

# A Sermon.

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“For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of the testator” – Hebrews 9:16.

The terms covenant and testament are often used in this epistle. In His infinite wisdom, the Most High dealt with man from the beginning federally. In a covenant there must be two parties. In the covenant of works the Creator and man were the contracting parties. We ought to banish the idea from our mind that it was this covenant that bound Adam to obey the holy law of his Maker. All rational creatures are bound to love the Lord their God with all their powers, and to render that obedience which the law demands. But when God entered into a covenant with man new obligations were incurred. Man became responsible to fulfil certain conditions upon the fulfilment of which he could claim eternal life. The Creator promised this freely to Adam. Adam, on the other hand, was most plainly told of the result, should he break this covenant, both upon himself and his posterity. “And the Lord God commanded man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16,17). Notwithstanding, Adam broke the covenant, and thereby fell from his original righteousness, and became a sinner. He became an enemy to God in his mind, and all the thoughts and imaginations of his heart became evil. But though man fell away from his allegiance to God, his obligations did not cease. The miseries which sin brought upon Adam and his posterity in this life itself are awful, but they are only a drop out of the ocean of that wrath of God which is the wages of sin in eternity. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23): “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

God, in infinite mercy, looked down from the height of His eternal glory upon the most awful condition into which Adam fell, came to him, and revealed to him a way of deliverance through the seed of the woman. This was the first announcement made of the Saviour, and of the covenant of grace. It is this covenant of grace, with its modes of outward ordinances, of which the Apostle writes to the Hebrews. He shows them in this epistle that Christ is the substance of all the sacrifices and ritual of the covenant made with them at Mount Sinai; that all these ceremonies held forth Christ in His obedience and atoning death; and that they all had their efficacy from His person as the rays of light have their power from the sun. In meditating upon the words of our text we shall endeavour, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to consider three things in particular: –

- I. The Testator;
- II. The necessity under which He was;
- III. The Testament.

I. The Testator. The Apostle, in this epistle, keeps before the mind of the reader the two terms “covenant” and “testament.” These two describe the covenant of grace. It was a covenant, properly speaking, as it was made with Christ, but sinners receive its benefits as Christ's testament.

(1) Let us consider the spiritual condition of those for whom Christ humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. First of all they were guilty. They had broken the holy law of God, and nothing but death could meet its sentence. If they should face this sentence in their own persons, the punishment would necessarily be endless. So awful are the demands of justice against the sinner for the dishonour done to the Lord's majesty by sin, that it not only claims at the hands of the offender a perfect obedience (which

was man's obligation under the covenant of works), but also to suffer the utmost penalty of the law – even death in its threefold aspect – temporal, spiritual, and eternal. The sinner lay quite helpless under this righteous, but most terrible doom. God's justice is like great mountains, and His judgments are deep as floods. The justice which man impugned is the habitation of God's throne, and thus it became necessary to punish the creature whose aim in sin was to overturn the government and throne of the Most High. The only sentence which can bear the least proportion to such a crime is, that the floods of God's wrath throughout eternity should be let loose upon the guilty. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). This will appear clear to our own reason and conscience if we consider that this will be the aim of the sinner throughout eternity. The enmity begotten through sin in the mind of man cannot be removed except by grace. No education, example, or environment can change man's nature; nothing can do that but regeneration. The sinner could not extricate himself from this awful condition. Though an angel, or all the angels of glory should come to his aid they could do nothing. One sin brought myriads of angels in an instant from heaven to hell. So terrible is sin when we look to its effects on rational creatures that we must conclude that one sin is sufficient to bring eternal death upon any number of them, let their dignity as creatures be what it may. So there was no help for man in himself, or in any creature whatsoever. He would have to perish eternally without remedy had not the Lord, in His infinite mercy, provided a way of escape.

(2) In the covenant made with Israel on Mount Sinai many sacrifices for sin were set up. There was a mercy-seat set up in the most holy place, and a high priest was appointed whose duty it was to enter that place once a year with the blood of the sacrifices, on the great day of atonement, to intercede for Israel before that mercy-seat; while other priests were set apart to offer sacrifices daily for the sins of the people. All these sacrifices could not take away sin. The awakened conscience could find no rest or peace in them. The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. This is as clearly set forth in the Old Testament as it is in the New. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:6,7). Though rivers of the blood of animals had been spilt for sin, the guilt of it still remained. The tabernacle, the mercy-seat, the altar, the high priest, and all the sacrifices typified Christ. They were shadows of Him; for those who by faith saw in and by them the great sacrifice of Calvary, they were efficacious; but to all who looked only to the merit of these sacrifices as they were in themselves there was no efficacy in them. It is not only the justice of God that demands death as the wages of sin; the conscience of the sinner, when awakened, demands the same. So those who were taught of the Holy Ghost before the coming of Christ in the flesh, understood the nature of the atonement, and looked to His death as the only way of deliverance. The word of God is the only rule of faith. In the first promise the bruising of Satan's head was to be by the bruising of the heel of the woman's seed. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah the great sacrifice for sin is held forth as clearly as in the Gospels. The same thing is true of the Psalms.

(3) Let us briefly consider the person, and humiliation of the Testator. In the first chapter of this epistle the Apostle proves that He was God. He shows that there are passages in the Old Testament which God the Father spake, and that they can neither be applied to angels or men. "For," says He, "unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him." God never asked any of his rational creatures to worship a mere creature; therefore Christ is God. The Apostle then takes up other truths to prove that Christ is the

moral Governor of the universe. “But to the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” He then goes on to show that God the Father spake to Christ as the Creator of all things. “And, Thou, O Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest” (Hebrews 1:5-11). In the second chapter the Apostle takes up the proof of the human nature of Christ, and of His humiliation and sufferings. For though it is proved to the satisfaction of any who submit to the truth of God in matters of faith, in the above quotations, that Jesus Christ is a divine person, and equal to God the Father, Christ had a human nature; and therefore the Apostle goes on to prove that the Word of God spoke of him as having it. “What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.” Under whom? under any of the sons of Adam. He speaks of him here as having absolutely all things in this world and in that which is to come put under him. Now there never was such a man among the human race. The Apostle shows that this was fulfilled in Jesus. “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour.” In this epistle we, as well as the Hebrews, are taught infallibly that Jesus of Nazareth was God, and when He became man did not cease to be what He was – God. Therefore, the second Adam, or covenant head on the sinner’s side, is the Lord from heaven.

The Scriptures speak of the covenant of grace as being between the Father and the Son. The Father took the side of the offended Godhead; the Son took the place of the sinner. He thus became responsible to God the Father to make amends for the breach of the covenant of works, by rendering to the moral law a perfect obedience, and by laying down His own life as an expiation for the sins of such as shall be saved. It was to the Testator a covenant in the strictest meaning of the term; but to them for whom He stood, the blessings of this covenant came in the form of a will or testament. This is the well-ordered and sure covenant which is offered to sinners in the Gospel. None but God could pay the penalty due to sin, and this had to be done in the sinner’s nature. This is the Testator – the eternal Son of God, who became man, and so was, and continues to be, both God and man in two distinct natures, and one person for ever.

II. The necessity under which He was. We have endeavoured to show the awful condition into which man fell by sin. We must keep that in view when speaking or thinking of the mediation of Christ. He became responsible to God for the sins of the elect. He took the very place legally which belonged to them. The guilt of their sin was transferred from them to Him. The curse of God against sin became His also. This became His when the iniquity of His people was laid upon Him. He who was made under the law, in order to obey its precepts and penalties, was the Creator of heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is. Every step of His obedience, from the manger in Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross, were the steps of God, the second Person of the adorable Trinity, in man’s nature. It was God in human nature that obeyed the holy law. This magnified the law and made it honourable. When an innocent creature – man or angel – obeys the moral law he must say: – “I am an unprofitable servant: I have done that which was my duty to do.” Not so with Christ. He put an honour on the holy law infinitely greater than the dishonour man put upon it. He sits upon the circle of the earth; and the inhabitants of it are like grasshoppers before Him, or as the small dust of the balance. Christ’s obedience, when set over against the disobedience of the creature, makes the sins of the elect like the dust of the clouds before God the Father. In order to attain this He had to

become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He emptied Himself so fully that He had to say: – “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20). He emptied Himself so that creatures ministered to Him with their substance. He who made all things, and to whom all things belong helped by His own creatures! Why? Because the sinner forfeited his right to one drop of cold water, and He was now in the place of the sinner before God; and on account of the love which He bore to His own people, and to His Father’s glory. He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, with all His soul, with all His strength, and with all His mind; and His neighbour as Himself. Though He was made a curse for sin, His love to the Father knew no abatement; but He loved the law, by which He was accursed for the sins of His people, with a perfect love. Though He was hated by men, He loved them with a perfect love. “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1).

Humiliation with a life of sorrows and griefs was not the climax of His sufferings. The death sentence passed by God on man for sin had to be met. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). We have drawn attention already to the truth that the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. Christ took to Himself the body which the Father prepared for Him. This was written of Him, “Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required. Then I said, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God” (Psalm 40:6-8). This is the *will* of which He so submissively spoke in the garden of Gethsemane: – “Not my will but thine be done” (Luke 22:42). The Holy Ghost gives us an infallible comment on this great truth: – “By this will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). The body and soul of the Lord Jesus had to be offered as a sacrifice to God for the sins of an elect world. Christ, in His own person was the priest, sacrifice, and altar, when He offered Himself without spot to God. This was the most amazing sight ever seen. The Father Himself speaks of it as such: – “For who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 30:21).

The flaming sword of divine justice, which appeared at the gate of the garden of Eden to keep Adam out from the tree of life, was commanded to awaken against God’s only begotten Son. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon the little ones” (Zechariah 13:7). Christ applies this truth to what took place consequent to his apprehension at the garden of Gethsemane: – “Then Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Matthew 26:31). No doubt wicked men, who are declared to be God’s sword, did their utmost, urged on by Satan, also Satan and the powers of darkness, to cause as much agony to the Lord of glory as lay in their power. The twenty-second Psalm bears this out fully. But the sting of all the agony of Christ’s soul and body on Calvary’s cross is to be found in the cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He was made a curse for His people. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). He grappled in his death with the eternal death, which is the wages of sin, and dried up the hell of the elect upon the cross. His eternal power as God upheld his human nature, till all the wrath and curse which were due to sin from a just God were fully exhausted upon His soul and body on the cross. Had he been a creature, as the Socinians of our day hold Him forth in their teaching, He would have lain eternally under the burden. He, by His death, swallowed up death in victory; made an end of sin; finished transgression; and brought in an everlasting righteousness. He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. This was the errand upon which the Son of God came into the world. “He said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:30). On the day of the resurrection

He said to the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus: – “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory” (Luke 24:26). These are a few of the necessities into which the Testator brought Himself by becoming the surety of His people, who were strangers and enemies.

By His obedience and atoning death He redeemed their persons from the curse of the law, and purchased for them an inheritance, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, in the heavens. He opened a way for the mercy of God to flow forth like a river from the throne of God to perishing sinners of mankind. The Father put all things under Him that He might give eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him. These are the things of which we will now endeavour to say a few words under the third head.

III. The Testament. In a testament or will, among men, there are several parties concerned. This text speaks to us after the manner of men declaring dark sayings of old in parables, or similitudes.

First, there is the testator. He has something which he desires to bestow upon others after his death. “A testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” (Hebrews 9:17). He, therefore, makes his will so that his affairs after his death may be settled according to his own mind.

Second, there is the lawyer before whom the testimony is to be written and attested. His duty is, that everything which the testator desires to be written should be inserted in the testament exactly in accordance with the testator’s desire.

Thirdly, there is the witness who hears and writes the testament from the mouth of the testator; and also attests it as witness of the transaction.

Fourthly, there are those unto whom the testator makes over his riches after his death. The benefits they are to receive are set down carefully in the testament, and what each individual is to get is definitely stated. None can make any changes in this transaction but the testator himself. Two copies are written of the testament; one of them is sealed and the other is left open. The sealed copy is not to be looked into till after the testator’s death. Death is the confirmation of it.

The testament of Christ is written, and is called the Old and the New Testaments. Not because they are two different Testaments, but because there were two periods of time embraced by them. Under the Old Testament, sinners received the blessings of salvation upon the credit of Christ’s faithfulness to pay their debt when the fulness of time should come. Under the New the atonement is an accomplished fact. Whether under the Old or New Testaments sinners were saved, it was by faith in Christ as the head and mediator of the covenant of grace, they were saved. It was the blessings of His purchase that they all received.

In our day brutish men are tampering with Christ’s Testament, and declaring that it is full of errors, &c. This only proves that there is nothing in it for them; for those who expect that there is anything in it for them, they want to leave it as it is. Audacious men may take the awful responsibility of adding to it, or taking from it, and thereby bring guilt and the curse of God upon themselves, but Christ ever liveth to see that all the blessings which He has purchased for His people shall be made theirs. The copy on earth may be tampered with by thieves, but the copy in heaven is beyond their reach. It seems to us a miracle that, after all the attacks made upon God’s Word in this world, it should have passed unscathed out of the hands of such wicked men.

