

Outlines of Sermons.

By the late REV. JOHN SINCLAIR, Bruan Caithness,
Preached on 11th and 25th August, 1839.
(Continued from vol. 5.)

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” – John 3:3.

We mentioned four points: –

- I. – The necessity of the new birth.
- II. – The nature of it.
- III. – The marks of it.
- IV. – The certain results of having or wanting it.

III. – The marks. These are only from the Word, “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” The Word is infallibly certain; it decides every case as clearly as at the day of judgment. If our eyes were opened we might by the Word know things to a certainty. “I know in whom I have believed.” “I know that my Redeemer liveth.” The Word is the only rule of knowing. “These things have I written . . . that ye may know.”

Then there is the duty, “Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” The neglect of this duty is a great loss.

(1) It dishonours God. It loses an end of His giving the Word, namely, to be a rule. In them that are not born again, this neglect keeps them away from Him that He might have the glory of saving them. In them that are born again, the neglect keeps them from their rest in the Lord in every duty, and from further degrees of faith.

(2) It pleases the enemy. It pleases him by this means to lead blindfold to hell those who do not know where they are and are not born again. A blind company with Satan at their head. It pleases him to see the children of God, without assurance of calling and election, walking as slaves.

(3) It injures the wicked. Their neglect of examining themselves by the Word injures them. Would Satan have so many, if they knew it?

(4) It injures the upright. They lose the comfort of assurance. “My beloved is mine and I am his.” They lose their strength for duty. “The joy of the Lord shall be your strength.” They lose strength in the performance of duty, and strength against temptation.

The causes of the neglect of giving diligence to make one’s calling and election sure are:

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(1) A deceived heart. It turns many aside so that they cannot deliver their souls.

(2) Sloth. Diligence is commanded, all diligence. Loss arises from taking some means and neglecting others, taking public means and not private. Two difficulties in the way of making one’s calling and election sure.

(1) The indistinctness of grace in the heart. The flesh wars against the Spirit, so that the heart is like a book full of blots, like a liquor full of mixture. There is first the need of being cleansed from every known sin.

(2) The want of the Spirit. He only can seal assurance. He can make the true light shine. Hence, though we could decide clearly by the Word, yet no one gets any benefit without the Spirit. A hypocrite cannot be awakened nor a believer comforted without the shining of the Spirit.

1. The *first* mark is – they do not commit sin. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” – 1 John 3:9.

(1) They do not sin *habitually*. A new habit of soul is given, and so a principle against sin. But if sin prevail, the Word and the rod are sent, as Nathan and the pestilence in the case of David. Do Word and rod reprove us when we sin, or are we let go? Do they discover a particular sin or sins? If we are not sure what sin we have been guilty of, are we saying to the Lord, “Show me?” Are we as anxious to know our sin, as to be recovered from the consequences of it? Are we led, not to duties only, but to the atoning blood? Though temptation return, does the Word come with it? Is sin now more hated? It is a distinguishing mark of divine love and favour to be treated as a son.

(2) They do not sin *wilfully*. “What I would not, that do I.” There is a contest in the heart; not so much with the sins of the world as with more hidden sins. There is a contest in the members, which leads to diligence in prayer and in the use of the means of grace. There is mourning for sin. “O wretched man that I am!” Why? Because they cannot attain to spiritual liberty, to godly exercise, etc. There is application to the Saviour for deliverance. They look for sanctification as well as justification “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

2. The *second* mark is – they do righteousness. They are not only turned from sin, but to the exercise of holy duties. “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” – 1 John 2:29. Hence this is another step in the evidence. The first mark is sufficient, but in this there is a new evidence. It is not only a turning from Satan, but a turning unto God. “No man can serve two masters.”

(1) Their doing righteousness is from a *new principle*. They are taught that of themselves they cannot cherish a good thought, but that their “sufficiency is of God.” When the Holy Spirit begins, He carries on the good work, and they feel they need this. Formerly they professed to ask the Spirit but neither felt nor knew His influence, but now “Woe to any other covering.” And so when any performance is ended, they are not satisfied unless the Spirit was there. The angels did not please the disciples when Christ “they saw not.” If the Spirit is our regenerator, we feel our need of Him ever after for the performance of duty.

