscience, then last of all, comes the fire and burns soul and conscience, carcase and all together; thou that repentest not, look to the thing before thee, an eternity of wrath, ready to embrace thee everlastingly, a fire of hell abiding thee, and a worm that shall never die, to gnaw thee eternally, and an eternity of torment to punish thee. O eternity, eternity! Who will not be astonished to think on that eternity? O soul! why shakest thou not, and tremblest not, when thou hast mind of that eternity. Are these fables, think you, when I am telling you of these things, when I preach to you of eternity, and when I speak of a heaven and a hell to you, is it not the oracle of God? And is it not this truth, which the Son himself that was from the beginning, and came out of the Father's bosom, and was upon the counsel of God, and knew all that was in the Father's heart? (Is it not He that hath spoken this) for He has told you that there is a fire that shall never be quenched, and there is a worm that shall never die, and He that brought the glad tidings of salvation to a sinner that repents, He has brought the same news from heaven, that one day He shall fling all impenitent sinners into a lake that burns with fire and brimstone eternally.

Now, if ye will doubt whether this be true or not, and if ye will call in question the thing that God himself the Judge of the whole world has spoken out of His own mouth; be doing on, take your hazard; and if you will not believe it now to be true, persuade yourselves once a day ye shall feel it. Now, if you will say, I know there is a hell, but yet I shall be saved; I shall warrant me for it I shall never go thither; for there are Jews and Pagans and Papists anew to be cast into hell, suppose I be not cast in too. But this I say to thee that countest light of heaven and hell, let all men, in all ages, have some excuse for them in that great day; let Cain have some excuse, that has been suffering hitherto these five thousand years bygone; and let the whole world have some excuse, for they had but one preacher Noah, amongst them all; and let Sodom and Gomorrah have some excuse, that had but one private man Lot, amongst them; and let the rich glutton have some excuse, that was no extortioner or oppressor of any man, but lived wealthily upon his own; and let all those have some mitigation in hell; but as for you that perish in this age for want of repentance, you can pretend to no excuse; for behold, I am here to summon you all before the tribunal of God, and arrest you to a day that God has set, wherein He is to judge you all, and I proclaim repentance to you; now, if you will judge yourselves now and condemn yourselves here, then you shall be absolved in that great day; but if you will not repent nor judge and condemn yourselves here, I assure you, you shall be condemned one day, and when others shall say, woe's me! that I fell not in that age, wherein the gospel was contemned, for if remission had been offered to me in that blood, I should have embraced it; but thou shalt say, woe's me! that ever I fell in the days that the gospel shined, for I have the blood of the Son of God lying upon my back, which offered salvation to me, but I contemned and slighted it; therefore my condemnation is the greater.

Now, you see in what danger you stand that delay and will not repent. I told you also that this repentance comprehends four things.

First, It has the terror of the law and of the gospel.

Second, It hath contrition, for it breaks thy heart and makes it soft and mollified. Then it brings you to this, that thou art like to be swallowed up by the wrath of God, and terror of thy conscience: now when thou seest thy conscience trailing thee before the tribunal of God, then thy heart begins to break and thou beginnest to reason thus with thyself, What shall I do, that I be not cast in yonder, in eternal fire?

Thirdly, This repentance stands in faith, that is, when thou art forfoughten and canst do no more; then thou wilt say, Lord, I will fall down at Thy feet; do with me what seems fit and right in Thy sight; I believe Thou art able to save me if Thou wilt, I perceive there is enough in Thy Son, that I desire no more nor is in Him, and then thy heart will warm, and thou wilt draw near to Him, to see if thou canst get a touch of the hem of His garment, and if thou canst not get to Him through the press of thy sins, thou wilt do as the men that carried the sick of the palsy, who did climb up to the house-top, and let him down through the roof of the house, for thou wilt climb up above all thy sins, and let down thy sick and diseased soul before Him.

Fourthly; It stands in justification; that is, when the Lord speaks a word of comfort to thee, either in prayer by His Spirit immediately from heaven, to persuade thee that thy sins are forgiven thee; or else by any of His servants that will say in His name unto thee, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins be forgiven thee." Then thy soul exults in joy, and triumphs in persuasion, then thou wilt say, now death, I defy thee; grave, I defy thee; hell, I defy thee; now I have gotten enough in my Lord that I need no more: then thou reachest out thy hand, and takest unto thee permission and remission, then thou puttest Christ upon thee, then thou takest His blood to wash thee, His righteousness to cover thy unrighteousness, His obedience to justify thee, and His glory to glorify thee; and when thou hast gotten this, then thou givest God His own glory, when thou avowest that Christ is come to save sinners of whom thou art the chief; and then God gives thee the honour again to be the son of God, the brother of Christ, and fellow heir with Him of the kingdom of heaven: from this comes an unspeakable joy, and peace that passes all understanding; then thou puttest on all thy armour, thy steel-bonnet of hope, the breast-plate of righteousness, and the target of faith, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; then thou goest out as an armed man to fight against the devils, the world, and the flesh, thy deadly enemies; then thou standest waiting for the Lord coming from heaven, and longest to see Him appearing in the clouds, that thou mayest follow Him in there, and sit on a throne with Him to judge the whole earth.

Now, in the end thou comest back again to thyself, and thou lookest into thine own heart, and there thou runnest to the capestone of thy sins, and casteth down stone and stone until thou comest to the ground stone, and to original sin; then thou labourest to get it plucked up by the root, and rooted out; then thou hast a marvellous light, that the power of the Almighty is spread over thee; and the virtue of the Most High doth overshadow thee; then thou becomest a new creature, and so comes in repentance, that is, when thou mournest for thy sins, not so much for fear of punishment, as that because thou hast grieved God who was so kind and so loving a Father unto thee. Then to take it up shortly;

This repentance comprehends, first, a legal or evangelical terror, by considering the absence of God, and the presence of wrath, which breeds such a burning flame in thy conscience, that strikes such a dreadour in thy heart, that thou fearest to fall into the gulf of condemnation, but the arm of God is under thy head holding thee up.