(1) This Testament has to be read in this world to all the chosen of God. They must hear it. For this purpose Christ has set up a ministry, and the means of grace in the world. The duty of Christ’s ministers is to read and expound the contents of this Testament to the people. It is not their duty to add any thing to it or take from it. It is their duty to tell the character and conduct of the parties to whom its blessings are freely offered, and the awful doom that

awaits such as die without getting a share in it. On the other hand, it is the duty of the people to assemble together in order that they may hear, believe, and be saved. If they neglect this, they are accounting themselves unworthy of eternal life. Paul sets this before us: – “How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?” (Romans 10:14,15). He tells most distinctly what the ministers of Christ are to preach: – “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:1,2). Now this testament is read to men spiritually dead. It is God’s word, or voice, that can quicken the dead. In the prophecy of Ezekiel (37:1-10) we have a full description given us of the duty of the prophet, his text, and the work of the Holy Spirit among the dead. The bringing of a sinner to spiritual life is as great a miracle as the calling of the dead out of their graves. The reading and expounding by men of God, of Christ’s Testament has quickened many a dead soul, and will continue to do so till the end of time, till all the elect are saved. This is the way God has chosen, and He is pleased to save sinners by it: – “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Saving faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

(2) Let us consider a few of the things conferred on sinners in this Testament.

First: Christ Himself must be received by faith as the first and unspeakable gift of this Testament. Christ is offered in the gospel to sinners as a Saviour. Until sinners accept of Him as offered in the Word of God, they are without an actual interest in the covenant of grace, without God and without hope in the world. The Holy Ghost convinces every sinner that is saved of the truth of this. The reason and conscience of the sinner are quickened to concur with the testimony of God’s truth against himself. He is convinced that he is a sinner. He cannot call himself now by any other name: – “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). He feels his guilt, and is convinced that he must perish for ever if God will not have mercy on him. This name – sinner – is quite new to him now. The Spirit leads him to the truth that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. This raises a desire in his mind after Christ. His fear before may have been that he should be cast into hell for ever; but his greatest fear now is that he may die without obtaining a saving interest in Christ. He begins to seek Christ. He is now convinced that his inability to accept of Christ offered to him in the gospel is the sin which will be, if God interpose not, his ruin. He searches for Him in the Scriptures, in private prayer, and if within his reach, in the public means of salvation. We read of two – a newly married couple – in the north of Scotland, who, being awakened to a sense of their lost and Christless condition, began to search the Scriptures, and so intent were they, that many a time the fire would be quite extinguished and the hearth cold, before either of them would observe that it was so. “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:3-5). The things of time are forgotten in the concerns of eternity. The mind cannot be kept from eternal and spiritual things; the perishable objects of this world are little thought of. One told us that, at such a period of his life, he was for three years that he could not think of anything but eternity: – “But,” he said, “it is as difficult for me to bring my mind now away from the things of this world, as it would have been then to bring it from the things of eternity.” The Lord may bring this change about in a moment; so we don’t mean that He, in His infinite wisdom, deals in the same way with every sinner.

The Spirit of God opens the eyes of the mind of the sinner, and presents Christ to him in the promise of the Word of God, enabling him to embrace and rest upon Him alone for salvation. Faith never comes alone into the soul. Love, hope, confidence, &c., come along with it. When the sinner thus embraces Christ by faith, he views Him as the atoning sacrifice

for sin. He feels in his conscience that his sins are forgiven him; he also sees by faith the ground of his justification – that God is just when He justifies the ungodly sinner that believes in Christ. Christ is now his righteousness before God: – “Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). The peace of God fills his soul. Everything becomes new to him. He sees a beauty even in the material creation that he never saw before. He is surrounded with gladness: – “For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12). He is like David: – “He brought me also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he put a new song in my mouth, even praises to our God” (Psalm 40:2,3). He is now an heir of God and joint heir with Christ. All things are his, because Christ is his. Christ’s Testament is a real thing to him now; and what rejoices his heart is, that though Christ died to bring all the blessings of the covenant of grace to him, He ever lives to confer these blessings, and to enjoy them with the saved sinner throughout an endless eternity.

Many a cloud may come over his evidences, but where God hath begun the good work, He will accomplish it until the day of Jesus Christ. Unbelief will come, Satan will come, the world will come, and the flesh will come; but God will not cast off the heirs of salvation. The sinner will have often to go back to the Testament to see if there be anything for him in it. Sometimes he finds nothing, at other times he finds that his name is there. I read of a young girl, at the time of persecution in Scotland, who went away on a Sabbath morning to attend a Conventicle at a distance. The troopers met her and asked her where was she going. She said to them that her elder brother had died, that he had left a large legacy, and that she was going to see if he left anything for her. They allowed her to pass, not understanding what she meant.

It is generally the case that people are full of confidence that something is left to them when a wealthy friend dies. Christ is the sinner’s friend. Many, therefore, take it for granted that He has left heaven in His Testament for them, who make little conscience of making their calling and election sure. There will be awful surprises awaiting such when the Book of Life is opened at the last day. Name after name shall be called, and the self-confident sinner will be expecting to hear his own next; but that next will not come till the whole are read off. The deluded sinner then will see his own folly in having taken for granted that, because he had good hopes of his own case, he was sure of heaven at last. Many will curse their deceitful hearts that day, who think now that they have good hearts. The truth of God, however, never deceived any man. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.

Others will hear their names read out on the great day, who often concluded in this world that there was nothing in Christ’s legacy for them. They were finding so much sin and corruption in their heart that they could not see how grace could be in them at all. This was causing them to abhor themselves, and to think it a wonder that God bore with them so long: – “If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130:3). Two of the crowned heads of Europe met once, and the one said to the other who had come to visit him: – “I will give you any of the condemned criminals in such a prison, whom you will select, and you can give him his liberty.” They both went to the prison. The prisoners were brought forth, and the king asked each in turn: – “What crime hast thou committed?” Every one told him that he had not been guilty of any crime, but that he was wrongfully condemned. He met one man among them who, when he asked him the above question, answered: – “If you should ask me – What crime hast thou *not* committed? – it would be easier for me to answer.” “Then,” he said, “you confess that you are justly condemned!” “Yes,” he said, “and the wonder to me is that I was not condemned to die!” The king passed along until he had gone through them all. He then stood forth, and called this man by his name; but the man did not so much as look up. He called him again with the same result. The third time he called

him, and the man looked towards him. He said to him: – “I give you your freedom; for you are too bad a man to be left in the company of such innocent companions.” The Lord’s people have nothing good to say of themselves. They know themselves too well for that, and still they discover evils in their hearts every day, of which they were formerly ignorant. All His children shall be taught of God. Their confidence in the flesh is gone. All their hope and confidence is placed in Christ alone. Salvation by grace alone meets their case. If one good thought should be held forth as a condition upon which they should receive the blessings of the covenant, they would conclude that they could not fulfil it; but because salvation is of free and sovereign grace, they have some hope. This hope is altogether through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The Apostle sums up their possessions in these words: – “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; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Corinthians 3:21-23). Poor child of God, behold your possessions! – “Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11).

The children of God have eternal life by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but what have the rest of the human race who are Christless? All are by nature children of wrath, but the unrepentant shall be lost eternally. God declares on His oath that He has no delight in the death of the sinner, but that His delight is that sinners should turn unto Him and live. Oh, sinner! will you continue in your carnal ease and security, while God is telling you clearly in His word that you must be cast into outer darkness after death? You are yet in time where Christ is in your offer, and you are called to come to Him just as you are and be saved. Listen to Him who speaks from heaven, and come with your eye upon the atonement made on Calvary’s cross as your only plea for mercy. “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).

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## Notes of a Sermon

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“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” – Ecclesiastes 12:14.



A more faithful friend than the Word of God we cannot have. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Sinners are apt to lull themselves to sleep in forgetfulness of God and in forgetfulness of judgment. Many influences combine to strengthen this tendency – the power of things seen; the strength of self-esteem; our natural aversion to thoughts about what may turn out ill for us; all these things, and others too, work hand in hand. They flatter us with a sense of security. We are apt to say – "To-morrow will be as to-day, and much better. God doth not see, neither is there knowledge with the Most High. If He sees, He does not care. We should not fancy that He is more particular about these things than we ourselves are, for see how smoothly the wheels of providence run." Such and such like is the language of a deceived heart. The kisses of an enemy do this; but there is a friendly voice of warning and admonition here speaking – "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Men do not care to think of how bad their standing is as before God. They either fancy that things are better than they are, or forget the whole matter. The dishonest man of business, who suspects that matters are not all as they should be, shrinks from examining his accounts; he does not wish to be put about; he does not care to know how near he is to the brink of ruin. The sinner is God's debtor. It is only the long-suffering of his creditor that spares him as he is. He does not care to know how things are as between himself and his maker. The easiest pillow he can find for his head is to forget or slur over the whole subject. This may do for time; it may give delusive peace as long as body and soul hang together; but once they part company, and the disembodied spirit passes before the bar of God, then the vanity of false hope and delusive security will be seen in the light of an undone eternity. It is no true friendship to the sinner to suffer him to sleep on into the second death, and the Word of God shows itself a true friend in declaring to men the reality and the certainty of judgment to come. Whether they lay it to heart or not, the reality remains. Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, judgment is certain, and they must appear in the judgment to render an account of their stewardship. As this is so, it belongs to us, every one, to take heed to this message.

In considering these words of our text, let us look at them as follows: –

- I. – There is a judgment.
- II. – The field this judgment covers –
  - (a) as to persons,
  - (b) as to things.
- III. – The Judge and His standard of judgment.

I. – There is a judgment. Man is a reasonable being. He is not the plaything of blind chance; he has not been made anyhow; he is accountable to God, his maker. God never trifles, and there is no trifling shown in His dealings with man. Man was made in God's image, and he was made to serve and worship God. The claim of the divine law on him was that he should love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind, and his neighbour as himself. There has been no abatement of this claim. An abatement would be unrighteous. There is no unrighteousness with God, and from Him alone could any abatement come, if abatement there could be. Man may fancy that such a claim is not made upon him; he may think he does not owe such a debt as this; he may propose abatements – but these are but his thoughts and his proposals. God has His claims on man, and man is accountable for the use he makes of his time and talents here. There is righteousness in God's administration; there is wisdom; there is strength; and because there is, there is a judgment day, there is a day of reckoning. It is appointed, it is sure, it is hastening, and with the realities of this day, we have all to do. However much man may trifle and play with the solemn realities of God and

judgment, they are no trifling matters. Remember it or forget it as you may, there is a judgment, and we have to face it each one.

There is nothing purposeless in the wide creation of God. He made everything for Himself and all inanimate creation fulfil His will; all things stand as He ordains, for all are His servants, and as His absolute will is fulfilled in the motions of sun, moon and stars, in the constitution of earth, air, and sea, that will claims obedience in the moral sphere, and when obedience is not forthcoming punishment is inevitable. Man's moral being has been given him, not that he might rebel and trample on the claims of God, not that he might please himself and introduce disorder into the harmony of creation, it has been given him that in a higher sphere than that of inanimate nature, he might shew forth the glory of his Creator; it has been given him that he might know God, enter into His thoughts, hold communion with Him, love Him, serve Him, and obey Him. For this end his moral nature has been given man. There is a deep mystery in creation out of nothing. There is a deep mystery in the creation of an intelligent free agent capable of willing and doing, and in willing and doing to take his own way, and not the way of God. Sin is a mystery. Sin is a reality, and with sin comes death, for God is a just God, and will recompense men according to their deeds. There might have been a day of reckoning, had there been no sin, but now that sin has entered in and with it death, how awful is the thought of judgment for those for whom there is nothing awaiting but the wrath of the Almighty! The day is fixed, the judge is appointed, for by "that man" whom He hath raised from the dead will God judge the world, and of this He has given us assurance in His infallible Word. God has appointed the judgment, therefore it must come. He has arranged all about it, and everything is unalterable. Let men remember or let men forget, the judgment is fixed, the judgment is hastening, and not more surely will they be in the scene, who believe in its coming and who prepare for its coming, than shall they be who would if they could avert its arrival, and though they cannot check its course, forget that its course is inevitable, and that this course shall be run. The judgment is sure. Let us never forget this.

II. – Consider now the extent of the judgment –

(a) as to persons,

(b) as to things.

(a) God's empire extends over all His creatures. His government takes to do with all the actions of His reasonable subjects, and in correspondence with this is the extent of the judgment. None of us are exempt from this; we are all subject to this, to give an account of ourselves to God, and His Word makes it unmistakably clear that all men of all classes shall pass before His bar. The highest on earth are subject to His judgment; the meanest are not beneath His notice. No one can so soar above his fellows as to cease to be accountable to God. No one can so sink himself beneath his fellows as to escape liability to render his account. What all men are alike in is of more moment than what they differ in. Their differences are accidental; their agreements are essential. They all agree in the possession of human nature, and this common possession of human nature is a bond that ties them closer together than that any circumstantial difference of lot should be able to separate them. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, wise and foolish, all, all are accountable to God, all shall appear in the judgment. In that judgment the righteous and the wicked alike shall appear. They will constitute then the two classes that will comprise the whole human family. As they do now, so will they then include all the inhabitants of earth. As they will do then, so do they now. There are but then two classes, and according as we belong to one class or another here, are our prospects in view of the judgment of the great day.

The two classes will equally appear in the judgment, but in the judgment they shall not occupy the same position. Their prospects differ here and their position will differ there. The wicked will be there and judgment shall be passed on them according to their work. The righteous too shall have judgment passed on them according to their work. The wicked shall

be rewarded as they deserve, and the righteous too shall be rewarded according to the character of their works, but their reward is not estimated on the ground of the value of their works. Their reward is sure. They never, however, could have deserved it. It is a reward according to work, but it is a reward all of grace. It is *according to* works, but it is not *of* works. The wicked shall appear and receive as their works deserve, but their reward differs from that of the righteous in that it is all their own by right and in justice, and no one has had a hand in winning it but themselves alone. The wicked have no standing ground but that of their own deserts. The righteous differ from them in this. They shall differ from them in this respect at the great day; but, indeed, they already differ from them. The difference between the righteous and the wicked is as varied, as deep-seated, and as thorough in this life as it will be at the great day. It is not, however, so potent, so easily seen, so unmistakable. Both classes receive according to their works. The wicked receive, on account of their works, indignation, dishonour, and wrath.