(2) They have a *new rule*. “The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting” – Psalm 119: 144. The holy law is the only rule, and to that they are turned. “Order my steps in thy word.” Their heart is cast in the mould of the Word. “Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments.” They are ashamed of every other rule, even of their own thoughts. They have a desire that their steps be ordered in the Word. They are not at ease in worldly matters without the Word, and when they are otherwise, the Word will be reproving them, as it did Josiah even in reading the book of the law.

(3) They live to a *new end*. “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Formerly they sought a righteousness of their own by the deeds of the law, but now they make use of the means in order to reach another’s righteousness. “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy;” to find not duties only, but God in them. That is a lost duty in which God is not.

Some questions –

(1) Is your worker God? Can you work without Him? If you do not find Him in a duty, is the duty put to the debtor or creditor side of the account? The supply of the Spirit is required. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Is that hard on you?

(2) Is the Word your rule? If so, you will not be easy when the Word does not come. That duty, which is done without the Word, will be heavy and trying. You will be seeking the Word; if it does not come, the duty will not be easy; if it does come, you will find the law exceeding broad, not easily fulfilled, and your performance will need cleansing.

(3) Do you seek God’s glory? If so, you will feel that a hankering after applause is a burden, and has a marring influence. You will be burdened with self rising, when you find

within you as Bernard felt, “O well done Bernard.” When the finding of God, and the discovery of the love of applause and self are reckoned with, there will not be much left for the creature to rest on in himself.

3. The *third* mark is – they overcome the world. “Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” It is not the world as God’s creature that the love of is forbidden. “Every creature of God is good.” From the highest mansion in glory to the lowest pile of grass, all is good, if used according to His Word, and for the purpose for which He gives it. We hear many people cry, “O the weary world!” Now, this is not from grace. I am not sure if I have ever heard gracious persons say so; generally it has been hypocrites, such are disposed to cast blame on creatures outside themselves. But sin brought into the world what should not be loved. The devil, the prince, the god of this world, wicked men, and dispositions in our hearts to use lawful things unlawfully, to abuse instead of to use – these are not to be loved.

(1) They overcome the god of this world. “Ye have overcome the wicked one.” In the day of conversion, the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive is delivered. They were carried captive at his will either in carelessness or sin; but they are awakened, and all bands fall off – at the bidding of the Mighty One of Jacob. “The strong man” is bound, captivity is led captive. The enemy is bound and cast out, and has many a struggle to get in again. When they are delivered from captivity, then the chained red dragon turns and follows them at every step, tempting to this and that, but they are strong and overcome him. How do they overcome him? By the Word of God: by the promise, and faith resting on it and saying, “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.” The threatening and the promise are “the sword of the Spirit.” Christ has Satan under his feet, and will put him under theirs. Paul says he is “carnal, sold under sin,” not under Satan. He was “not ignorant of his devices.” Satan’s sudden and violent temptations and suggestions in the heart are the worst to believers. The poor unregenerate sinner has none to go to as a conqueror of Satan. He will not go to Christ, and therefore overcomes not. Satan cannot touch believers without permission, and they cry and are delivered from their fierce enemy.

(2) They overcome the men of the world. They overcome their threats. So, “we ought to obey God rather than men.” It is fearful when men can be threatened to do anything. “We are not careful to obey thee.” Such was the attitude of Daniel and others in Babylon. It is not consistent with Scripture to be influenced by the threatenings of men. Peter fell once for fear, but was a noble champion for Christ ever after. They also overcome the bribes of the world. All the treasures of Egypt could not bribe Moses.