Secondly, It comprehends a contrition and a breaking of the heart, which makes thee to have a contrite spirit, and a humble heart, that thou canst fall down at Christ's feet, thou canst lay thine ear to the word, and submit thy neck to the yoke of Christ.

Thirdly, It stands in a justifying faith, whereby thou layest hold on the Son of God, and all the promises made to them that believe in Him.

Fourthly, It stands in that unspeakable joy, and exulting persuasion, that arises from the sense of the love of God in Christ, spread abroad in thy heart by the Holy Ghost; then thou art guarded with peace of conscience, when thou seest there is no condemnation for thee, because thou art in Christ, for thou hast gotten the Son, and the merits of His blood imputed to thee; then thou art more than a conqueror: then thou laughest at all the evil that can come to thee; then welcome cross, then welcome pest, welcome death, for I defy you all, seeing I am persuaded of the love of my Lord, that nothing can be able to separate me from the love of God in Christ.

Objection 1. Thou wilt say, What will become of me that could never get this exulting joy and persuasion? How shall I know if ever I have gotten that repentance to life? Answer, All men and women that shall be saved get not this exulting joy at the first, for it is the highest degree the soul of man can win to in this life; and therefore, there is a meaner degree of faith and repentance that is given to some, whereupon, if thou hast it, thou mayest rest satisfied without danger; and this is either at the beginning of thy first calling, when thou hungerest and thirstest after righteousness, when thou longest to get a fill of Christ, and a new drink of His blood, and to be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus; or else it is after thy calling, when thou hast an insatiable desire to get a new bit of the flesh of Christ, and a new drink of His blood, because thou hast quenched His Spirit by some notorious fall; and therefore thou hast a vehement hunger and extreme thirst that heaven itself cannot fill thee, but God himself, and the flesh and blood of Jesus only; therefore thou longest to get Christ's arms folded about thee, and His blood to cover thee. Hast thou then this insatiable desire of Christ, and this hunger and thirst for righteousness in Him? Then I answer thee, one day thou shalt get a fill of Him, either sooner or later; then thou mayest confidently rest upon His promises, who has said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they shall be filled." – Matthew 5:6. Then thou mayest say boldly, My Lord that has given me this hunger and thirst with an insatiable desire to be filled, He is now coming to fill me; for this hunger and thirst is the undoubted token of the forerunner of Christ; wherefore I am sure He is coming from heaven to feed me with the apples of the tree of life, that stands in the midst of the paradise of God and shall give me to drink of the water of life, that I shall never hunger or thirst any more in the like manner.

Objection 2. Some will say again, I have found these things sometimes when God first called me, but now I am fallen in sleep and security, and hardness of heart, through the long custom of sin, that now I miss all this hunger and thirst; and some may say, That I am casten in such terrors, that I see nothing but wrath, and the judgment of God following upon induration and hardness of heart. Answer, A man may be hardened in heart, and yet nevertheless have the Spirit of Jesus; for Isaiah says, in his own person, 63:17, and in the name of the Church of God in his time; "Lord, why hast thou hardened our hearts? And we have turned from thy ways?" This is the complaint of the prophet of God; shall we say then, that he wanted the Spirit of God when he said this (God forbid), for the prophet speaks by inspiration, that is the Spirit of God informed him. And David, Psalm 22:1, also cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? I cry by day, but thou hearest me not, and I cry by night, but thou takest no heed: I am a worm, and not a man; all that see me have me in derision, they make a mock of me, and they shake their heads at me; I am like water poured out, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, and melts within my bowels," by which words ye may see he felt nothing but terrors within and pain without, and yet he was a man according to the heart of God; Job also says, "Fear is turned unto me, my heart passeth away as a cloud, my soul is poured out, he has casten me in the mire, and my bones are broken, and become dust and ashes; and when I cry unto thee, thou shuttest out my prayer, thou turnest thyself cruelly against me; and my sighing comes before I eat, and my roarings

are poured out like water; I had no peace, no rest, and trouble came upon me;" and yet Job was the dear child of God.

Objection 3. Yet thou wilt say, How shall I know if I have that much within me as to bear me out in that great day or not? I answer, Tell me if thou seest the hardness of thy heart, and art thou displeased with it, art thou sorry that all the joints of thy heart are not loosed and melted with the fire of God's Spirit, and hopest thou above hope, and longest thou for the day of salvation, and hast thou any sighs and cries unto God that He would take away this hardness of heart: then be of good comfort, for thou art in the way to heaven I assure thee; and therefore consider with thyself, that the frost is as needful for manuring the earth, as the south wind and soft showers are needful to loose the earth, and the harder the frost be, and the longer it continue in the ground, the fruit fuller and more plentiful shall the crop be that year; even so hardness of heart is as needful sometimes for a man and woman as softness of heart, and the harder thy heart be, and the longer thou hast lien under induration, when the wind of God's Spirit shall blow upon thee, and loose thy heart, then it shall cast up a more plentiful crop, and in the greater abundance; so then suppose thou feelest thyself bound with bonds, I dare persuade thee, that the Lord shall once loose thee, and set thee free and at liberty.