It may be asked, Why do not the righteous likewise receive on account of their works? This opens up the question of what distinguishes the righteous and the wicked. By nature there was no difference. The righteous were wicked; they were children of wrath even as others; they were children of disobedience as truly as others; and had they been dealt with on the ground of their merits, they should not now be the righteous; rather would they belong to the wicked who receive the wages of sin that is death. They were not righteous until the Lord imputed to them the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. In justification they were delivered from the state of wrath and brought into a state of favour; their sins were forgiven; their lack of righteousness was made up for, when Christ was made of God to them their righteousness. This it is that separated them radically from the world in which they were. A change of state brought with it God's blessing instead of his curse. Sin was no longer laid to their charge, and so for them there was now no longer any condemnation. Not only is there no condemnation, but there is also positive acceptance, and as their persons are accepted in Christ, so too are their services. In themselves their services are imperfect, and as such deserve not the reward of the inheritance, but rather the wages of sin; but the privilege of the children of God is, that Christ's intercession alike prevents sin being laid to their charge and secures that their service of loyalty, imperfect though it be, shall be accepted. This intercession as sweet incense perfumes their services. It is of God that a distinction is made between their services and the imperfection of their services. He can distinguish between them, so that accepted in Christ their halting, faulty services would scarcely be recognisable by themselves, could they see how fair it looks. Their best works are imperfect, yet they are good, and according to the character of their works will they receive at the great day. Yet they will receive what their works could by no means merit, and thus, though they receive according to their works, they do not receive on account of their works. All this means that they shall find mercy of the Lord that day, that their sins shall not secure their condemnation; but does not this jar with the statement of our text that every work shall come into judgment together with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil? This we shall consider under next head.

(b) The extent of the judgment as regards the things that enter into it. What field does the judgment cover as regards *things*? Our text tells us expressly that every *thing* enters into it – everything good and evil alike. The judgment of God passes over nothing, good or bad, open or secret. There is nothing bearing on the case of each individual of our race that is not fully known to the Judge, and everything will have its due weight given it. God searches the heart and tries the reins. Appearances never deceive Him. Our secret faults are set in the brightness of His face. He is from eternity to eternity. A day with Him is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. With Him there is no past or future, for everything that with us is past is still before His eye, and what has not yet come to light is seen by Him. No event can

then take Him by surprise, and He cannot be ignorant of all the past or of any of it. Such is the character of the Judge's knowledge. He knows what is in man; He needs no subordinate testimony. Should He call for it, it would be forthcoming, but subsidiary testimony is unnecessary; His infallible and universal knowledge is evidence enough. There is no individual of our race beyond His ken. Nothing any has been, nothing anyone has done, no relation in which anyone stood to others, is or can be unknown to Him. Such is the Judge, and such being the case, we see what field His judgment covers. It is, as our text asserts, a universal judgment. The judgment is as universal as human accountability. This, however, does not shut us absolutely up to the last day as the period when His judgment is exercised. Human accountability runs on; we are always accountable to God, and we may have to render our account at any time. He may summon us to our account when it pleases Him.

Now, it has pleased Him already to act as Judge, and to enter into judgment. The hour has been when judgment was executed. "Now is the judgment of this world." Christ came as the Lamb of God to bear, and so to take away, the sins of the world. In Him was no sin, but He came as the Saviour of sinners. Their sin stood related to the law of God; in relation to that law He came, "made of a woman, made under the law." He came to bear its curse, He came to secure its blessing; and ere its curse could be borne, judgment must be executed. Sin was not in Him, but says the Church, taught of the Father, "The Lord made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all. The chastisement of our peace was upon him." Judgment was executed. The sin of those whom He represented was visited in His person with the judicial infliction of the curse. Then was "the judgment of this world." What a judgment it was! Sins innumerable, of every class, of every age, of the deepest dye, were there. Their guilt was laid to His charge, and as the representative in law of His clients, He accepted their penalty. The sword awoke against Him; a victim led, His blood was shed; He poured out His soul unto death. The sun was darkened and the moon gave no light. As it shall be at the great day, so was it then. The lights in the firmament of the heavens, as it were, failed. It was no natural darkness that eclipsed the sun's bright light. The time was that of the Passover. The moon was full, and so could not come between our earth and the sun. Poets may say that nature mourned, that the sun was draped in black; but let us plain people remember that then was "the judgment of this world," then was the execution of the curse. When time shall be no more, and its stream shall have terminated in the ocean of eternity, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall no more give her light. This will accompany the final judgment, which shall wind up the proceedings of time and usher in the ages of eternity.

"The world to come" has already come. The Sun of Righteousness has already risen with the bright shining of an eternal day. He shall set no more, but when the world to come was introduced then the old order passed away. The old gave place to the new. This judgment wound up the period of the old dispensation, and it inaugurated the new. Its accompaniments in the physical world correspond to what yet shall be when time shall give place to eternity. Judgment has been executed on the sins of the believing people of God. Their evil works and secret things that were evil have come to light, and have entered into the burden laid on Messiah's shoulders, and if their sins shall not be found any more for ever, it is because their penalty and curse have already been borne. They have been atoned for; they have been abolished. The righteous at the great day are justified sinners. Their sins shall not be mentioned to their shame, and their righteousness shall be produced as proof of their character. This righteousness by obedience belongs to those and all those from whom the curse has been lifted. They shall not be put to shame. They shall appear with Christ, who is their life, and when He shall appear the second time, it is without sin unto salvation.

The universality of God's judgment, then, is not affected by the fact that the righteous shall not be put to shame, when the heavens shall reveal the justice of God, and all men shall see His righteousness. The sins of the righteous have been blotted out, and that has been done

because they have been borne by Christ. And this speaks loudly of the certainty of judgment. If, even when laid to His charge, they could not be passed over, but must be visited, how much more must the sins of those be visited with punishment condign, who refuse the covert and the refuge afforded to sinners in the surety and righteousness of Immanuel? The extent of the judgment of God is but shown forth by the fact that His people shall not be put to shame. The Lamb as it had been slain sits on the throne, and so the very presence of the Son of Man, as Judge, will tell of vengeance executed, of iniquity borne, in order to be blotted out. It has been borne, so He was slain. It has been blotted out, for He lives, and He who is the Living One shall judge.

But not only shall the evil works and secret devices of the wicked come before the bar of justice, other things also shall come; "every work" shall be there. The righteousness of the righteous, and their secret things that are good, shall be there. For whether it be good, or whether it be evil, every work and every secret thing shall then have sentence passed upon it. Now, no one that admits the doctrine of the Word of God as to the state and condition of the natural man will venture to say that any good works or anything truly good is his. He is corrupt; his works are vile, not one of them doeth good. Since this is so, if there are good works that shall come to light in the judgment, these cannot belong to the wicked. An evil tree brings forth evil fruit; it cannot bring forth good fruit. If these works belong not to the wicked, they must belong to the righteous, and to them only. Thus we read in Matthew 16 of the testimony that the King shall bear to those on His right hand. He will bring their fruits of righteousness to light before an assembled universe and will have nothing to say about their ways that were not good.

Those that are justified by faith live a life of faith and a life of obedience. Thus they bring forth fruit. Their obedience is far from perfect, but all its imperfection is taken away in the virtue of the atoning blood, and the effectual intercession of their great High Priest. He intercedes for them, and no sin is laid to their charge, and such is the effect of His intercession, that it separates between their works and the imperfection that attaches to them. None of the imperfection of purpose or execution that is in their obedience is laid to their charge, so that they can scarcely recognise their own obedience, when it has passed through the hands of Christ. Thus we find the righteous saying, "When saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in? or naked and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?" Their wanderings all are known to Him, He takes note of their tears. Of their heart the secret groans are not hidden from Him. Thus their secret things will come to light. Their hidden life of true Godliness will then be acknowledged and made known. All false charges under which they have laboured will be cleared away. Their righteousness shall be made evident, and they shall trample Satan under their feet. But if secret things that are good shall be made known, will not, on the other hand, secret things that are evil? Hidden crimes will be revealed; hidden motives will be laid bare. No sinner digs so deep in order to hide his way from the Lord, but the most secret springs of action will then be exposed. The flaunting hypocrite will then be seen to be what he is; his shame shall be manifest. However successful sinners may have been in deceiving their fellows, they cannot deceive God, and it is with Him they shall have to do on that day.

III. – It remains for us now briefly to touch on the Judge and the standard of judgment. We have already spoken of God as Judge, of His omniscience, and His unfailing truth and justice. We, as His creatures, are accountable to Him. Our account is still running, but He may render it at any moment. To Him we are accountable, and He has entered into judgment already with Christ, the substitute of sinners. To the Son, as the Son of Man, all judgment is committed. He shall come "the second time without sin unto salvation." He will come in the glory of His Father and the holy angels. He shall sit on the throne of His glory, and before

Him shall be arrayed all nations. He will separate them from one another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will give to each their own portion. A day is fixed in which God shall judge the world in righteousness by “that Man whom He hath ordained.” Of this He has given assurance to us by raising Him from the dead. The glory of coming judgment belongs to the kingly crown of Christ. He shall judge, and the secrets of men’s hearts are known to Him. Unto Him every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and of things on earth, and of things under the earth. He shall reign until all His enemies are made His footstool.

Now, in the judgment He shall execute, perfect equity will be revealed. Privilege increases responsibility. According as we have received, shall it be required at our hand. There are some servants that know not their Lord’s will, and so do it not; they shall be beaten, but it shall be with few stripes. They that have sinned without law shall also perish without law. To perish is not something light, or something to be trifled with, but though it is not, yet how many disregard it and court danger for their never dying souls. There are servants that know their Lord’s will, and do it not; they shall be beaten, and that with many stripes. If those that knew not His will shall perish in their transgressions, how much sorer shall the punishment be which shall be inflicted on those that knew His will and did it not! Among those to whom His word has come there are gradations. Those who sinned against Moses’ law died without mercy at the mouth of two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment shall he be counted worthy that tramples under foot the Son of God, and accounts the blood of His covenant a common thing? Perfect equity will characterise the judgment of God. Holiness too will characterise it, and as its result nothing shall enter into the holy city that defileth, or that loveth or maketh a lie. Only those whose names are in the Lamb’s Book of Life shall enter through the gate into the city. To those who have sinned in the law, the law will be applied in its holiness and unbending rigour of requirement. This standard will be applied, and nothing lower. The law takes to do with the outward life; it takes also to do with the inward state of the heart; and should there be nothing to settle the everlasting fate of sinners but their heart sins, these would suffice. Should nothing bear witness but their callousness of conscience, this would suffice. Should nothing testify against them but their unconcern, it would secure their condemnation. Should nothing be theirs but their worldliness of affection, it would be enough. Judgment shall visit men’s secret things, for God’s law takes to do, not alone with the visible conduct, but also with the hidden heart. Heart rebellion is real rebellion, and it is as clearly rebellion against God as any outbreaks of lust or passion can be.

This is the standard of the judgment for those that sinned in the law. But for sinners against gospel light what shall we say? What awaits them? Increased guilt is theirs in proportion as their light and privilege are great. But increased guilt brings with it increased condemnation. “Woe unto thee Bethsaida and Chorazin. And thou Capernaum shall be cast down unto hell.” Such is the awful effect of privileges and advantages abused.

Now, judgment appeals to natural conscience. Felix trembled when he heard Paul reasoning of temperance, righteousness and judgment to come, and seeing that this subject appeals to natural conscience, good reason were it that poor sinners should lay to heart that they have to appear at the judgment seat of Christ. Those that will not bow to Him on His throne of mercy, must perforce bow to Him on His throne of judgment. How can we estimate their folly when they refuse to bend the knee to Him for mercy? They yet must drink the cup of judgment from the hand of Him whom they now reject.

In closing, let us notice that judgment is not something haphazard. God *will* bring every work into judgment. As nothing escapes His notice, He will not fail to execute due vengeance on the inventions of His enemies. As nothing escapes His notice, He forgets not the good works of His people. His observance of their ways is as minute as His sovereign

superintendence in providence. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His providence. Not a hair of our head is unnumbered. Even so is it with the reward of the faith and patience of the saints. “Whosoever gives a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall by no means lose his reward.” For God is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. He will bring everything into judgment; He will see to this being done, and because He will see to it, there will be no loopholes of escape. Not the mountains and hills, nor the depths of the sea, shall hide from His face, and thus the haughty and the humble alike shall be there; kings and slaves shall be there; and they shall be judged out of the books. Every work, every secret thing, shall be there. You shall be there, and I shall be there. God grant that we may be prepared by grace so as to stand in that day!

[June 1901]

## A Sermon.

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

“Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff” – Isaiah 41:14,15.

God has threatened the overthrow of idolaters in the former part of the chapter. Now, in this part of the chapter, He promises to do for His true worshippers – that He shall uphold them, deliver them, comfort them, and make them victorious over all their enemies, whom here He comprises under the name of adversaries great and small, the angels that lay about them.

The encouragement given to them in the former verses, is repeated and insisted on by a promise of help (verse 14), and of strength and victory over their enemies (verses 15,16); and if need be, a drink of comfort is promised in their conflict, or time of sore trouble (verse 17).

It is very fit ye should hear this, because ye are called to war; ye must fight, before ye can win to heaven. There is more ado, than to say your prayers, come to the kirk, and haunt communions; for ye must run, strike, fight, and endure sore bickerings, before the crown be gotten: there is no coming to heaven with ease; but as Christ came to heaven, so must all his, through many tribulations and conflicts. But this generation has neither will to work nor fight. Their hearts faint, their feeble knees bow, and their hands refuse to work: men sleep over in security, and dream of the fool's paradise. They come to the communion to be cleansed, and fall over again, as swine in the mire; as if the coming to the communion, were like the confessions made to the Papist priests, and their absolutions. But the truth must be told. Now ye have a fight, a task-work, ere ye get the treasure; a hell to go past, ere ye win to heaven. As ye have reconciliation to seek with God, so ye have the devil and the world to encounter with; therefore ye have need to guard yourselves upon all hands.