(3) They overcome the doctrines of the world – 1 John 4:4. False prophets are gone out, as many as unregenerate men and women. They cry, “Peace, you need not trouble so much.” But the new born cannot be satisfied with that. The old worldly religion will not do; “There is no fear, go on, be good, peace, peace.” This will not do. “They are of the world and speak of the world.”

(4) They overcome the company of the world. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate.” Moses flees; the disciples went to their own company. They hear God dishonoured in worldly society, and the divine nature in them rises against this. They separate, not merely for their own party, but for the cause of truth. “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” “They sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land.” They not only speak against these, but they mourn and pray. This is very searching; it is not easy to claim the mark. Their own minds are hurt by worldly company. The Spirit is dried in their hearts in an hour, and is not recovered in many hours, when they go without cause into the company of the world. Yet observe, they do not break any relative duty, but rather increase their attention to these duties.

August 25th.

Now, they overcome, not in their own strength, but in that of Christ. “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” It is in virtue of Christ’s overcoming that they overcome.

(1) He overcame the devil in the wilderness. He overcame the temptation to make bread – all things pertaining to the lust of the flesh. He overcame the temptation to fall down and worship Satan – all things pertaining to the lust of the eye. He overcame the temptation to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple – all things pertaining to the pride of life. Christ stood in the room of the elect. Look then to a tempted Saviour. He overcame; and if you are an elect person, He will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. He dragged the devil a poor captive at His chariot wheels.

(2) He overcame the wicked men of the world. He overcame them in their doctrines. He overcame the doctrine of Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees – all false doctrines. He laid a foundation that no elect person might be snared. He overcame them in their companies. He companied with sinners, but went to them for their good only. He overcame them in their threatenings, such as those of Herod, Pilate, soldiers and others. He overcame them in their allurements. They would have made Him a king, but He refused.

(3) He conquered what was in His own people. He had no sin in Himself, but He suffered for all their sin; and thus having satisfied justice, He made way for exerting His almighty power to destroy sin, the work of the devil. He suffered for original sin. He was bruised for their iniquities; He was “made sin,” and hence His blood cleanseth from all sin. He was bruised for the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. He suffered for actual transgressions. He was wounded for them. He obtained peace by His chastisement, so as to get strength for His people to war with sin, and He got stripes by which they are healed of their wounds.

Again, they overcome by Christ’s intercession. “Keep them from the evil.” He never ceases pleading for them, and gets whatever His lips crave. He engages almighty power in their behalf, Hence they get most unexpected deliverances. He pleads the merits of His own blood. It “speaketh better things than that of Abel.” He pleads their necessities too. “They are in the world.” He sends the Spirit to lift a standard – the Word conveying His blood – against the enemy: and thus the Holy Ghost enables them to take up the standard – the very same as He has in heaven. He works the faith, by which they overcome the world, namely, by believing that Jesus is the Christ. Thus it is Christ’s victory that is their victory.

We have mentioned the first thing in the world which they overcome; that is the devil. This is a mark of the new birth, because none ever overcame him but by Christ and His Spirit; and they that have Christ have life, in other words, have the new birth. We said they overcome him as a captive-leader. The world are “taken captive by him at his will;” but “the prey is taken from the mighty and the lawful captive is delivered.” They overcome him as a strong man armed. He is bound and spoiled; his armour is taken from him, and his goods are not left in peace. They overcome him as a prince, as a ruler, his laws are broken, his tribute is refused, and his service is abandoned. They overcome him as a god. He is refused worship. He offers them the world; and Luther-like, nay, Christ-like, they refuse to accept it.

Now, let us ask –

(1) Have *we* been delivered from captivity? If so, we shall be taught to say, “Give me not to mine enemy’s will;” we shall be afraid of falling away again into his hands. “Blessed is the man who feareth always.” If we have been delivered, the enemy shall be after us. “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” Where the devil does not lead, he follows. “The enemy has pursued my soul.” He is spoken of as a lion, a wolf, a bull, a dog, etc. If we have been delivered from captivity, we are also taught to say, “I am carnal, sold under sin;” the old nature is a burden. We feel carnal in every duty,

reading, praying, attending on ordinances, and such like. “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” The evil is mourned.