Question. But yet ye will ask me, What warrant ye shall have for that? Answer, I tell thee, none can sigh and pray with groans, and long for the Spirit of God, but he that has the Spirit of Jesus already, and none has the Spirit of the Son of God, but he that has the Son Himself, and none has the Son but he that has the Father also, and no man or woman has either of these but they that are the chosen children of God; and this is a sure ground whereupon thou mayest build the certainty of thy salvation, and this is the rock that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Therefore (my dear hearts) be not discouraged, suppose ye find hardness of heart and the absence of the Spirit at some times; for remember there was a time when thou sawest not thy own blindness and hardness of heart, even when thou wast in nature: but tell me then, who hath letten thee see thy blindness and hardness of heart, and who makes thee discern between hardness and softness of heart? Who but the Spirit of grace, that has pulled thee out of nature and planted thee as a lively branch in that true olive tree the Lord Jesus; and seeing thou hast been ingrafted in Him, thou mayest be sure always to draw life out of Him, by renewing thy repentance, and by taking a new bit of His flesh, and a new drink of His blood. The Lord grant that ye may wait with patience upon God's time, when He shall come again to the comfort of your souls. This I crave for Christ His Son's sake; to whom be praise, glory, and honour, for now and evermore. Amen.

[August 1900]

Christ's Napkin.

A Sermon Preached in Kirkcudbright, 12th May, 1633,
by the late REV. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” – Revelation 21:4-7.

“And God shall wipe away all tears.” When friends meet, they give the stranger his welcome-home. Here is the pilgrim's welcome that our friend Christ gives us. It was spoken from heaven, and therefore it is true doctrine. Then we see that the tears of the saints shall be wiped away and removed, but not fully until the world to come, for then is Christ's welcome-home to poor sinners. They come all to Him with wet faces, and bleared [bedewed] with tears for sin and the manifold troubles of this life; and Christ meets them in the door, with a fair soft napkin in His hand, and puts up His hand to their faces, and says, “Hold your tongue, my dear bairns, ye shall never weep again.” And indeed, in my judgment, it is a speech borrowed from a mother that has a bairn with a broken face, all bloody and all bleared with tears, and it comes to her – woe's her heart to see him so – and she sits down and wipes the tears from his eyes, and lays her hand softly on the wound, and his head in her breast, and dights [wipes] away the blood, and lays her two arms about him, and there is no end of fair words. So, when Christ and we shall meet in heaven, He will hush us, and wipe away all tears, and lay our head in His bosom. See how He alludes to this, Isaiah 54:2, “O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest, and not comforted; behold I will lay thy foundations with sapphires,” &c. It is there, to speak so, our Lord is ruing [repenting] that ever He had handled His saints as He did. Isaiah 65:18,19, “Be glad and rejoice for evermore in that which I create; for behold I create

Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice over Jerusalem, and joy in my people, and the voice of weeping shall no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. "If ever there was a blythe [happy] meeting betwixt two, it must be betwixt the bridegroom and the bride in the marriage day. And what a meeting there is of joy betwixt such a bridegroom and bride, cannot be conceived. For Christ, that day, will have on all His best clothes: and such a bride as the Lamb's wife! When we shall be clothed and not a wrong pin on us; a fair bride in silk and purple of Christ's own husking [dressing]. And what a welcome she will get! To get a drink, at our first meeting and incoming to heaven, of the "well of the water of life," O strong comforting water! And Christ our Lord shall present His bride to His Father; and our Father-in-law, the Father of our Husband, shall take us by the hand and lead us ben [inward] the house to the dining-hall, and set us down at a table to feast our fill upon the "tree of life" – to feast upon the Trinity for evermore! Now, mock and scorn the way to heaven as ye please, ye never heard of true happiness till now. Here is a "banquet of joy" for evermore.

"He shall wipe away *all* tears." Christ our Lord in this world wipes the tears from His bairns' faces, yet after that they weep new tears. He never wipes away *all* tears till now. Here shall be our last goodnight to death – good-night, crying, and mourning, and sorrow. We shall be on the other side of the water, and over beyond the black river of death, and shall scorn death; for "Christ shall take death and hell and cast them into the lake of fire," Revelation 20:14. The mother that lost her bairns shall get them, – all the Lord's widows shall get their husbands – the old world, which was the mourning world, shall be away; and therefore, never till now shall "*all* tears" be wiped away.

The kirk is half a widow here – her Lord is in an uncouth country, far from her home; and ilk loun [each low fellow] round about plucks at this silly widow, while she is in the valley of Baca wherein is no water. The watchmen strike her and take her veil from her; but Christ writes a love letter to her, and after she has read it she rejoiceth and wipeth her face. But when the letter grows old, and she has lost the letter, new troubles come on, – she sheds new tears, and comes under new persecutions; and her Lord, for her sins, goes in behind the wall and hides himself, and lets her mourn her fill. But in that day "He will wipe away all tears from her eyes." See then how it goes here in this life, first a fair day, then again a foul day, till at last that fair day dawns when all shadows flee away; and there shall never be a foul day after that, but aye the long, lasting, summer day for evermore. You see a man travelling to his home – here is a water, then dry land, then another water, then dry land, then a water, and at last only dry land between and his home; then he goes home to his wife and bairns, and has no more waters. So all our tears are never dried till we come to heaven; for the saints have a liferent tack of the cross of Christ, while we are here, and aye [always] ill weather – ever the cross. See John 16:20-22, our Lord compares our troubles to the pains that come upon a woman in travailing; now a shower and then some ease, a shower again, and then ease – aye till the last shower that she be delivered, and then no more showers; "she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." We must be in pain ere our birth be born; but we shall be delivered of our birth.