After that here a Redeemer is promised to Jacob, he is encouraged to go in the battle: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." As if he said, I know thee; thou hast a great turn to do, and thou art but a feckless and feeble thing, in the sense of thy own weakness; yet, fear not, for I will help thee; I thy Redeemer have said it. Oh, but what shall I do with my strong and mighty adversaries, that are like mountains and hills, says Jacob? The Lord answers, Thou shalt thrash them like a sheaf of corn, and winnow them like chaff. I shall make thee like a newshod flail with iron, or like a cast wheel shod with iron nails, that takes the corn off the straw; so that albeit thy great enemies be as mountains, and thy smaller enemies as hills, yet I shall cause thee beat them as a sheaf of corn, that lies still before thee, and stirs not, till thou be tired of threshing, and then casts it by thee, and when it is threshen, is letten through the wind; and thy enemies shall be carried away, as chaff, that is carried out of the gate with the wind. Now, because Jacob might think this an easy victory over his enemies, therefore he tells them in the next words, that for all this, he will be put to a sore pinch before this victory be gotten in his sense; for it is a victory that is given to faith, and faith will count no more of all enemies, the devil, the world, and the man's own corruptions, than a thresher will count of a corn-sheaf; when it looks to the Lord's strength. But before sense get the victory, there will be a strange warsling [wrestling], sweating, and breathing, and such a weariness in the conflict, that there must needs be a drink of consolation. Therefore the Lord says, "When the poor and needy want water, and their tongue fails them for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, and will not forsake them." I know, that for all the notable victory I have promised, Jacob will faint; but when Jacob is so forfoughten [over-fought, exhausted with fighting], that he cannot cry to me for a drink, yet I will hear him when his tongue cannot speak, when he cannot pray for swooning. I will hear him, and not forsake him. This for the meaning of the words: let us now make our use of them.

1. "Fear not." When God is speaking to Jacob and all His redeemed people, He says, "Fear not;" which lets us see, that God knows that His people are very feeble and weak in the time of trouble, trial, and tentation, and how much we are taken up with the sight of impediments, when we meet them in a strait. We are all stout enough till we be assayed, but when we have adversaries to meet with, and see their strength, then our hearts fall into the dust. We are like Peter, who minted to his Master on the water; but when the wind blows, and he is like to sink, he cries, "Help Master, I perish!" I grant, it is no wonder the godly be feeble, they carry about with them so great misbelief and manifold corruptions; yet let them know, that know their fears.

2. "Fear not, saith the Lord." We see there is no remedy for this fear but the voice and word of the Lord; only His encouragement can hold us up in the conflict, and no created power will bear us up in the strait; His voice and word give boldness and courage. Thou who art afraid to win through thy sins and get impediments overcome, take the Lord's word, the staff of His promise, to strengthen; let this word dwell plentifully in thee. Take the sword of



the Spirit, the leg-harness of resolution, the helmet of hope (spoken of in Ephesians 6), and guard thyself with the word on all quarters.

3. In the tenth verse He forbids Jacob to fear, and here He repeats it. It lets us see that, as nothing is more comfortable to a feeble or fleyed [frightened] soul than the word, so the Lord is not sparing of it, but large in His promises; He repeats, inculcates, and strengthens in the battle. So that look how feared we are and what need we have of encouragements, as ready is the Lord to lay them to our hand, both to rebuke our fear and strengthen our doubtings. The same He does to Joshua, to Jeremiah, and here to Jacob.

4. "Thou worm Jacob." Jacob a worm,

(1) For weakness; for what is all flesh but grass, when it is to stand out against the fight of sin, the devil, and the wrath of God?

(2) A worm, for unworthiness; for of all the unworthy things that can be, a piece of sinful flesh is the unworthiest, for sin disgraces the substance wherein it is.

(3) A worm, for afflictions and dejection in the mire of trouble; therefore in Psalm 22, "I am a worm, and no man;" for it is a worm's place to be trodden in the dirt; so was Jacob, an offcast for reproach and affliction.

(4) A worm, because of the sense of his own naughtiness; a worm in his own estimation, because of his present estate; he was so cast down and discouraged in himself, that he cannot lift up himself, as David, "I am a beast before thee" (Psalm 73), I have not the understanding of a man.

Here then God, by calling Jacob a worm, recounts all his objections which might mar his faith; as if He said, Jacob, I know well enough that thy weakness, unworthiness, thy afflictions, and estimation thou hast of thyself, make thee fear; yet fear not for all that. It lets us see that the consciousness of these, which is in man, makes him to fear, and breaks his courage. Try what makes thee fear that thou shalt not win to heaven. I speak to thee who art yoked in the battle, and not to lazy sluggards that love to loiter and sleep, and will not wrestle against sin, Satan, and their own corruptions; but to the striver I speak. What makes thee afraid? I am weak, sayest thou? and I have many strong enemies and adversaries, sins, and God's hand is upon me day and night, both upon body and soul; I am unworthy to stand upon God's earth; I am sensible of my own naughtiness, and see reasons anew within me. I answer, All is true that thou sayest; but God who knows all this, saith, "Fear not, thou worm." Therefore seeing God knows thy weakness, unworthiness, and every evil that troubles thee, and meets them with, "Fear not," take heart – strive on!

5. "Fear not, thou worm." Jacob, I know thou art a worm and what are the causes of thy fear, and yet that hinders me not to make unto thee a promise of help against all thy enemies. It lets us see, seeing our weakness, unworthiness, troubles, and sense of want, hinder not God to make a promise, neither should they hinder us to embrace the promise. If we find ourselves unworthy worms, and God saying, Fear not, then we should answer God and say, Albeit, Lord, I be a weak unworthy worm, and my foes many and strong, yet seeing Thou forbiddest me to fear, I will not look to my own dead body; but having Thy promises, as Abraham did, I will give glory to Thee in believing, whatever unlikelihood be in the performance of the promise. I will not look to these, but to Thee who promisest.

Seeing God knows the fears and passes them by, let us pass them by also, for He makes not a promise for anything in us, but for His own love and grace's sake. Therefore let us not, because of our unworthiness, refuse the promise. If it were for our deservings, it were not grace. Labour indeed to be sensible of thy weakness and unworthiness, that thou may the better take the promise. But, alas! the most part are not sensible of their weakness and unworthiness, but bolster up themselves with some one conceit or other; as those who say to Christ, Hast thou not taught in our streets? have we not eaten and drunken at Thy table? have we not preached in Thy name? And yet, never have their hearts been brought low in the sense

of their own vileness and unworthiness; never have they searched the reason of their fears or doubts. To whom, I say, it is very needful that they should search the causes of fear and doubting to work humiliation; for fault of this, sin is not repented, God's anger not laid to heart; hell is not seen gaping for them, but rather a covenant is made with hell and an agreement with death. I grant we should not doubt nor fear, yet we should dispute about the causes of fear and doubting; and if any dispute not, let them beware lest they presume. Therefore, hear the reasons of the doubts of thy conscience; and if thy conscience say thou hast reason to fear and doubt, because thou art a rotten hypocrite, thou hast never pannelled thyself before God's tribunal for sin; thou hast never taen pains to know if thou art reconciled to God; thou hast never been loathsome in thine own eyes; and for thy prayers, hearing, reading, communicating, they have been but counterfeit. When the conscience thus accuses, thou hast reason to dispute the matter; thou must either grant or deny when thou art challenged on true grounds; and if, after dispute and trial, all be found true that is said, hast thou not reason to be humbled, and to fall down and mourn in the sense of thy own vileness? And yet I would not that in this estate thou should quit the promise, but keep the promise fast in thy hand, and mournfully cry to God with thy mouth for pardon. Jacob, thou seest he is a worm, weak and unworthy in his own sense; and therefore if thou be unhumbled, proud, and beastly, thou hast cause to fear and doubt. If thou hast never doubted, beware lest thou never believed. Yet I commend not doubting, but I speir, How came thou to that strength of faith, that never staggered, or felt thy own weakness? Beware thou be not circumvented by the devil's delusions! Therefore rest not without impregnable grounds: labour first for a sense of unworthiness and wretchedness, and grip the promise of not fearing. Here I have digressed a little; but men's sluggishness and customary slighting of God's service, makes me fear, that many a one is not prepared for the consolation that here is offered to such as are become worms, as Jacob, in their own estimation. However, the point I had in hand is this, that unworthiness should not hinder to take the promise, seeing it hinders not God to make it.

6. "Worm Jacob, I will help thee." Wherefore will God help Jacob? because Jacob is a worm, and cannot help himself. It lets us see, that our weakness and unworthiness are so far from hindering God to make the promise, that it is the very fit disposition in us to stir Him up to make a promise to help us. And therefore the feeling of our weakness and unworthiness should be so far from hindering us to believe the promise, as it should further us to it, for now we are in the disposition fittest to receive God's help; our sense of the need of help, should make us take it; the sense of our weakness and wants should make us apply the comforts. This is a notable means to overcome Satan and all our doubts. When Satan says, Thou art vile, weak, and unworthy, therefore thou cannot lay hold on God's promise; retort his argument and say, that by the contrair, because thou art so, thou shouldst lay hold. If he say, Will such a feckless weak wretch as thou stand out against principalities and powers; or will such a worm as thou bear out the godliness thou aimest at? thou mayest answer, Because God has letten me see my weakness, worthlessness, and sinfulness, and in sense of it has laid me low, flat along upon the earth, as a worm, therefore I know he will help and regard me in this low estate.

7. We see, albeit Jacob be a worm, he must neither misken himself, nor refuse God's offer of help; but his disposition must be such, as he must both be abased in himself, and confident in God; for these two stand well together. Take it for a proof of faith, when thou findest both; and of presumption, when these two are parted. If thou believe in God, and see not thyself a worm, thou but presumest; but if the sense of thy vileness make thee tremble to draw near to God, and yet thou comest, then thou art confident. Let this then be the trial of thy faith: Art thou vile, wretched, and unworthy in thyself, and at the same time believest in God? – thou hast found faith, for the composition of the sanctuary is in the ointment. Now, to deny thyself, is to be a worm; and to lean on Christ is to believe in Him. That this may be

done, hold the glass of the law still before thine eyes, to shew thy vileness, and so be humble; and Christ shining in the mirror of the gospel, His goodness and pity to make thee believe – look on both, and thou shalt be borne through.

8. “I will help thee.” – the reason why Jacob should not fear. It lets us see that, having God on our side, we should not fear. If God be with us, who can be against us? Follow God at the back, and in His name pray, work; then fear not, for He will be with thee in all thy ways, to guide thee, and has given His angels charge over thee, that thou should not dash thy foot against a stone. Hold thyself in God’s way, and at His back, and fear nothing.

9. While God says He will help Jacob, it imports that He will join Himself with Jacob in the turn; for He sayeth not simply, I will do the turn, but, I will help thee to it. It is true, God doeth the turn; but He doeth it by Jacob. It lets us see that God so works His work in all His own, as that they are not idle but are employed in the work. This reproveth those who will lay over the matter upon God, and go idle themselves. It is true all we can do is nought; yet by us, as instruments, God will work. It reproveth those who say, It is bootless for me to mint for repentance till God please to give me it; and so they will follow the devil’s service merrily: and if God will fetch them from the devil’s back, it is well; if He will not, they cannot help it. But I tell these men, they tempt God never to give them repentance. If they will have mastery of their sinful corruptions, they must put to their own hand to the fight, and they must bear some bulk with God. Albeit they can neither fight nor work, when God bids them put out their hand to do anything, they must assay to put it, albeit it be lame and sick, and so God shall furnish strength to do the work; for God, and anything with Him, are strong enough against all our foes, spiritual and bodily.

10. “Says the Lord, and thy Redeemer.” He puts three styles to the promise, or shews His great name in three titles, that Jacob may know who is the promise-maker; for it is a matter of singular worth, to know what he is who makes a promise, and the promise takes worth from him who makes it; and so, we see the Lord sets His name to the promise, and subscribes it. See here God’s willingness to make His kirk believe His promises: He not only makes promises, but subscribes, and would have us to read His written subscription at the end of the promise. He is not like the false flatterers in the world, that will make many fair promises, and when it comes to the subscribing or sealing, will draw back. But God both promises, and subscribes it in all His three styles – the LORD, thy REDEEMER, the HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL. In all God’s promises, read God’s stamp and subscription, and when thou perceivest the promise to be His, distrust not: say not it will never be, call not His obligation in question, controul not His truth; for that would crab [offend] an honest man, far more the God of truth.

11. These three styles are God’s name in three titles, which let us see the distinct persons of the Trinity; for here both the works of creation, redemption and sanctification are clearly shewn, whereby He lets us see there is a consent given to this promise by all the three persons of the Trinity, and God is content that His great styles lie in pawn till He perform the promise He has made, that as He would give honour in these three styles, so shall He get it in performing of this promise. Therefore, when God lays His crown royal in pawn, His name Jehovah, having being of Himself and giving being unto all; His name in redeeming us, His people, His name of sanctifying them; He intimates that, as He loves to be honoured in one and all of these styles, so shall He surely perform His promise; and He will no more quit His being of Himself, redeeming and sanctifying of His people, than He will quit the performance of His promise. Neither yet think that there is a division among the persons of the Godhead when a promise is made; for when the Lord says it, it is the Redeemer says it, and the Holy One says it; for He promises nought that the Son knows not of; for both their promises are one – their word and works are one to us.