(2) Have we been freed from “the strong man armed?” If so, his armour is spoiled from us. Our peace and security in a state of nature is spoiled. We are made to know that we are children of wrath by nature, and are anxious to get out of it. “Create in me a clean heart.” Our unbelief of threatenings is broken: whatever we do with the promise or not, we believe the threatenings. We are delivered from a seared conscience.

(Continued in vol. 7.)

[December 1901]

Notes of a Sermon

By the late REV. D. MACDONALD, Shieldaig.
Preached at Wick, on Saturday, 28th April, 1894.

[These notes were taken by a hearer]

“Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.” – Genesis 42:1,2.

Famine is one of the afflictions which God sends upon the world for its sins. Some years ago there was a famine in China, and it was computed that seven millions of the inhabitants died. It was confined to China. But we have a famine this day, not the want of bread and water, but the want of the real knowledge of God. This famine is general throughout the whole world. It is sad for those who are free from this famine to see so many perishing in it. There are millions perishing without the true knowledge of God, and had He not left us a small remnant we should be like Sodom and Gomorrah.

What would be the best remedy to remove this famine? Bread. What bread? The bread of life, Christ Jesus – “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Though you should have dishes of gold and silver on your table, if you want bread you cannot live. So if you have not Christ set before you in the Gospel, you are in a spiritual famine still; nothing will do but Christ.

Jacob had good news to tell; but he must first rebuke his sons for looking at each other instead of going where the bread was. It is so with the children of God. They look too much at each other instead of going to God by Christ to get their spiritual needs supplied. As if Jacob had said, “In looking upon one another you are following the way of the world in their extremities.” Why look ye upon one another, to gratify the flesh? Why look at each other in your striving to accumulate wealth? Paul said, “I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ.” Why are you looking at one another, gratifying the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? “Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” Why do you look one upon another, striving who will be the greatest? “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” Why do you look upon one another, instead of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling? Jacob was touched on account of the famishing condition of his sons: so is God; for He says, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no delight in the death of the wicked.” There is corn in Egypt, why are you not bestirring yourselves? Corn in Egypt! This is glorious news to them who feel that they are perishing; to those who feel that they are far off from God and saying to one another, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!” Those who are perishing without the knowledge of God are urgently in need of good news, and this is good news, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, that He finished the work of redemption, and that He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. There was plenty of corn in Egypt. The poor sons of Jacob were so needful of deliverance that the news gladdened their hearts. Immediately there was a great stir among them, some running for the asses, some for the harness, some for the sacks to go to Egypt. There was a commotion among the dry bones when the prophet spake as he was commanded, as there was here among Joseph’s brethren. The Holy Spirit plants desires and motions after Christ the bread of life in the souls of men, and directs them to the cross of Christ for deliverance.

Joseph spoke roughly to his brethren. Christ wounds before He heals. He speaks roughly to His brethren through the law – He speaks roughly to them through an interpreter – through the law He shows them their sins, their guilt, and His wrath against sin. Then they feel and confess that they are sinners, and they reflect upon their past conduct. This pulls down their pride. The treatment they gave Christ before will now be very grievous to them, just as Joseph’s brethren here were grieved for the treatment they had given him in the past. The sinner’s Sabbath profanation, lying, drunkenness, &c., sting his conscience, and he begins to cry out, “What shall I do to be saved?” The interpreter will not give you what you need – the law cannot give life, peace with God, or peace of conscience – the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, alone can do this. The sinner will say, “Oh, that He would come and pour the oil

of comfort into my wounds, for I am tired of being spoken to in the language of the Egyptians! “But Christ is the Father’s wisdom. Notwithstanding their sinful conduct in the past, the roughness with which they were spoken to now, and the guilt that lay heavily upon their conscience, they were not sent away empty. Joseph commanded the stores to be opened.