Use 1st. Let us prepare; for tears will follow us to heaven; unto the very entry of the door our face shall be wet, for we go out of this life sad and groaning for this miserable life; and to thrust through the last port, and to wade through the hindermost water – it is a sore set [difficult work]. But be blythe, Christians, and grip to the promises. God's bairns that can now mourn for their own sins, and the sins of the land, rejoice in heaven; there are never seen greeting bairns [weeping children] there, God has a napkin to dight [wipe] their faces.

But ye that laugh now (and so are far from tears), that mock the mourners of Zion, you may sigh and close the Bible, and say, "Alas! I never shed a tear for Christ; your text is not for me." It may be Christ shall that day make you weep and shed tears for evermore. This vain, laughing world will pass away – there is a day of tears coming on you, "weeping and

gnashing of teeth;" and when a man gnash his teeth, one against another, he has no mind of laughing. I would not have your mirth for a world. Be doing; we shall see who will laugh fastest yon day.

Use 2nd. There is an ill coming on this land. Sin is not come to full harvest. Often have I told you of a fan of God's Word to come among you, for the contempt of it. I have told you often of wrath, – wrath from the Lord to come upon Scotland, and yet I bide by my Master's word; it is quickly coming – desolation for Scotland, because of the quarrel of a broken covenant. Now, my dear people, my joy and crown, seek the Lord and His face; let Him be your fear. "Flee to your stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." Doves, flee to Christ's windows, and save your souls.

Verse 5, "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful."

John heareth more of Christ – a sweet speech. Here are three things mentioned.

1st, A speaker.

2nd, A speech.

3rd, A direction to keep the speech.

1. A speaker. "He that sat upon the throne," Who spake the speech is not told, whether an angel or an earthly king, for they sit on thrones also. But it is He of whom it is said, Revelation 4:2, "And, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne." John tells not his name, but he thinks so much of Him that he takes it for granted that there is none worthy to be a king but He, and to sit on a throne but He. The saints measure all the affections of others by their own affections. As, if one speired [enquired] at John, "Who is he that sits upon the throne?" he would have answered, "What needs you speir? is there any in heaven or earth, in my estimation, worthy to be a king but He? and to sit on a throne but He? and to take a crown upon his head but He?" The saints set aye [always] Christ alone – they set Him above all. Speak of kings to them; but Christ is out of play. So, Song 3:3, the kirk, meeting with "the watchmen," saith, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" What kened [knew] the watchman of him whom her soul loved? for she might have loved a loon, or a harlot, or an idol-god, or the world. But she measureth the watchman by herself. There was none in *her* mind but Christ; and therefore she needed not to tell them, as she thought. So Mary Magdalene, John 20:15, says to the gardener (as she thought), "Sir, if ye have borne him hence, tell me where ye have laid him." She tells not what *him*, taking as granted that what so much possessed her own soul, would doubtless equally occupy the thoughts of every other: and none was so much in her mind as Christ. Now, I pray you, let the same mind be in you that was in John and in Mary. Let Christ be to your soul the pearl of the ring. Among all kings, Christ should be made high, and esteemed by us as He – the only He – that is worthy to "sit on the throne." So, in Song 5:10, He is to the kirk "the chiefest among ten thousand." Gather all the angels in heaven and earth together, – Christ is too good to be their captain. And, indeed, what is all that sits on a throne? It must be infinitely more in Him. And whatever glory is in the world, is far more in Him. Take all the roses in the earth, and put them all in one, that would be a dainty thing and sight. But what are all these to Christ? – no more than a nettle to the fairest rose. Fie upon the tasteless love of men, that never loveth Jesus Christ, and yet falleth in love with lusts. They love gold, riches, and honour, and put Christ to a backside. Aye, Christ gets not His own among us. We commend Him not; neither will we match with Him.

2. A Speech. "I will make all things new." This is as much as all things are old. Sin hath made all things old. They are like a woman groaning in childbirth with pain and vanity, because of our sin. Romans 8:22. All the creatures are sickened because of sin. Because of our sin, vanity came on the sun, moon, and other creatures. They sigh under this, and pray, in their kind, a malison [evil], and a woe to man; for sin has made us all miserable. The heavens,

that are the fairest part of the great web of the world, “wax old as a garment;” the prophet saith they are like an old clout [rag] – the water saith, “let me drown sinners, they have sinned against my Lord,” – the fire saith, “let me burn them, let me burn Sodom, for they have sinned against my Lord.” All things have lost the glory that they got at their first creation. Jesus saw all things gone wrong, and quite out of order, and man fallen from his Lord, and He did, even with the world, as the pilot, who, when an inattentive man at the rudder was steering the ship on a sandbank, stepped in quickly and turned her incontinent, or else all would have gone to confusion. So our Lord stepped in when the great ship of this world was running on destruction; and when the sun and the moon looked sad-like, and said they would not serve us, He renewed them by His death, made them all laugh on the elect again, and gave them all a suit of new clothes.