Verse 15, “Behold, I will make thee a new threshing instrument.” Here the Lord’s promise to make them strong against their adversaries. As a sheaf of corn is unable to resist

the threshing instrument, so shall their adversaries, spiritual and temporal – compared to mountains and hills – be unable to resist them.

1. It lets us see, that the victory of God's people over their enemies, looking to God their helper, is as easy, as the threshing of a sheaf of corn. I say, it is easy to faith, albeit not to the flesh; for the apostle Paul, when he looks to his flesh in his conflict, he says, "O miserable man that I am! who shall deliver me?" But when he comes to faith, he says, "I am persuaded that neither height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." There he threshes all his enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and all that can be against him. And in Psalm 118, "They ran about me like bees, but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them all." For temptations come about him, like bees swarming upon all hands, and no place to fly to: but in the name of the Lord, that is, his faith looking to God, he will destroy them all. He only stands, and sees the salvation of the Lord; holds on the whole armour of God, resists the devil, and he flies from him; yea, no enemy, great or small, but faith in God makes them all fly.

2. "Thou shalt fan them." We see Jacob's adversaries who were great like mountains, being threshed and put to the wind: they seem strong and terrible, and he like a weak worm; but from once they be holden to the wind of God's promise, they are blown away as chaff. It lets us see, that the godly seem weak, and their adversaries strong, before God put to His hand: but then, the godly seem strong, and their adversaries weak; for when the devil's strength is compared to God's, it is but like chaff to the wind, or the forces of kings and potentates. Therefore the prophet says, "What art thou, who art afraid of man whose breath is in his nostrils, and forgettest the Lord his Maker?" And David says, "I will not fear what flesh can do to me." This is after fainting. Therefore winnow all the doubts which arise from the strength of thy adversaries, and thine own weakness; but see that thou winnow them at God's barn-door, in the sanctuary, as Asaph in Psalm 73. When he had almost fallen at the sight of the prosperity of the wicked, he went to the sanctuary, and there he saw, they were set on slippery places, and horribly consumed in a moment.

3. "Thou shalt beat small" and "the wind shall carry them." They are something before God put to His hand – mountains and hills – and Jacob nothing; but from once God put to His hand, Jacob is strong and they are weak. So it is at this day with the kirk and her adversaries; that which was something is nothing, and nothing is, by God's hand, become something. For who would have said that the King of Sweden [Gustavus Adolphus], when he came from home with six thousand men, when his enemies were six hundred thousand, should have done that which is done. But through God's putting to of His hand, he has done great things.

4. We see in God's promises it matters not what strength they have or want, to whom the promise is made, for the whole strength stands in the promise. And when God threatens it matters not what strength be in the party threatened; for albeit they were as mountains, yet He who threatens can make a worm thresh them. God's flail can ding them all in dust. Look never how weak or how strong those are to whom God speaks, for the weak shall be strong, and the strong shall become weak.

"And thou shalt rejoice in the Lord." Jacob's part of the battle is won, and now God must have His victory. We see it is a part of the Lord's honour, and our thankfulness, to rejoice in the Lord when we have gotten victory. Has God promised that He will be our God, and renewed covenant with us, and communicated Himself in the sacrament, and has done it? It is our part to rejoice, in testimony of our thankfulness.

2. He says, that worm Jacob shall rejoice, which lets us see that we may be a worm in our own sense, and yet rejoice in the Lord, and in Him, triumph over all His enemies. These two stand well together, for we are bidden rejoice in trembling.

3. Rejoice is for the time bygone and present, and glory is for the time to come; which lets us see that the fruit or right use-making of our delivery past, is to make us rejoice for the

present, and glory for the time to come. And indeed the godly, if they will not look to themselves but to God, may rejoice for time bygone, and glory for time to come: they may boast themselves in God all the day long; they may not glory in their own strength or wisdom, but let him that glories, glory in the Lord: through Him they do valiantly. Albeit they have many strong foes, and great adversaries, yet God shall tramp them under foot, and rule over them with a rod of iron.

Verse 17. "When the poor and needy seek water." This victory formerly promised, is not very easy to sense; for albeit faith may hold on this victory, yet flesh and sense will flag and fail, and be more worm-like and naughty before the battle be ended. Therefore a promise is here subjoined to such as in their own sense are weak in the conflict, that they shall get a drink of consolation. We see, whatever promise be made to God's children of victory over their foes, yet they may not think but to find great pain to the flesh, and sore and uncouth skirmishes; albeit faith get the victory easily, yet it is hard victory to the flesh. Wonder not to find it so that ye be like Elisha at Jordan, crying, Where is now the God of Elias? I am like to be overcome. In such straits as these, think not that God will fail in His promise.

*Question.* But how far may victory of faith be kept under in the flesh? *Answer.* Till one become poor and needy, fainting, forfoughten, and fallen by, and their tongue so failing that they cannot seek a drink, yea, no water or drink of consolation at all; but debarred the sight of all comfort in the conflict – so deprived of all comfort that their tongue is so far sealed that they dare not say, God help me! or pant unto God. Think it no wonder when thou art thus borne down, and thy face thus rolled in the dust. Know it is but thy flesh and thy pride that God is abasing; He is but making thee nought to thy own sense. It is true, all will grant in their words that they are nought, but it is mickle to get acknowledgment of our own naughtiness from experience; therefore that we may win to this, God yokes us with a hard party, and so empties us in ourselves that, being closely contemned of ourselves, we may seek help in Him. Therefore, at the hardest pinch look up to God, for there is adversity betwixt faith's estate and flesh's estate. Think not that faith is failed when flesh fails, for David says, "My heart and flesh fail, but God fails me never." God and His word cannot fail, whatever we feel or fear.

*Question.* What will God do when we are brought thus low? *Answer.* I the Lord will hear and help. This is a strange kind of hearing – to hear one whose tongue is sealed, so as he cannot speak.

(1) We see that the consolation of the godly may be so long delayed, till their strength be found to be spent, and they neither able to help themselves nor seek help – their tongues sealed with thirst.

(2) It lets us see that their impotency and weakness in the trial shall do them no prejudice; for the dumb silence of their pressed soul is a loud speech, and an earnest prayer in the ears of God, which He will both hear and answer. When their tongues are tacked, and speak nothing – so straitly frozen, that they cannot stir, no more than a frozen worm in the clay – even then they have a loud cry to God. Know then, that when thou art forfoughten, like one gasping in the water ready to give up the ghost, and cannot cry, "Help me!" this gasping dumbness speaks to the on-lookers, to haste to help, so thy estate hastes the Lord to help thee.

"I the God of Israel will not forsake them."

1. Jacob, who before was called a worm, is now called Israel. It lets us see albeit God call His children worms, yet He keeps His estimation of them as Israelites: whatever styles of baseness He gives for our humiliation, yet He has the same estimation of us, as when He gives us highest styles. Learn we then so to be base in our own eyes, that we quit not our prerogatives; for God counts of us at the worst, as He doth when we are at the best – as the woman of Canaan was called a dog at the one word, but a woman of great faith at the other word. God counts nothing less of a humble soul, than at another time. Therefore humble

thyself under the mighty hand of God, and know, that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble; yet quit not thy privileges in thy low estate.

2. This name of Israel is a glorious style – a word of estimation – and imports a duty. He was called Jacob, a supplanter, because of a trick which he played to his brother in stealing his birthright; but he is called Israel, because he wrestled and prevailed with God. And his glorious style puts him, and all Israelites, in mind of a duty. Every worm Jacob must be an Israel; every true Israelite must be a wrestler with God in the time of his deepest dejections. Wilt thou then, a pressed worm with sore troubles, make thee for wrestling, as a worm that is trampled in the clay? – at the one end it will sprawl, and stir at the other end. So must thou. Whatever part is loose or free of thee, stir that. If thou cannot pray, meditate, hear, or confer – yet sigh, bow thy knees, lift up thy eyes, and stir whatever is loose.

3. “I the God of Israel, will not forsake.” That is, because I am become your God in covenant with you, I will not forsake you. It lets us see that those whom God has taen by the hand to be of Israel, whatever be their straits, for His covenant’s sake He will not forsake them. Our heart, flesh, and courage may fail, but God neither fails not forsakes. Forsake not Him, but fight out the spiritual combat as good soldiers, so shall your glorious God be with you. To that God be all praise, for now and ever. Amen.

[July 1901]

## A Sermon

By REV. WM. GUTHRIE, Minister of Fenwick, 1644-1665.

“Ho, every one that thirsieth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” –  
Isaiah 55:1,2.

There is in this chapter a proclaimed market, such as was never heard of, even the most pleasant, most substantial, and most glorious market that ever was; the most glorious wares; the most precious wares; the dearest bought and cheapest sold that ever any wares were. Here we have the most free and lawful invitation to all sorts of persons to come and have them. They shall get them and pay nothing for them. Now there is in this chapter

1st, An invitation to all persons in all places, to come and receive Jesus Christ, the King of kings, Lord of Lords, and Prince of peace, who is even among our hands in the gospel, wherein He manifests Himself. Now that He offers Himself, take Him, and you are welcome to Him. Any person who hath anything ado with Him, come; for He is now seeking employment to be given Him. He hath balms for all wounds, salves for all sores, and cures for all sorts of diseases. And,

2ndly, There are some objections against this coming, and these He solves, and uses various motives and invitations to encourage souls to come unto Him and buy. Such are the following: –

1. The market is free. He is seeking nothing from you, but hath all glorious things to give you. Therefore, ye are fools if ye will not come and take when ye have nothing to give.

2. If ye will not come, your well-doing is over. Your doom is, “Depart for ever;” and do what ye can, ye shall not prosper, nor get any soul-satisfaction any other way. And,

3. If ye will come, ye need not be afraid of wrath and justice. Ye shall not have that to say that ye dare not come for fear He execute justice upon you. The Father took Christ Jesus to be your Cautioner or Surety. Christ shall stand for you and manage in your room or stead. He will manage all that concerns you, both with regard to the guilt and the pollution of sin; for the punishment of sin, if ye will but accept of Him to be your Cautioner or Surety, He shall answer for all your wrongs, as if they had been done in His own person, and He shall stand for them, and ye shall go free. And,

4. Ye may think it a great honour and prerogative that ever the like of you is allowed to come near Christ, instead of saying ye will not come unto Him. For God hath a mind to make Him unspeakably honourable in His kingdom, think ye of Him what ye will. For many shall come out of all kindreds, kingdoms, and nations, like flocks of sheep, and shall cast down their crowns at His footstool, even those that have never yet heard of Him; and what a shame will it be for you to be the last of all in paying your respects to Him?

5. If ye will not come and close with Him now in the offers of the gospel, wherein He is offered unto you, take care that ye sit not your time of the market; for there is but a set time of His offers, wherein He will be found of you.

But there are two formidable objections, which are these: –

Objection 1. – We are so abominable, and have provoked God so often, that we think it cannot stand with His justice to accept of such traitors, though we should come. But God answers, “Away with such chat; for my thoughts are not like your thoughts, saith the Lord; they are as far above them as the heavens are above the earth.”

Objection 2. – Say some, “Ye may promise us fair words enough; but in the meantime, we get nothing in our hands but bare words.” “That is true,” says God, “but I think My word effectual enough to perform anything I can promise; for I am both powerful enough and willing enough to perform it. Besides, My word must prove itself effectual, for it must be for a name and for a praise unto Me in all generations.” And then He hints at the deliverance of the people of the Jews from their bondage. So much for the meaning of this chapter. We now return, to make some improvement of it in the way of comparing it with the former chapter, in which ye heard many a precious promise made to the Church and her children. And now God will have them apply and bring home all these to their own souls, in closing with Christ; wherein we observe,

That whatever promise was made to the Church, all the members of it should believe, and apply them to themselves in the way of closing with Christ. And now we enter upon the words, wherein there are: –

I. – The King’s proclamation making way for our coming to the market, in the words, “Ho, every one.”

II. – A public intimation of the goods that are to be had at this market, and these are “water,” “wine,” and “milk.”

III. – The manner in which these goods are to be viewed.

IV. – The duty of the party to come, and a dehortation from any other way in these words, “Wherefore do ye spend your labour for that which is nought?”

V. – An exclusion from salvation in any other way than by coming unto Christ, and receiving Him as He offereth Himself in the gospel. I return,

I. To the first, which is the proclamation openly made for coming unto Christ. “Jesus stood, and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Now Christ is crying this day, who will come unto Him? He is crying to deaf folk who never

heard, "Will ye hear, and believe the word preached? I will make you see, ye blind folk who are running upon imminent hazard. Ho! are there any folk who have wounds to heal? here is balm for you. Is there any man here who desires to be made clean? here is water to cleanse you. Is there any who have sores to heal? come, here is salve for you. Are there any fractured bones amongst you? here is healing for you. Are there any hard hearts amongst you? here is repentance for you. Are there any confused with darkness amongst you? come, here is light for you. Do any desire to be taught? here is teaching for you. Do you desire to be made friends with God? here is reconciliation for you. Would any be borne up under their crosses? here is strength for them. Is there any person who judges himself, though they suppose they are beguiling themselves? here is counsel for you. Come unto me and I will tell you where you are, and what ye are doing." But oh! what is the matter that we have to say unto you, that few of you will come to Christ, though ye know yourselves to be far from Him? The reason why a proclamation must be made before we come to this market, is

1. That the King may declare publicly what goodwill He bears to the commonwealth of Israel. He would much rather have folk to be converted and live, than die and perish.
2. He makes it public, that He may evidence His power and sovereignty over all things.
3. He makes it public, that the mouth of all objectors to the contrary may be stopped.
4. That all his enemies may come to a rendezvous and see whether they are able to stop Him.
5. He proclaims it publicly, that all may know that the market has but a set time, wherein Jesus Christ is offered to souls; and therefore they should bestir themselves in the time of the market. Go not away, then, ere ye get the wares secured to yourselves, seeing the great God of heaven has made an open proclamation for all sorts of persons to come to Christ. Let no person be so foolish as to despise the King's proclamation.