What are the keys that open the stores of heaven? Faith and poverty. “Without faith it is impossible to please God,” and “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” These keys – faith and poverty – will open all the stores of heaven and earth. They opened the Red Sea to Jacob’s sons, while the Egyptians were drowned. They opened heaven, and manna fell down in showers; they opened the flinty rock, and waters gushed out; they brought fire from heaven to consume the enemies of God; and they brought rain from heaven after the doors were locked three years and six months.

These keys also open the stores of grace for the individual soul. The first store opened is mercy; the next, forgiveness. “Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner.” Oh, how precious forgiveness of sins is to them who feel their need of it! Then another store is opened – the blood of Christ. “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” The awakened conscience will say, “Oh that the blood were applied to me!” “Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” I think I hear one say, “Oh that it were applied to my guilty soul!” The next store is the influences of the Holy Ghost – the blessed Comforter who comes through the blood. Though you were as black as hell, He, by washing you in the blood, makes you whiter than one of the holy angels. When Christ comes by His Spirit to the soul the doors fly open. What doors? The doors of prayer, praise, and the Word of God. None can open them till He comes. He alone imparts consolation to the souls that are weary. “Oh,” says one, “that He would send the Holy Spirit to me, to let me see Jesus.” Another door (and you say, “Ah, how often it is shut against me!”) is the door of the promise. How often the poor soul is bewildered trying to get one promise upon which to place his hope for eternity! At other times the promises are renewed to the soul, and they shine one after another through the darkness, like the stars as they appear in the sky on a clear, frosty night.

Another store that is opened is the store of wisdom and knowledge. In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Spirit alone can open these precious treasures to your soul. If you get this it will spoil your own wisdom on you, and make you a fool in your own eyes. “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not.” Again – “To know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, is life eternal.”

Again, there is the store of temporal mercies. A godly man observed once, “If ever I knew the Lord, I knew Him in providence, both in keeping my personal character, and in keeping me from falling into debt.” If He has made Himself wonderful in His grace, He has made Himself wonderful also in His providence. He is all riches. Child of God, all things are yours. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” If He keep you from possessing much of the riches of this world, it is in order that He may wean you from the world and draw you to Himself.

Joseph’s brethren went away with their sacks full of corn. When they came to an inn, and opened their sacks, every man’s money was in the mouth of his sack. Then they said, “What is this that God hath done unto us?” They ought to have said, “What have we done to ourselves?” You are not to buy Christ and His benefits. He cannot be bought; you must come to Him as beggars. Joseph would not be a type of Christ, if they could say to their father, “We got plenty of corn for our money.” Christ is not to be bought, but faith brings balm and healing power from Him. When Christ reveals Himself to you in the fulness of His grace, you will feel a stinking smell off all your own works, tears, or alms-giving; you will be stripped

of all human merit. Oh, build on the grace and merit of Christ Jesus – the Rock of Ages – and not on the sandy foundation of your own possessions. But they soon spent all, and became as needful as ever. What you got from Jesus to-day will not do for to-morrow's need. Christ's people, like Joseph's brethren, are a poor and needy people, They went back in their need to Joseph again, so do you to Jesus Christ. Go back and get a fresh supply for your famishing soul every day. It may be that, before you get consolation, you will be imprisoned and put to it very severely, like Joseph's brethren, but the sighs of the prisoner come up before Him. The Lord's people are often in darkness, but they are prisoners of hope. Are you in the prison? If so, you are tired of the darkness. You cannot say in it, what others say with boldness, "My Father."