Drunkards, Christ gave His blessing on the wine ye spue on the walls. Ye that dishonour your Maker with your vain apparel, ye know not what it cost Christ our Lord to buy a right to those things that ye abuse in vanity. All that set the world in their hearts, where the Lord should be, forget that Christ bought the world to be their servant, and not to be as their darling and wife that lies in their bosom. Ye that make the earth, and the broad acres of it, your soul’s portion, forget that Christ bought the earth, and made it new, to be a footstool, and not a chair for our souls to sit down in. And if Christ has this art to make all things new, come to Him all ye that are old. O ye that have old hearts, come. Christ may get His craft among ye, if ye would come to Him; the devil, it may be, has borrowed your heart for covetousness, and crooked it with the thorny cares of this world, and holed it, and knocked the bottom out of it. O if ye would put it in Christ’s hand, He would put it into His furnace, and melt it again, and by His art bring it out a new heart for Himself to dwell in. Alas! Christ gets not His trade or calling among us. But why are not our old hearts mended? Because we handle them as a foolish mother doth a dawted bairn [indulged child]; she will not let him go to the school to learn, and why? Because she dow [will] not want him out of her sight. She will therefore, never let him do well, but feeds him for the gallows. We dow not give away our souls to Christ, who would fain have, and could easily mend them. But lust, or pride, or covetousness, like the foolish mother, keeps them out of Christ’s company; so that we will not let that dear craftsman, who made the earth under our feet and the mountains new, make our old hearts new. Our souls are all hanging in tatters, worn and old with sin, and yet we dow not put them in Christ’s hand, that He might make them whole, and cleanse them. Fie upon thee, that thy garden, cursed in Adam’s day to bring forth nettles and thorns, is blessed again to bring forth fruit in Christ, and thy soul gets not so much of Him as thy yard; – it is made new, but thy soul remains old. O bring it to Jesus, – He will create in you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you. Indeed, Christ may get His craft among ye, if you would go to Him; for it is His trade to “make all things new.”

3. A direction to keep the speech. “And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.” He bids John write these things about the state of the glorified, and calls them faithful and true. He would not intrust His word to man’s memory and conscience, – He would have it written. Blasphemous papists, laugh not at this, nor call the Pope’s breast the Bible; here is a warrant for written scripture. Indeed it tells us, that man’s falsehood wore his conscience. Had his conscience been a faithful register, there should have been no need of a written Bible. But now, the Lord has lippedened [trusted] more to dead paper, than to a living man’s soul. Our conscience now under sin had not been a good Bible, because man is ready to run away from his conscience; and because, what is written on our conscience (as, that there is a God – a judgment – a heaven – a hell), Satan and sin come in as two false witnesses and blot it out, and write that in the fool’s heart that says “there is no God.” And there are many holes in our souls; the Word of God comes in and runs out again at back-spouts, unless Jesus make our souls waterfast, so that “the Word of God may dwell in us plentifully.” Are

not our hearts compared to a field, wherein the preacher sows the seed, and the black spirits of hell come and gather up Christ's wheat? O but there are many running-out souls; and much need we have of a written Bible. Therefore make much of the written word, and pray God to copy His Bible into your conscience and write a new book of His doctrine in your hearts; that ye may be made "the living epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart."

Verse 6. "And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end: I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

Here also are three things,

1st. A prophecy.

2nd. A description.

3rd. A promise.

1. A prophecy. Christ says to John, "It is done." That is expounded in Revelation 16 and 17. The world is ended. So speaks Christ of the world. The glory of it passeth away in the twinkling of an eye, and Christ crieth to those that have the world in both their arms, "It is done," it is a past thing, there is no more of it. It is but a word to our Lord. He said "let all things be," and they were; he will say "let all things depart," and they will be at an end. We are beginning with the world as if it would be evermore ours; and our Lord says, in a moment, let it be plucked from them, and it is done. It is not for nothing that the taking down of this inn of heaven and earth is touched in so few words, – "It is done." For it is an easy thing for the Almighty to take in His own hand the staves that hold up this fair tent, and, when He pulleth it, He maketh it come down with a tilt. So, Revelation 7:1, four angels are brought in "holding the four winds of the earth," as if they had the world in their hands, and as if they had it ready to fold up as a sheet. And O! what a fighting and business do men make to get a clout [a piece] of this sheet! He staring out his eyes – and he setting out his neck, for a piece of this holly [tattered covering] and sheet, and for a gloib [piece of ground] of the earth. But see, Revelation 6:14. "The heavens shall depart away like a scroll" of parchment that is rolled together, and the fair stories thereof are like figs; with the shake of the Almighty's arm shall they fall together to the ground. And, what is more, with a touch of the Almighty's hand, – or a putt of His little finger, – or a blast of His mouth saying "it is done," – the cupples of the walls of the house shall come down. Now I cannot but speak of fools that have their heads full of windmills, and cry it is beginning, "to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant." Isaiah 56:12, and there is no end of buying and selling. I came not here to bid anybody be unthrifty; but be not like bairns building sandy bourocks [places of shelter] at a burnside, when presently a speat of water comes and spills all their sport, or a shower chases them in from their play. Men are ever bigging castles in the air. In very deed, we are like bairns holding the water at a river side with their hands. They think (daft things) they hold the water; while in the mean time it runs through their fingers. And what says God, of honour, riches, pleasure, lands, fair houses, and sums of money? Even that in a word "all is done." Ask of them that had the world and broad acres once at will, what is to the fore? And what is to the fore [remains] of so many thousands? What has the world of them but their name? And what if their name be lost too! For what is their name? Ten or eleven letters of the A B C; and for their bodies – howbeit, when they were living, kingdoms would not content – the clay into which their bodies are dissolved would not now fill a glove. I think that a true, and a strange spoken word, Isaiah 40:22, "God sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers." We even creep like grasshoppers up and down the globe of this earth, and cry to men, of the vanities of all things, till death comes, like a common thief, without any din or feet, and plucks them away, and there is no more of them; then they say, "It is done." All men must confess it is true that I say, but I think to be dead ere they believe it, and act accordingly, or be brought to hate the world. I think the world is the

devil's great herry-waternet, that has taken thousands and slain them. Ye say, ye are sure of it. Then I say, ye are a dyted horse for heaven.