He makes an open proclamation that you may know that there is a reality in closing with Christ in the Gospel. Consider this, all ye who never knew anything of your guilt, nor had the sense of it, nor had ever had any debate about your closing with Christ for your recovery out of your lost state and condition. I say, such are to look upon themselves as the most vile and the maddest creatures that ever were known. They even savour of the earth. Any person that is truly acquainted with the exercises of closing with Christ, and dare say that they have Him for their portion, their countenance shall be made to shine in heavenly glory. As to any person who supposes he has any hatred of his sins, and yet, through a sense of guilt, dares not venture upon closing with Christ, I say, as long as he stands on this side of Christ he shall have no true peace of mind.

Now, we shall give you some motives that we think may put you upon a peremptory closing with Christ. And consider –

1. That these offers are threatened to be removed. God knows how long you may have them. Now, while you have your day of the Gospel, improve and make use of Christ for your salvation by closing your interest with Him.
2. Though it should please Him to continue the same day of the standing of the Gospel, it will not stand long without a storm and many a winter blast blowing against it and its professors. Since the winter is approaching, ye have need to look that your clothes be provided for you, lest ye go with the storms and dint of the weather.
3. And is not God now plaguing all the land? We conceive it is for no other reason but because people will not flee from their idols and cleave to Christ, and close with Him for their alone portion. But,

II. – We come to the wares of this market, and these are of three sorts –

- (1) Water,
- (2) wine,



(3) milk.

With regard to water, He is called “the water of life”; with regard to wine, the spouse compares Him to “flagons of wine”; and with regard to milk, He bids His people suck out the “sincere milk of the word (which is Himself), that they may grow thereby”. The reasons will be taken from the properties of each of these, which we shall consider separately for your better understanding of the point. And,

Firstly

- (1) Water, ye know, is good for washing and cleaning away of all filthiness.
- (2) Water is good for the softening of any hard thing.
- (3) Water is good for refreshing, or quenching of thirst.
- (4) Water is good for curing hot and fiery humours.

All these properties are to be found in Christ. Art thou one of the most filthy creatures upon the earth? Then Christ is that fountain opened for washing away your sin and uncleanness. Is the wrath of God burning in thy conscience for thy sin and uncleanness? Then Christ broke down the partition wall, and quenched justice and wrath, and became a curse for us. Hast thou an old hard heart, harder than anything thou ever sawest? I say, Christ can soften it, and pour out the spirit of repentance, and make one mourn for sin that never mourned for it before. Is thy conscience galled for sin that thou canst get no rest? Christ is a Prince for that end, to make peace in a soul that is out of peace. Hast thou a desire after Christ, and are all things nothing to thee for want of Him? Then come and venture upon Christ, and thou shalt be satisfied and filled with Him in such a manner that out of “thy belly shall flow living waters;” that is, thou shalt have full satisfaction in Him. Is thy case one of the most strange and wonderful in the world? Then Christ’s name is also the Wonderful, Counsellor. Art thou afraid of the removal of the gospel, which would oblige thee to flee to the mountains, where thy soul would be famished for want of this water? Christ can be a little sanctuary, and preach to thee there Himself. “But I fear,” says one, “for all that, I shall fall into some error or other for want of instruction.” I say, Christ will feed thee, lead thee, and teach thee. “But,” say you, “what will I have there to live upon, on the top of a bare mountain!” Why? Christ can feed thee there, according to His prophetic office? “But,” say ye, “what if the gospel be not totally removed, but is tainted with some mixture that will prove poison to me?” I say, Christ will “lead thee by the way that thou shouldst go,” even up into His own bosom, which is the ocean from which the whole gospel flows, where thou shalt drink pure and clear water without any mixture at all. And if thou thinkest thou canst not get Him served there, He can write His law in thy inward parts, circumcise thy heart, and cause thee to serve Him.

Secondly, As for wine, ye know it is good for comforting a weak and heavy spirit. It is also good for reviving one that falls into fainting fits. It is likewise good for fitting a man for more than ordinary pieces of work. All these properties, and more, are to be found in Christ. Then look what case thou hast to propose; there is still something in Christ to answer it. Is thy case a dead case? Then Christ revives the dead and dry bones of Zion. Art thou not only dead, but so very dead that thou art past hopes of recovery? Then Christ can say to these dry and withered bones, Live. Is thy strength quite gone? Then come to Christ, and He will be thy strength and portion for ever. Thinkest thou thyself one of the most needy creatures in the world? Then Christ is that noble plant of renown, that puts life, and holds life, in all His branches. Hast thou no strength to resist an enemy? Then say, “When I am weak, then am I strong in the Lord.” Art thou oppressed and borne down with an enemy, and hast thou lost all strength to resist? Then they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, and make them to face their enemy again. Is all thy strength so far spent that thou art sighing and going backward? Then Christ is that green fir-tree that holds in the spark of life in all the branches that are withered. And as for growth; hast thou such a case that for all the pains that have

been taken upon thee, thou hast never grown anything better? Then Christ is the choice builder who makes all the stones of the house cement compactly together. Besides, He is that Sun of righteousness who arises with healing under His wings for all sorts of maladies and diseases, or kinds of diseases.

There are other reasons why Christ and all that believers have in Him, are compared to water, wine, and milk. And Christ represents Himself under these similitudes to hold out the variety of cures that are in Him, suited to the variety of diseases in His people.

Then, all polluted people, come away to Christ; He has cleansing for you. All that are languishing under diseases, come away; He has cleansing for you. Here is a cure for all your diseases; strength for all your weaknesses; comfort under all your crosses and trials; growth under all your backwardness. He takes away the guilt of sin, and the filth of sin, and the punishment of it. He makes the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk and go forward. He feeds the hungry with good things, binds up the broken-hearted, and dandles them upon His knees, and tenderly lays them in His bosom. We will say no more of that ocean of fulness that is in Christ, but this, "that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it," nor is tongue able to express the bottomless fulness that is to be had in Christ. Oh, that He were made use of and got employment at our hands! How much more cheerful in this case would many souls be than they are! There would not be so many complaints amongst you; but we think all would be stirring up one another to speak unto His commendation; and that would be a sweet and comfortable life for you.

III. We come to the manner in which the party is desired to come to and accept of Christ in this market of free grace. And,

First, They are desired to come that are thirsty.

Secondly, Those that have no money. These are the only objects of Christ's free offers. For thirsty folk, it is clear from the fore-cited text: "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." And for those who have no money: "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." Now,

1st, For the first of these, viz., the thirsty. I shall speak to so many sorts of them that are invited to come.

1. Some are afraid of hell, and thirst principally for heaven, that they may be kept in life. These, perhaps, have no thoughts of Christ. I say to those who are afraid of hell, and would gladly be at heaven, ye must come to Christ for that, for Christ hath both the keys of heaven and hell at His side; it is He that must open heaven's gates, if ever ye get there. Therefore close with Christ for salvation, and ye need not be afraid that ye will not get heaven; but without Him heaven ye shall never see.

2. There is a sort that thirst principally after Christ; and give them all the world, they count it but loss and dung if they get not Christ. Give them evidences of their interest in Him, it will make up all their other losses. I say, I wot well ye should come and close with Christ: for He cries unto all who have any desire after Him to come, and He will fulfil and satisfy all their desires. "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

3. There is another sort that thirst after holiness; and these also are bidden come. But although this be good in itself, yet take care that ye thirst not more to be holy than to come unto Christ Himself, who must sanctify you, and make you holy by His Holy Spirit. And,

(1.) Beware of seeking holiness in order to make it a positive qualification, whereby ye may have it to say that ye have something in your hands to buy with, by which ye will spoil all the market; for the market is "without money, and without price."

(2.) I say, think ye ever to get the grace of holiness wrought within you until first ye venture your salvation on Christ, and take Him to be a righteousness unto you. Take Christ in

the first place, and then seek holiness from Him. According to His own word, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Seek first righteousness, and then holiness. Ye would think him a foolish man that would look for apples on a tree that is not yet planted. So people are foolish to think that ever Christ will make one grow in holiness as long as they dare not venture their salvation upon Him. How can ye believe He will make you holy, as long as ye cannot believe in Him, or trust your salvation unto Him. But,

(3.) In the third place, Think not that we discommend holiness, or those who are seeking after it. No, God forbid; "for without holiness, no man shall see God." Our meaning here is, that people should think nothing of their holiness. For anything that they can do is but as "an unclean thing," which needs mercy for the imperfection of it. However, they must be in earnest in following after commanded duties, for fear of offending God; and the due honour of their Maker should be the reason of holy duties. And,

(4.) I say, if once ye were well interested in Christ for salvation, then He would put a principle of holiness within you that would not let you take a liberty to sin, and would make you so walk in duties, that for a thousand worlds ye durst not do such things as the multitude do, who know nothing of Christ by closing with Him. Know ye what the apostle Paul, with all his holiness, says? "I count all things but loss and dung, that I may win Christ."

(5.) I say, every thought that puts Christ out of His place, is as much as to say, ye will shift for yourselves without Him. I say, that is even the conflict betwixt Christ and souls; they would still have something in themselves; and Christ will have all flesh as grass, still abasing themselves as nothing, and seeing there is a daily need of Him, and a daily hazard without Him.

4. A fourth sort that have a thirst, that lets them have no rest, and yet they are so stupid that they cannot tell what it is. But oh how glad would they be to have some person's counsel, that could tell them the right way; and how ready would they be to do anything that would relieve them. I say, let such wait on Christ for counsel, and close with Him, according to that word, "He that hath no light, and walks in darkness, and sees himself to be in that case, let him stay himself upon God, and come to Christ, and he shall give him light." Seek light from Him who, I am certain, will not deceive you.

5. A fifth sort are those who have some desire after Christ, and yet spend their strength upon the world, and its vanities. I say, these may also come to Christ, and close with Him in the way of forsaking their idols. "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me, and I will have compassion upon thee, saith the Lord."

2ndly, The second sort of people invited to come to this market, are those who have no money. And,

1. Is there any man that has no money in his purse, and yet knows not where to get any, let him come to this market, and close with Christ.

2. Those who have nothing in their purses, and yet no where to get it, but dare not come to take it, I say, here is your warrant to come holden out to you, subscribed and sealed with the King's seal.

3. There are a sort of poor folk, poor indeed, while they know not that they are poor, but imagine that they are rich enough; they think that nothing is awanting to them. I say unto you, Atheists of this kind, if ye were once brought so far as to suspect yourselves, and were but afraid of beguiling yourselves, ye might make it an errand to come to Christ, and close with Him, that ye might get a better sight of yourselves, according to that third chapter of the Revelation before-cited. So that if thirsters, and those who have no money, are to be the only party at Christ's banquet this day, and the only persons who are to taste of these fat things, then anyone that sees his need, and has any desire of Christ and these things; and sees that he

has nothing in himself to help him; and sees any worth in a Christ to do him good; let such a one come away to Him; here is your market. Here is a rich supply of all your wants.

We know that there will be some objections to this, proposed by some; but it will not be by those that are convinced they have no money. We know few that can boast of their duties or works at this time; we think all may be ashamed of their naughtiness. But we know of some that will say, that they are not of those who are thirsty, and therefore they should not come. Their objection will be this: –

(1.) A thirsty man is pained and troubled under his thirst; but this I am not. I have neither pain nor thirst.

(2.) We say that a thirsty man is not only troubled, but is impatient under his thirst; but this I am not; I have neither trouble nor pain for want of Christ; neither am I seeking after Him, or at pains to find Him.

(3.) A thirsty man is not only pained, and gets no rest under thirst; but even so much pained that he cannot forget it. But it is not so with me; I have no trouble for want of Christ; nor am I in pain to get Him; and besides, any thought or desire I have is soon forgotten. And how can any person in this case be said to thirst for Christ, and be among those that should close with Him this day?

1st, In answer to this: – Dare you say that Jesus Christ, in this text, excludes any person that has the least desire to be interested in Him? Here is a word for that. Boaz, who was a type of Christ, said to Ruth, “When thou art athirst, go unto the vessel and drink of that which the young men have drawn.” So I say unto you, if ye have any desire after Christ, He is here offered unto you. Go, take Him, and close with Him. “And any man who will come, let him come, and drink of the water of life freely.” But who dare put another qualification upon their closing with Christ, than what He has set down here in His word?

2ndly, I say, ye must consider that everyone gets not a like degree of thirst after Christ. To some the King measures with larger measure; and to some with less, according to His absolute sovereignty. How dare you be so bold as to make any qualification necessary that He has not set down Himself? Dost thou see any need of closing with Him? Seest thou any need of the pardon of sin, or any need of strength to be borne through, or any diseases thou hast to be cured? Seest thou that thou art not able to make any help to thyself? and that thou canst not remedy thy case? Seest thou any merit in Christ? Come then, and close with Him for salvation, in order to be freed from the punishment of sin, and to be cured of all your diseases, and to have strength for all your weakness. For, think ye ever to get a constant dependence on Him, adherence to Him, hunger after Him, and thirsting for strength to cleave to Him, if ye close not with Him first for salvation? But,

3rdly, I say it may be ye have resolved upon it beforehand never to close with Him till He give you such a measure of holiness, and then ye would venture your soul’s salvation on Him if invited to it. But then ye would think that Christ is bound to you by your holiness, and ye would think salvation, so to speak, to be out of Christ’s common. And,

Lastly, I say that the text excludes none living, whether they have any good desires or not. If they have any need of Him, let them come, be what they will. If ye be so self-witted that ye will not come, stand your hazard. If you can provide for yourselves without Him, never come near Him. If ye will not come till ye get something in your hands to put you out of his common, then ye shall not come unto Him, for that ye shall never get. And if ye remain as ignorant as stocks and stones of the knowledge of God, ye may not come unto His table; but if ye see your need of Christ, and are under the sense of sin, and behold anything in Him that will do you good, then ye may come forward to the table of the Lord, in the way of closing with Him as your Saviour, and receiving His wine and milk without money and without price.