Christ saw all the sorrows and trials of His people, and, like Joseph, sought a place to weep in. He could not weep as God, but He sought and found a place to weep in. He found it in the womb of the Virgin. He became a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. We are not told any ever saw Him laughing, but many saw Him weeping. They saw Him weeping over Jerusalem when He said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things belonging unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." They saw Him weep at the grave of Lazarus – "Jesus wept." Christ wept in order that sinners might not weep in the depths of hell for ever. He found a place to weep when the load of the guilt of His people's sin was laid upon Him – in the garden of Gethsemane He was bathed in a sweat of blood. There He prayed with strong crying and tears. "The cup that my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?" He drank it in order that Satan's head should be bruised; and that death and hell might be robbed of their prey. Do you weep for your own sins? "You who have not wept tears of repentance on earth will yet bedew the floor of hell with your tears," says Dr Love. You children of God should weep also for the sufferings of Christ. When the weeping is over, Christ, like Joseph, orders a feast for His brethren. When Christ brings you to enjoy a feast with Himself, He dislodges all strangers – the devils must be put out – the Egyptians are put out. The devil, the world, and unbelief are put out. "Every natural man," says Dr Love, "has a devil coiled in his breast." Oh! the light that burst in upon their souls when he said, "I am Joseph!" It was God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, that shined in our hearts, giving us the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Again – "Believest thou on the Son of God? And he said, Lord, who is he that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him,"

When you are at the feast with Jesus, two things will be affecting your soul – first, the glory of Christ, and, second, the bad treatment you gave Him. No doubt these two things were uppermost in the minds of Joseph's brethren. The glory of Joseph burst upon their spirit. "I am Joseph, your brother." The apostle says, "We are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones." Think of the relationship that exists between you and God through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ; and who can separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus your Lord? Love is strong as death, and in the hottest persecution it increases more and more. The love that burst into your souls when Christ first revealed Himself to you will never wholly fade away. What feeds love? Nothing but the glory of Christ revealed more and more to your souls. The soul will say, "If I am to boast at all, it is in the glory of Christ as the Redeemer." The child of God can never forget what he saw of the glory of Christ when He first revealed Himself to him. "When I saw," says the believer, "a blink of the throne of grace, and the provision made in the covenant of grace, oh, how my soul was filled with holy joy!" For a guilty sinner to enjoy the favour of God, is more than any tongue can express. When He breathes by His Spirit through the Word upon your soul, then your heart burns within you.

What is the table upon which the feast is set forth? The Gospel. What viands are on the table? Milk and honey, flesh and wine are on it. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." That is most substantial food. The sweetness of Jesus to your soul is the honey, after the harassing terrors of the law whether at first or after backsliding. "His mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely." "Thy words are sweeter than honey to my mouth." Oh, to be able to say, "He took me from an horrible pit, and from the miry clay." He can do it in spite of your own unbelief and all the devils in hell. He can give you the grace of His Spirit so that you can make mention of His name both in public and in private. There is milk on this table for infants. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." There is wine on the table also. "And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." This wine makes glad the heart of man. It is the best wine; that of the covenant of grace. It is as old as eternity. At this table He makes Himself known to His people, and He gives each his own portion. He also gives them Himself, and that makes up all their wants. Each could say, "He is my brother." So can you, poor child of God, say, "Christ is my brother, husband, prophet, priest, and king." Then cast thy burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain thee. The burdens are heavy, but He has a strong back to carry both yourself and your burdens. Many a heavy one He carried before yours.

To conclude, we see that there was a sweet meeting between Joseph and his brethren, At the end of the meeting he said to them, "Go ye, and tell my father all my glory in the land of Egypt." So go ye, and tell all the world the glory of Christ, and that He sitteth on the right hand of the Father. Go ye and tell that all power in heaven and on earth is put into His hand, and that, therefore, He is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him. There was not a more glorious moment in heaven, than when Jesus Christ entered with His elect, blood-bought people, engraven upon His breastplate. "Tell my father about my glory in Egypt." Are you dumb yet about the glory of Christ? If you have seen His glory, be you telling others, and you will be getting crumbs yourself. The telling and the hearing of it will be like oil to your wheels. "I will," said Jacob, "go down and see Joseph." I will go down to the valley of humiliation to see Christ; for God resisteth the proud; they shall go down to the chambers of death; but He giveth grace to the humble. Jacob came to the conclusion that he would never see Joseph again. You may have come to the conclusion that you will never see Christ's face in mercy; but if you have got but one spark of His love in your heart, you will certainly spend an endless eternity with Him. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

[January 1902]

A Sermon.