2. The second thing that is in the verse, is a description of Christ: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." Our Lord here being to make an offer of the water of life, He first sheweth what He is; even the first and the last letter of the alphabet – the Ancient of Days – the Eternal Son of the Eternal God. This teaches us that we may crack [boast] more of our old holding, and old charter, than all the world can do. For why? When began Christ to bear a goodwill to a sinner? Even when He began to be God; and He was God from all eternity. Suppose the sun in the firmament were eternal, the light of it behoved to be eternal; for the light of the sun is as old as the sun. Now love is a beam of life and heat that comes from Christ, the Sun of Righteousness; therefore everlasting Christ – everlasting love. For loves comes not on Christ the day, which was not in Him yesterday. Man's love and a king's love, are hunted for very much; and yet they die, and their love dies with them, and often their love dies before themselves. But who seeks Christ's love, that "changes not?" Yea, this is a matter of admiration and wonder, that Christ should have thought on us worms of the clay, ere ever we were; and that our salvation is as old as evermore; as old as Christ, and Christ is as old as God!

Indeed, if God should begin at any point of time to love sinners, His love would have had a beginning; and if His love had a beginning, Christ himself would have had a beginning, because love with Him is one with His essence and nature. But it may be said, can the love of God be older than the death of Christ? Answer: Christ's death doth not properly make God a hater or a lover of man, for then both His will should be changeable and His love have a beginning. How then? Christ's death doth only let, that God kythe the fruits of his eternal love out upon us, but after such a way as He thought convenient for His justice; and therefore *we* are said in Scripture "to be reconciled unto God," and not God to be reconciled unto us. His love is everlasting; because by order of nature it was before the seed, before we had done either good or evil; so that sin could not change God's mind, but only by the order of justice. Sin stood in the way to hinder us of life everlasting, which is a fruit of His love. Yea more, God with that same love in Christ, loveth the elect before and after conversion; and therefore, in feeling any of God's love to us, we have to rejoice in Christ. It is old acquaintance between Him and us. And therefore, as it is folly in man (as Solomon saith) to cast off his old friend, and his father's friend, so let us think it madness to cast off such an old friend as Christ. And under temptations and desertions, let our faith hold fast by this; Alpha and Omega changeth not, the change is in us.

3. The third thing in the words is a promise of the water of life to the thirsty: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Isaiah 55:1, and John 4:14. Christ at the market cross cries the well free. Here learn,

(1.) The thirsty, and hungry souls are meetest for the water of life. What! (ye will say) and are not all thirsty? Yes, all want the life of God, and the sap of grace, and are burnt and withered at the root; but all know not their own want. Here is indeed a special comfort for the weak ones who say, "O I know Christ doth good to believers, to repenters, and to such as love Him; but I dow not, cannot, win to faith and repentance, hope and patience: I have too short an arm to rax [reach] so high." Then, say I, have ye a desire, a hunger, for faith, and repentance, and love? Now, upon your conscience, speak the truth. I trow ye cannot deny it. Then your Lord bids you come: the well is open to you. For hunger and thirst being next to motion, and the two properties that begin first with life; so every one that is new-born is lively, and hath a stomach for meat and drink. "O but," say ye, "I am many times, in my soul, at death's door. I have neither faith nor feeling. I am even at this – 'God loves me not,' and the well is not ordained for me at these times." Would ye fain be at the well? In my mind ye cannot win away. In the children of God, when at the lowest ebb; even when faith, comfort,

joy, love, and disposition to pray is away, is there not a longing for a presence? I speak to the conscience of God's child; lie not. David, Psalm 6, when he thought God spake to him in wrath, was at, "How long, Lord?" A cutted word. I think that he looked like a poor hungry beast looking over the dyke; he would fain have had a mouthful. He was even going about to seek a slap to break over the dyke of his doubtings. And so it is with God's bairns, under their thirst for the water of the well of life. See Song 3, when the kirk can get no speiring of Christ, and has no smell of Him, and cannot find the print of His foot; yet she is at this, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" And chapter 5:8, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." Then, let me now tell you weak ones, who are Christ's companions, and who it is shall drink with Him, and get their hearts and heads full of the water of life, – even the tender Christians that are aye seeking. The bairn in Christ's house that is most cumbersome, and makes most din for his meat, is the best bairn that Christ has. The bairn that is greeting ilk hour of the day for a piece and a drink, we say of such a silly thing, "He would fain love." Aye the cumbersomer that Christ's bairns be, they are the welcomer. Na, He loveth the bairns best that have no shame, and are aye crying, "Alas! black hunger, dear Lord Jesus: I am burnt with thirst; O for an open cold fountain!" O it is a sweet thing aye to be whinging, and crying, and seeking about Christ's pantry doors, and to hold aye an eye upon Christ when He goes into the house of wine, into His Father's lucky wine cellar, where there are many wines, and bout [push] in at Christ's back. But, in a word, have ye a good stomach? much hunger and thirst? Well, ye shall get much satisfaction of grace in Christ. Is there not a time when ye cannot get a presence, and ye have no pith to put up the door and bout in, but ye put it half up and blink in? Love ye to pray, or desire ye but a desire of prayer? Hold on then. Ye are right. The true desire is absolute, and not conditional. Not like the sluggard that would have a crop, upon condition he might have a feather bed to lie on for fear of cold. Even so some would have heaven, upon condition that they might keep their lusts, and take their lusts with them.

Now, who are they that are debarred from Christ's well? Answer. Those who have gotten an ill drink from the devil, full of lusts, pride, and covetousness, – full of love of the world. Such are they that have no stomach for Christ. Alas! and woes me! Christ standeth at the well's side, and crieth, "The back of my hand to you." The Lord Jesus give such a vomit-drink, that they may grow wholesome and hungry again for Christ; for till then they are never meet for Him.