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## The Profanation of the Sabbath.

A Sermon by the late REV. GAVIN PARKER, Aberdeen.

“Will a man rob God?” – Malachi 3:8.

To rob a person, is to deprive him unjustly of his property. In some instances, time becomes property. The time during which a servant is engaged to labour for his master, is the master’s property. If the servant appropriate this time to his own use, or waste it in idleness, he robs the master of his property.

The whole human race are bound to serve God: He is the universal Lord; and has an unlimited right to their service. All time is His: He measures out a portion to each of us, according to His own will. This God is served by the love and obedience of His intelligent creatures: He has authority to prescribe those services that are pleasing to Himself, and to appoint and arrange the times for performing them.

He has said to each of us, “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh is the Sabbath of Jehovah thy God: In it thou shalt not do any work. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh, there shall be to you a holy day – a Sabbath of rest to Jehovah. Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy.” The words of God, by the prophet Isaiah chapter 58, verse 13, have also all the authority of a Divine injunction – “If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord and honourable, and shalt honour him, – not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words,” &c.

He who determines the bounds of our habitation has an unquestionable right to dispose of our time. He claims our time upon earth as His property. He has clearly and forcibly revealed the manner in which it ought to be employed. He demands that the Sabbath be set apart for Himself, to be employed more immediately in the exercises of religion. To appropriate any part of the holy Sabbath to ordinary or common purposes, any further than duty requires, or to waste any part of it in idleness, is to rob God.

In the sequel of the discourse, it is intended to consider the evil of profaning the Sabbath by worldly or common conversation, and to show that this violation of the Divine law is more criminal than common robbery.

Duty requires that some words be uttered respecting common objects and events, even upon the Christian Sabbath. But the worldly conversation by which the Sabbath is profaned,

is occasioned neither by duty nor necessity: It is a voluntary or deliberate prostitution of holy time, to common, and, in many instances, to trivial and useless purposes. Those who trifle away any of the sacred hours of the Sabbath in this manner, are chargeable with robbing God. This, we say, is a crime more aggravated than common robbery.

It is readily admitted, that there may be instances of robbery more aggravated than the other crime in certain circumstances. But the comparison is not to be made between flagrant cases on the one side, and more ordinary cases on the other, but between the sins in themselves.

It is a very heinous crime even to rob a man: it betrays a mean sordid disposition – a hateful excess of selfishness, and a vile contempt for the right of others. It evinces a mind dark, envious, malignant, and ferocious: it discovers a heart deeply depraved and awfully hardened by long-continued habits of impiety and wickedness. The man who can perpetrate such a crime is an object of abhorrence to the wise and the virtuous, and a source of general fear and anxiety: he attempts to nullify those useful regulations which connect society together; and to disseminate sorrow, disorder, and misery, among men. The crime he commits is very daring rebellion against the Most High: it brings disgrace upon his own character, renders him wretched upon earth, and it brings everlasting ruin upon his immortal soul. We cannot depict a character so base, in all its blackness, and all its horror: we cannot describe all the miseries to which such a transgressor may give rise: he may spread calamity, desolation, and destruction, wherever his influence extends: he may be a terror to thousands, and ultimately a terror to himself; for the way of such transgressors is hard. But to rob God is a crime still more aggravated: And this greater crime is committed by those who voluntarily, and in opposition to the revealed will of God, take part in secular conversation on the Christian Sabbath.

This crime is direct rebellion against God, and an avowed contempt of His law. The command is explicit – “Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.” The words were uttered by God Himself. They form a part of that law which shall remain in force after the heavens and earth shall have passed away. This law, all of us are bound to observe: by it we must be judged. The meaning of this part of it is easily understood. “Remember” – be attentive, be careful – “to keep the Sabbath holy;” set it apart from common exercises to the exercises of religion. It is God who issues the mandate: He attends to the manner in which it is received. “God looks upon man. His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” Disobedience to this mandate is rebellion against Himself. The rebellion is direct, and peculiarly daring. The transgressor says, by his conduct, “I know the words of the law, but I disregard their meaning, and their authority. No, I will not sanctify the Sabbath; I will make a part of it common: I will speak about the trifles or business of the world; I will please myself, and endeavour to please others. I know that awful threatenings are denounced against those who profane the Sabbath; but I fear them not; I know that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, but I will compel Him to look on my rebellion; I will do what is pleasing in mine own eyes, in contempt of all that God has commanded or threatened, and in defiance of all that He can do.”

This species of Sabbath-profanation is a rejection of offered grace. All mankind are guilty and depraved. All are justly condemned to perdition. None can save himself. “Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost.” The blessings of His salvation are offered to all: but, to obtain a personal interest in them, faith and repentance are indispensably necessary. Without the knowledge of God, and of salvation through Jesus Christ, there can be no saving faith. Without a change of nature, there can be no genuine repentance. All these are the gifts of God’s free grace. An earnest and humble waiting on God in all the ordinances of religion is the appointed means of obtaining them. The Sabbath is one of these ordinances. If any part of the Sabbath is wilfully squandered away in idleness or in worldly conversation, the person

cannot be earnest in seeking after God; he cannot feel much concern about his own salvation. But Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life. Ask, seek, knock: Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." These injunctions require great concern and activity. But those persons who can profane a Divine ordinance, by common conversation on a Sabbath, show that the precepts and invitations of the gospel have had little influence on their minds. They neglect the appointed means of salvation; they also neglect salvation itself: and thus their trifling with the Sabbath amounts to a rejection of the offered grace of God.

This manner of profaning the Sabbath presents a strong resistance to the progress of Christianity. It is the opinion of many – and the opinion is well founded – that, were it not for the appointment of the Sabbath, a regard for God and for religion would soon be obliterated upon earth, and the great bulk of mankind would sink into atheism and utter profanity. But the great utility and excellence of the institution must be sought for in the strict and spiritual observance of its duties. When the practice of worldly conversation, during a considerable part of the Sabbath, becomes prevalent, the religious exercises performed on any other part of the day can do very little – perhaps nothing at all, perhaps even less than nothing – to maintain the honour of Christianity in this country, or to extend its influence to other countries. This manner of spending the Sabbath, by those who profess Christianity, is sufficient to prove that they know not the spiritual glory and excellence of religion – that they have never felt its power upon their own souls – and that they have no ardent desire to see its influence and its blessings extended to others. Thus it frequently happens, that much more injury is done to the cause of Christianity upon earth by its pretended friends than by its avowed enemies. The openly impious, the profligate, and the infidel, may habitually and daringly profane the Sabbath; but their practices and their example are not so pernicious to the progress of the gospel as the conduct of those who profess, on one part of the Sabbath, to reverence His sanctuary, and yet trifle away the remaining hours in common and useless conversation. The young and the ignorant are thus tempted to think that religion is a mere system of forms and of services, that have no influence upon the heart or conduct; and the openly profane are thus tempted to make vital Christianity and those who profess it the objects of contempt and derision. Thus the progress of Christianity is prevented and resisted by the hypocrisy and profanity of its pretended friends.

By persevering in this practice, the everlasting ruin of the soul is rendered inevitable. No rational hope of salvation can be entertained by one who voluntarily and presumptuously persists in violating any statute of God's law. He who pollutes the Sabbath, by habitually employing any part of it as a common day, is chargeable with self-destruction.

This practice manifests a contempt for heaven. Sinners may speak and think of heaven, and express a feeble wish to enjoy its pleasures: But, by neglecting the duties of the Sabbath, they afford sufficient evidence that the exercises and enjoyments of heaven are not adapted to their taste. Heaven is an everlasting Sabbath: there God dwells: there His servants see His face, and enjoy satisfying communion with Himself. The same God is to be enjoyed upon earth. The exercises of the Sabbath are the means of communion between Him and His people. If these exercises be neglected, the favour of God is not enjoyed, nor even desired. Communion with Him, which constitutes the highest felicity in heaven, is not esteemed; and thus heaven itself is despised. The sinner thus prefers earth to heaven – the pleasures of the world to the enjoyment of God – an imaginary, transient, and unsatisfying good, to that magnificent and everlasting good which God has laid up for them that love Him. If it was an evidence of base ingratitude and aggravated wickedness in the Israelites to despise the pleasant land of Canaan, how much greater insensibility and wickedness must there be in despising heaven itself – that better country, of which the earthly Canaan was only typical!

These observations might suffice to prove that the species of Sabbath profanation already mentioned is a more aggravated crime than common robbery; but let us now attempt to bring the two in more direct comparison with each other.

Let us compare them according to those statutes of the law of which they are violations. Sabbath profanation is a transgression of the First Table, which prescribes our duty to God; robbery is a transgression of the Second, which prescribes our duty to man. The most able and judicious theologians agree with the standards of our Church, in affirming that sins committed more immediately against God are more heinous in their own nature than sins committed more immediately against man. All sin is committed against God; but Sabbath profanation is more directly against Him than robbery. He who knows the law, "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy," and yet employs a part of the day in common conversation, offers a direct insult to God, and provokes Him to anger. The robber seldom thinks of God: what he intends chiefly is, to appropriate to himself, by injustice or violence, that which belongs to his fellow-creature. It is surely the more aggravated offence to violate the rights of Deity, and to prostitute his peculiar property to the purposes of self-gratification or of vanity.

Compare the places they hold in the gradation of crimes. One sin leads to another; evil men become worse and worse; the first departure from comparative innocence is in many cases the most daring; the crime of our first parents in Paradise was perhaps the most aggravated that ever was committed upon earth; the sins that follow are partly the result of the former. Sabbath profanation is nearer the commencement of a course of sin than robbery; Sabbath profanation naturally leads to robbery; many who have brought themselves to a disgraceful death have made this acknowledgment; but who can say that robbery leads to Sabbath profanation? The robber's heart has been hardened by profaning the Sabbath before he ventured to do such violence to man. Sabbath profanation has not become so common in Dundee because the town was formerly infested with robbers; but robberies have recently become more frequent, because the profanation of the Sabbath has long prevailed. Sabbath profanation is a radical crime; robbery is one of its remotest and wildest ramifications. Although the branches were lopt off, the root may remain in all its vigour, and may still send forth luxuriant shoots; but destroy the root, and all the branches will quickly fade, to revive no more. While Sabbath profanation abounds, it is almost vain to expect any considerable improvement in the observance of social duties; but were the sanctification of the Sabbath to become general, an act of robbery would seldom be heard of in our land.

An act of robbery may be done by an individual, and no other be concerned in the crime. Worldly conversation on Sabbath involves more than one in deeply aggravated guilt; it may bring whole families and communities under its corrupting influence.

Robbery occasions to the individual injured the loss of property of a worldly kind; the profanation of the Sabbath occasions the loss of souls. The robber, indeed, brings destruction upon his own soul; but he may do no injury to the souls of those whom he deprives of their property: they only sustain a temporal loss; their present misery is increased, but their guilt may not be augmented. But worldly conversation on Sabbath may ruin the souls of all who may take part in it, and of all who may give it encouragement and approbation.

We should also take into consideration the different circumstances of the parties. Common robbers, for the most part, are the very refuse of society: they have received little education, and have never been taught Christianity; they are ignorant of God and His laws – ignorant of their own guilt and danger – and as ignorant of the way of salvation. No man has cared for their souls. Perhaps they had no friend, no teacher of religion, to warn or admonish them; they are outcasts from the abodes of virtue and of decency. From them little good can be expected. But many of those who profane the Sabbath by common conversation, have been well educated – have enjoyed the advantages of friendly attention from the wise, the virtuous, and the good – have been taught the doctrines and duties of Christianity; not a few



of them even call themselves Christians! These should know God and His laws: they ought to stand in awe of His judgments, and to believe that He is highly displeased with their crimes. How hateful to profess love to God, and to promise obedience to His commandments, and yet to mock and insult Him by a voluntary profanation of the Sabbath! Might not such hypocrisy, such wickedness, appear shocking even to the hardened mind of a barbarous ruffian?

In some instances, the comparative atrocity of crimes may be determined by the temptations which induced the different parties to commit them. From the habits of idleness acquired by the robber, it is difficult for him to submit to honest and regular industry; from his habits of dissipation, it becomes difficult to learn sobriety; his temptations to prodigality and dishonesty acquire a fatal influence; his propensity to live by plunder gathers strength by practice of injustice, and he ultimately appears the confirmed slave of vice: he makes his living by the wages of unrighteousness; he is thus entangled by the bond of iniquity: his present enjoyments and his future expectations upon earth, seem to him dependent upon his nefarious achievements. But little good of any kind is obtained by worldly conversation upon Sabbath: the temptations to this crime are comparatively feeble. Few individuals in this country can add anything to their riches, or honours, or respectability, by this practice – very little is added even to their pleasure – very meagre and sordid is the enjoyment it affords. The robber obtains a reward for his wickedness; the other is a volunteer in the service of sin. If, then, a person will not restrain himself a little, that he may keep the laws of God, he must surely feel very little regard for the Divine authority; his rebellion must be peculiarly daring. Very few sins are so easily avoided as worldly conversation upon Sabbath. Almost every one has this in his own power. If any deal unfaithfully toward God in this which is least, they will be unfaithful also in much. If they will not bridle the tongue during one day in the week, how can they be supposed to keep the heart every day, and with all diligence? How can they keep themselves in the love of God? How can they be in the fear of God all the day long? How can they resist, and obtain dominion over sin in the heart? How can they purify themselves as Christ is pure? If the easiest duties are habitually neglected, there is sufficient reason to conclude that the more arduous are never seriously attempted.