(2.) But secondly, Hunger is aye seeking through the whole house. For the belly can hardly play the hypocrite. The natural man is in darkness; he is in a sleep; it is night with him. He is like a cumbersome bairn greeting in the night for a drink, and crying, "Who will shew me any good?" Psalm 4:6. And Satan is ready at his elbow with his dishful of the dirty, miry waters of lust, and love to the world; and he drinks till he sweats and tines [loses] breath, and tines all sight and desire of Christ, – "the Fountain of the Water of Life." It is true this fountain is said to proceed "out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Revelation 22:1. But it is all one; for the streams of the water of life proceed from the fountain, Christ. How then is the water Christ? Answer. It is Christ-man dying, and sending out His heart's blood for quenching the thirst of such poor sinners as find the fire of hell at the stomach of their souls, burning them up with the fire of the wrath of God for sin. This is the well; this is why He is called "a fountain of the water of life." A man burnt with thirst, nothing can quench him; no, not a world of gold is so good as a drink of pure, cold, clean, fountain water. So a soul wakened under sin, findeth nothing in the world satisfactory to the soul's appetite, but in Christ. Tell me, art thou a thirsty sinner after Christ? Then thy soul is dead-sick till ye get Him. Is a man faint, and fatigued, and way-worn? Lay him down on a soft bed, dry the sweat off him, give him a cold refreshing drink. In like manner, ye cannot speak such a word to a soul-bursten thing under sin, as to lay it upon a crucified Christ. O that is a soft bed! His

sinful soul being stretched upon the open wounds, and warm-flowing blood of Christ. O that is a soft bed! O but a part of Christ's blood is a refreshing cooling drink to him! A slave of hell, to know that he is made a free heir of heaven – O that is sweet! Hence it is, that those who are wakened with the furies of hell, howbeit they know not yet what Christ is to them, yet this world cannot calm their conscience. Because, for men that are soul-sick and sin-sick there is no physic but one – only a “drink of the well of life.” And because they ken not the gate to this well of life, they, in despair, leap out of this life into the fire of hell, through the madness of an awakened conscience. A thirsty soul finds two things in Christ, never to be found in all the world or in anything else. 1st, Christ takes off the hardness of sin. None has power to do this but He. All the pardons of sin are in Christ's keeping, and of Christ's making. It is His office, and His alone to forgive sin. 2nd, They find in Him an influence and abundance of happiness, so that what they sought before in the creature, they find nowhere else but in Him. Speak to them of gold – it is nothing to Christ. Speak to them of lands and lordships – a Saviour, and such a Saviour, has another and a more delightful name to a sinner that is awakened. Again,

(3) The text calls Him “the water of life.” We see here there is some water rotten and ill-tasted. Will a thirsty man drink of it, he shall not be the better. But the wholesomest water is the running spring – so all that sinners can get beside Christ is standing water. Let them drink in gold, and kingdoms, and lands; these will never be satisfying to a sick soul as He will be. And they who have drunk in these, at death would be content to spue them out again; they lie so heavy upon their stomach. But Christ is the cooling, wholesome spring, “the well of water springing up to eternal life.” Now to make our use of this. Seeing Christ is such a living well of water, how comes it that under the gospel there are so many dry and withered souls? I answer, for God's part. Indeed, God has not put an iron lock upon the well of life; but Christ by His word and sacraments, opens the well in the midst of us, and for seventy years and more in this kingdom the well has been open – Christ and his messengers have been crying to dry souls. But now, for aught we see, He will close the well again. He has been setting out the means of life, and opening the booth-doors to give us freely, even to such as would take it; but He gets no sale. Therefore He must put up His wares, and go away, for men are not thirsty for His waters. But one thirsts for court and honour; another for lust and money, and a third for sinful pleasures. There be few stomachs gaping for Christ. They have not a vessel to cast down into the well, and take up water. This is a fruitless generation. O! we loathe Christ, and Christ loathes us. We need speak no more of the call of the Word. All the land, – court, king, noblemen and kirkmen, have spued the waters, by despising grace and contemning the gospel; and in very deed, when we cast in clay and mud in Christ's well, and mix His worship with the poison of the whore's well of Rome, what do we else but provoke the Lord to close the well?

“I will give it freely.” So are all Christ's mercies given of grace. His mercy is for nothing, and of free grace. I grant the well is dear to Christ. God's justice digged it out of His side, and heart, and hands, and feet. The man Christ got not this water for nothing; yet He gives it to us for nothing, because He minds not to make a gain of us. We live upon Christ's winning. For know ye that Christ, who redeemed many, did so by the rule of justice; since “he gave himself,” and has bought all “with His own blood;” so that in this sense Christ was bought to us with blood, else we could not get Him; for He was both the price and the wares; so that, as far as we can see, it was decreed by the Lord, by order of justice, that Christ could not have lived and given to us the waters of life. It was dear water to Him; for in the garden God deserted Him, and blood came out. On the cross God bruised Him, and blood came out; and *that* is the well we have here. We think we would have something to give to Christ for the water of life – some of our own righteousness – some of our own worthiness; but this is plastered humility, watered copper. And in doing so we refuse grace, and make grace to be no

more grace; for if it be given for any worth in us, then it is no more grace. Let men here then see that the kingdom of grace is a good cheap world, where the best things are gotten for nothing. I think in *this* dear world nothing now is bought for nought; all things go for money. Court costs expenses, lands are dear, gold is not gotten for nought; and law is dearer than ever it was. Yea, paper and ink are now dearer than jewels and gold rings were long syne. Yet Christ, for all that, will not change His world. All things with Him are given *gratis*, and ye are welcome when all is done. Here we get no garments for nought, no physic for nought; but Christ gave “white raiment,” “eye-salve,” and all for nought. Sinners say, “Lord, what take ye for the water of life?” He answers, “Even nothing, and yet welcome.” Christ plays not the merchant with His wares: He makes no gain, but cries, *The well is free*. No, says the Pope; not a drop of it till ye tell down money. That bloody Beast would sell the water of Rome for gold. As meikle money, – as meikle grace and forgiveness. Want ye money? He says, ye shall not come here. Nothing in Rome without money. Fie, fie; the stink of the devil’s world. Nay, but Christ is for nothing. Here justice giveth money, and officers give money; it is a dear world. But Christ and His world care no more for money than before.

Verse 7. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

I. Alway in this book, John urgeth “*fighting*” and “*overcoming*” for heaven. We wonder much that God will not have poor men go to heaven but by fighting, seeing He might have sent us to heaven by a second heaven. But this is but a thought of men, that would make a new backgate of their own to heaven. God advised well when He made His causeway to it, and ordained all His saints, yea, His own Son, to go that way. But it is easier for us to complain on God’s decree than to obey, and to dispute than believe. Men have too thin skins. For health they will cut a vein, or let a leg or an arm be cut off for fear of a fester; and yet for “life everlasting” they are so, that they dow not venture a moment’s pain.

There are excellent promises made to the overcomers – to him that taketh heaven with stroke of sword and blood. For heaven is a besieged city or castle. There are many foes to fight against. Armies of sin with all their armour, and the deceiving and malicious world, with Eve’s apple in one hand, and fire and sword in the other; and the devil is the captain of the army. Now, here is a prize set, and an offer made to him that overcometh; to him that will mount up by faith and hope, and leap up into Christ’s chariot, and betide him life, betide him death, will go through. They are cowards that take a backside, and let the devil coup [upset] them in a gutter. But yet to lead men on, here is a promise, “He shall inherit all things.” Ye see that the Christian’s Captain is a man of fair rent. “For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come – all are yours,” 1 Corinthians 3:21,22. And to let us see He bides [stands] by the thing He has said, He says again, “All are yours.” Ye see, in this world, one has a kingdom, as Asa, but wants health, and is sick of his feet – he has not all things. Another, as Samson, had strength of body above any living, yet had many troubles, and wanted his eyes – he had not all things. Oh the business Adam’s sons are at for inheritances! Here a mailen – there a lairdship – there a new lordship. These they call their all things. I think this is a greedy style, and proudlike lordship or lairdship. Yea greedy Adam’s sons have more greediness here than wit. They run all upon their lordships, that they call the lordship of many things. “Martha, Martha, thou art troubled,” Luke 10:41. Worldlings, ye are aye careful and troubled about this, to be called my lord of many things. But we shall see if the text be true.

Ye will notice, that Paul puts in “death” into the rent-roll. I think death an ill mailen, – better want it out of the charter. Nay, but death is also a part of the lordship this way, because it is my lord of all things, and a coach to glory, Christ Himself being the coachman and driving the horse. As the wind serveth to bring the seaman home, so death serveth him that hath the new lordship. Death is Christ’s ferry-boat to carry the Christian home, for in Christ

he sets his foot on death's neck. It is a bridge over the river of hell that he walketh on to heaven; and it is his. The Christian is advanced in Christ's court, and gets the new style, and is called my lord of all things, the prince, the duke of all things. Yet I shall get you a lordship far inferior, but much sought for – the lordship of vanity or nothing. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" He that is rich has nought, "For riches certainly make themselves wings; they flee away as an eagle toward heaven," Proverbs 23:5.

Again, if the Christian "inherits all things," then the whole world is his, and so he wanteth nothing. Psalm 89:25, "I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers." Here see how broad Christ's two arms are. His one hand upon all the sea, and His other hand upon the rivers. And that promise is made to Christ as principal cautioner of the covenant; for it is said, verse 26, "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation." Verse 27, "Also I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth," which is expounded of Christ, Hebrews 1:6. Again, in Revelation 10:2, He has "his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the earth." Put these two together, and see how wide His arms and legs, or feet are; they go over the whole world as His inheritance, which He won to Himself and His heirs after Him, with His blood. Now Christ got land not to Himself. What! needed He land, and to give His blood for clay! But He won it to us, and took infetment in the earth, in the name of His friends; so that in Him they inherit "all things."

But here one may say, How is it then that the saints are hungry and poor? Answer. It is true they are not now possessors of all things. But (to compare earthly things with the heavenly) for minors' wants ye see their interest is in and over all things, yet their tutor lets them go with a toom [empty] purse. He knows the heir is a young one, and cannot keep gold, and therefore He gives him food and raiment for his present necessity, but keeps the lordship till he be able to guide it. Even so Christ is made of God our tutor and treasurer. It is all one whether our wealth be in our chest-nook, or in our tutor's hand, to keep till we need it, providing we lose it not.

Another objection and doubt is, Seeing they are under so many troubles in this life, and have no ease, the saints have not "all things." I answer, yet I must defend it, and say, if they have the inheritance they have all things, because the sweet of the comforts and the trouble is theirs.

A third question or objection is, The saints have not heaven and glory, at least, in this life, and therefore they have not all things. I answer, the promise is not fulfilled in this life. Yet when a man has shorn a stook or two of corn, we say, he "has got harvest and new corn." So the believer gets joy, hope, faith, assurance of heaven, and the first fruits of the Spirit; these are a foretaste of the full harvest and new corn; and having God and Christ, the saints have all things. For ye see the great ship draggeth the cock-boat after her, so the great Christ bringeth all things after Him at His back. So I say, having Christ, believers, ye have all things – ye have "the Father, and the Spirit, the word, life, and death." – Amen. Let us pray.

[September 1900]