Let us also compare the influence of these crimes upon society. The moral consequences of robbery in this country must be very limited. Robbers are comparatively few in number; their character is not esteemed but detested. Robbery can never become fashionable among us; it can never appear innocent; the practice of it can never become general; and those by whom it is committed will always be regarded with abhorrence. But secular conversation upon Sabbath is a common and a fashionable vice. The decent and respectable are not ashamed of it; many have the presumption to pronounce it harmless. In many families, the man would be accounted rude, or austere, or a hypocrite, or a fanatic, who would venture to reprove it; the impious practice has gained firm footing among us, and has extended its baneful influence over all ranks of society. The rich and the poor have been brought upon a level by this powerful destroyer; all classes are vitiated by this moral pestilence. Injustice, oppression, and violence, can never appear harmless; but it has been considered a trivial crime to rob God and to trample His glory in the dust. Misery, desolation, and destruction, may be spread far and wide by the unfeeling cruelty of the robber; but an evil more awful than all these has been disseminated among all ranks of society – the voluntary pollution of the Sabbath. This is the cause of many evils; it is more to be dreaded than misery in any form, in any degree. Sin abounds in our land; it rears its odious head in many terrific and disgusting forms, and it will continue to hold a conspicuous place as long as worldly conversation upon Sabbath prevails.

Are not these observations conclusive? Do they not sufficiently prove, that the profanation of the Sabbath, in the manner already stated, is a more aggravated crime than common robbery?

The voice of conscience, if not corrupted, would decide in favour of these statements: For, if there is a God at all, He is infinitely great and glorious; He is to be feared more than man; His rights are more sacred than those of man. Is not sacrilege pronounced the most aggravated species of robbery? If to rob a temple of God be reckoned more criminal than common robbery, must it not be still more criminal to rob God Himself? Conscience attests that God ought to be honoured and esteemed, and feared more than man; conscience will also pronounce concerning an insult offered to God; that it is more criminal than any insult offered to a fellow-creature.

God is good: His mercies and His benefits are great and numerous, even to the evil and unthankful. Never can one man do so much good to another as God has done to each of us. Conscience attests that we should feel and express gratitude to this God; it also pronounces ingratitude towards the greatest benefactor upon earth a crime not nearly so base and wicked as ingratitude towards God; but when God receives direct insults and avowed rebellion from the objects of His compassion and kindness, conscience must attest that such wickedness is peculiarly aggravated.

But let God Himself decide. Let us listen to His voice; His words must be conclusive. In the text the prophet asks, with a feeling of astonishment, "Will a man rob God?" There would be no expression of astonishment at one man robbing another – the act is not uncommon – the crime is not too great to shock a depraved heart – the person injured may be nearly on a level with the robber. But will a man, a feeble, dying man, venture to rob the omnipotent, the immortal God? Can there be so much ingratitude and so much wickedness in a human being as will permit him thus to mock and insult his great Creator, his bountiful benefactor?

The words of divine inspiration uttered by Eli convey the same idea. "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against Jehovah, who shall entreat for him?" It is possible to make up the loss to an injured individual, and to inflict a punishment upon the offender commensurate to the evil done against man; but sins against God are so great that no earthly judge can inflict a punishment adequate to their guilt.

The same doctrine is taught by the great Founder of Christianity. Jesus said to an impious and insidious lawyer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: this is the first and great commandment." The duty of the first and greatest importance is to love God; the neglect of this duty is a greater crime than the neglect of any other. It is a great evil not to love man – it is a greater evil to do injury to man; but it is a greater evil than both not to love God, and still greater to violate His laws, to rebel against His authority. To profane the Sabbath by worldly conversation is rebellion against God. All who voluntarily and deliberately do so give sufficient proof that the love of God is not in them. The thing is impossible. All who love God love His commandments and keep them. It is their aim, it is their pleasure, to do whatsoever He hath commanded them. But if one of the easiest commandments is habitually violated, it is quite impossible that the same persons should even attempt to keep the whole law. The Scriptures and the dictates of reason direct us to say, "The love of God is not in them. They have therefore violated the first and great commandment. They have not loved – they have offended, they have insulted – the Lord their God."

The respective punishments which God, as the legislator of Israel, adjudged to the two species of crime under review, may also assist us in deciding upon their comparative aggravations. "If a man shall steal an ox or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. Ye shall keep the Sabbath; for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people." The greater punishment was adjudged to the profaner of the Sabbath. Nor was this an unmeaning or empty threatening, intended only to alarm. The punishment was actually inflicted. A man was found near the camp of Israel, in

the wilderness, who had gathered sticks on the Sabbath day. He was brought to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. He was kept in ward till the divine will should be ascertained. Jehovah said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp." And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as Jehovah commanded Moses. Although these laws were given to the people of Israel while under a theocracy, the holy God could not be more severe in punishing moral evil while He acted as King over a peculiar people, than while He acts as "the judge of all the earth." Whatever changes have taken place in the dispensations of God upon earth, there is no change in His nature, in His law, or in His counsel. The precept concerning the Sabbath belongs not to the ceremonial but to the moral law – even to that law which God hath "founded for ever." Jesus, the Son of God, that infallible teacher from heaven, confirmed the authority and the permanent obligation of this precept when He said to His followers, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from *the law* till all be fulfilled." These words assure us the sins against the moral law, which God punished with the greatest severity during the Jewish dispensation, must still be the most heinous in His sight.

For the same kind of disobedience the most severe calamities also befel the Israelites in subsequent ages. Their captivity in Babylon was predicted, and afterwards took place on account of profaning the Sabbath. "I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you; and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths. They polluted my Sabbaths; then I said I would pour out my fury upon them. I lifted up my hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; because they had polluted my Sabbaths. If ye will not hearken to me to hallow the Sabbath day, then will I kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, and it shall not be quenched." Nehemiah contended with the nobles of Judah, after their return from Babylon, respecting the profanation of the Sabbath, saying, "Did not your fathers thus; and did not God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." How awfully have these predictions been accomplished! The people have been led away captive and dispersed among the heathen. They are in a state of dispersion to the present day. Jerusalem has been burned and destroyed, and ploughed like a field. Its palaces and gates and temples have been levelled to the ground, and a sorry and meagre-looking town now occupies their place. Can we produce any one instance in which robbery has been punished in a manner so terrible?

We can, therefore, have no hesitation in affirming that the pollution of the Sabbath by secular conversation, is a more aggravated sin than common robbery.

At the conclusion of the discourse it may not be improper to mention some reasons for illustrating and enforcing this doctrine.

We have reason to think there are some among us who sigh and cry for the abominations of the land. They are grieved at witnessing the disgraceful and impious profanation of the Sabbath, so prevalent in this place. They complain that the evil has greatly increased during their own time. Should not something be said and done to resist its progress? It may soon come to a crisis. Who knows but that period may speedily arrive when God will say to this overflowing deluge of profanity, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." O that many present may begin to think on the Sabbaths they have wasted in idleness, or profaned by unprofitable conversation! O that God would awaken them to consideration, and bless them with true repentance!

It is a scene awfully affecting, to witness so many of our brethren deliberately bringing everlasting ruin on themselves. Little do thoughtless sinners consider the worth of a soul! Seldom do they seriously anticipate what awaits them in the approaching eternity. But the people of God are affected, and weep over their perishing brethren.

It is peculiarly distressing to think of the dangers to which the young are exposed by the prevalence of Sabbath profanation. They are thus induced to think that the Bible is not true; or that many of those who profess to believe it are mere hypocrites. They are in danger of following the multitude to do evil, and of imitating the hypocrisy and profanity of those among whom they live. Although something is done for their instruction and admonition, the influence of evil example may counteract all their good resolutions, and soon efface from their minds every serious impression. None but God can preserve them from the ways of the destroyer. O that I could successfully exhort them to avoid this fascinating sin, and to flee from the wrath to come!

The sacred Scriptures hold out to us the prospect of great prosperity to the Church of God upon earth. Some preparations are carrying forward in different countries for this auspicious change. The Word of God is read with eagerness and pleasure by many thousands who never till of late enjoyed the precious gift. A general desire to possess the Bible is excited among the nations. In several heathen countries the gospel has been preached with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and astonishing have been the effects. "Waters are breaking out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." Would it not be desirable that a revival of religion should take place in our country? We have reason to think that God yet intends to favour our land, and to bless her children within her. But while Sabbath profanation so greatly abounds among us, little good can be effected even by the preaching of the gospel. If a people can attend the sanctuary of God on one part of the Sabbath, and wilfully employ another part of that day in worldly conversation, the most alarming, the most discriminating, the most animating truths of Christianity will be to them of no avail. They may come to the house of God as His people come; they may sit as His people sit; they may hear His words, but they will not do them; they are triflers in religion; they are hypocrites in Zion. The solemn ordinances of God become the means of blinding their minds and of hardening their hearts.

If God revive His work in our land, there will be among us a very great and conspicuous change in the manner of observing the Sabbath. At present, how painful it is to think of an institution so useful, so fraught with good to man, perverted to the meanest purposes! A day "made for man," for his instruction, improvement, and comfort, wasted in idleness, or wantonly abused by dissipation and open profanity! There is a loud call for a Divine visitation. May it be in kindness, and not in wrath! Let God appear in glorious power and majesty to shake the earth, to destroy the false confidence of impenitent sinners, and to subdue a people to Himself! Then shall the Sabbath be accounted a delight, and its prescribed exercises sources of dignified pleasure. Then all its hours shall be devoted to God, and employed in His service. In place of idleness, and amusement, and festivity, and vain talking, after retiring from the sanctuary of God, there will be great searchings of heart; there will be deep convictions of sin; there will be earnest prayer for the blessings of salvation; there will be vigorous attempts to make proficiency in the knowledge of Divine truth and in holiness; there will be zealous and persevering exertions to promote the interests of religion in families, and vicinities, and towns, and in all places of the land.

It may occur to some, that were they to refrain from worldly conversation, the Sabbath would be to them dull, and melancholy and "a weariness." It might be so. But what would heaven be to the same persons? Surely much more cheerless. The Sabbath is a type of heaven, and a happy means of preparation for that everlasting and holy rest. If sinners or professing Christians cannot take pleasure in the exercises of religion during one day in seven, how could they endure to remain for ever before the throne of God, and to serve Him

day and night in His heavenly temple? If they have no desire for communion with Him in the ordinances He has appointed upon earth, how could they relish that full and uninterrupted enjoyment of communion which constitutes the bliss of heaven? Let not men, therefore, deceive themselves with a false hope of heaven: Their dislike to the spiritual and delightful exercises of the Sabbath, proves that they are totally unqualified for heaven; and that, without a change of nature, they can never be admitted into that holy place.

It is a happy circumstance for our country that the crime of robbery is held in general detestation. This useful feeling holds out the prospect of a quiet and peaceful life upon earth to the great majority of our countrymen. Long may this feeling remain in all its acuteness, and in all its strength! It ought to be cherished; it ought to be improved and extended. O that this discourse may have some influence in exciting a similar and proportional abhorrence of the crime of Sabbath profanation! Although this crime cannot disturb the order and harmony of society *upon earth* as much as the other, there is an *eternity* to come: and if the peace and happiness of *eternity* be prevented by Sabbath profanation, it cannot be too much abhorred. God has published a law, by which the world shall be judged. He who said, “Thou shall not steal,” has with equal authority commanded, “Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy.” God will render to every one according to his works. Multitudes may live in peace and honesty; they shall not be condemned for robbing man; but if they have neglected to sanctify the Sabbath, God will assuredly condemn them to endless woe, for robbing himself. The serenity and comfort that exist among the profaners of the Sabbath in this world, afford no proof at all that they shall enjoy any peace or any pleasure in the world to come.

The very appointment of the Sabbath calls upon us to admire the wisdom and goodness of God. To the sincere Christian, it is a day of holy rest from the toils and anxieties of life – a day of intercourse with God – a day of refreshing to the soul. It is the means of increasing knowledge, and faith, and holiness. Sabbaths spent with God will soften the terrors of death. They bring heaven down to the earth, and introduce the saints to the exercises and pleasures of the celestial world.

Even to those who are yet in their sins, the Sabbath is a distinguished blessing. Were it not for this day, and the exercises prescribed upon it, their salvation would be very improbable. Many have been called into the grace of God by this appointed institution. Let even those who have long profaned the Sabbath by vain conversation think on their ways. Let them seek God while He is yet to be found. Let them call upon Him while He is near. Let them return from their evil ways, to fear God, and to reverence His institutions. Let them henceforth employ the precious hours of the Sabbath in attending with ardour to the things that belong to their everlasting peace. Let them read, and hear, and meditate, and apply to themselves the truths of Christianity. Let them think on the compassionate and almighty Saviour, whose finished work and resurrection the Christian Sabbath is intended to commemorate. Let them be ashamed and grieved in heart on account of their base ingratitude in so long despising His great salvation and rejecting His gracious invitations. Let them be horrified at the insults they have offered to the Son of God, in trampling His blood under their feet, as if it had been something common, or even contemptible. Let them seek grace to repent of all that they have done against God, and against the anointed Saviour. Let them humbly and patiently wait on God, and beseech Him to make them new creatures, to sanctify them wholly, and to prepare them, by His grace, for that everlasting Sabbath which remains for the people of God.

In retiring from this place of worship, it may be proper to think upon the meaning of these words of Divine inspiration, “If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation.”

“I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.”

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