By the REV. CHARLES CALDER of Ferintosh, 1774-1812.

[This sermon was "preached at Contin on the 15th August, 1793, at the ordination and admission of Mr. Dallas."]

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" – John 12:32.

The great design of the ministry of the Gospel as declared to Paul by the heavenly vision, which so suddenly and graciously arrested him in his career of persecuting zeal, is to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living God. Christ is the light of the world and the only way to the Father; it is therefore by leading men to Christ that the great object of our ministry can alone be fulfilled – that they can

be brought to the enjoyment of true light, and restored to the image and favour of God. Thence, in pursuance of the divine commission which the holy apostle had received, it was his devout resolution, as expressed by himself, writing to the Corinthians, to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The doctrine of the Cross to be the power of God and the wisdom of God in winning sinners to Christ and salvation, he knew from happy experience, as well as from our Lord's declaration in our text, signifying by what death He should die: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." By a display of love so rich and amazing, our blessed Lord was now to lay a foundation for conquering the most stubborn hearts, and was to engage a multitude, which no man can number, of all ranks and all nations, to enlist with joy under the banner of the Cross. Though there be virtue enough in the blood of Christ to expiate the guilt of the whole world, and attractive power in His dying love sufficient to draw to Him every heart, and though we have a warrant to preach the Gospel to every creature; yet we know of the many thus called that but few are chosen, and that of those to whom the word of this salvation is sent many perish in their sins: "For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" – Matthew 7:13,14. As Christ was of old to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, so He is still, alas! despised and rejected by many to their own aggravated condemnation and eternal ruin. The benefits, however, of His death are offered unto all, and by the preaching of the Cross, a glorious church shall be gathered unto Him out of the Gentile as well as the Jewish world, out of every kindred, people, and nation, – of all languages, ages, and conditions: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

I propose in discoursing from these words, in dependence upon divine aid, to show wherein lies the attractive influence of the Cross of Christ, by illustrating those views of His death, from the representation of which, in the preaching of the Gospel and through the accompanying influences of the divine Spirit, the great end of our ministry may be accomplished, and sinners effectually drawn to Christ and salvation. In order to the accomplishment of this important object, and that men may be brought to experience the powerful magnetism of the Cross of Christ, it is necessary to represent to them:

First. The divine glory of Him who was lifted up upon the Cross. Little indeed is the portion which we can comprehend of the infinite glory of our Redeemer, before whom Isaiah in his vision of the upper world, beheld the highest orders of celestials, veiling their faces with their wings, and worshipping Him with the most profound reverence; and of whom, rapt in the vision of future times, he cries out in holy ecstasy, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" – Isaiah 9:6. Had it been only a mere man, a creature though of the most exalted rank, who had condescended to suffer and die for us, whatever admiration and praise such friendship might excite, it could afford us no solid consolation, as it could be of no avail to expiate the guilt of sin, or to obtain for us eternal redemption. The redemption of the soul was precious, and it must have ceased for ever, had not a ransom of infinite worth been provided, adequate indeed to the redemption of a multitude which no man can number, and each soul of that multitude, incomparably more valuable in his estimation, who best knew its worth, than the whole world. Adequate to such a redemption was the price by which it hath been purchased: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" – Matthew 20:28. "Feed the Church of God," says Paul to the elders of Ephesus, "which he has purchased with his own blood." That one of such infinite dignity should humble Himself thus, and shed His blood on a cross for the salvation of men, is altogether

wonderful and mysterious, and is a doctrine, therefore, which corrupt reason is ever ready to reject as false and absurd. But he that believes that there is a God must believe mysteries, and in the eye of sound reason, nothing can appear more arrogant than for man to pretend to search out the Almighty unto perfection, and obstinately to reject the clear and express revelation which Jehovah hath made to us of His nature or of His ways, because they are incomprehensible to the poor grovelling creature who is a mystery to himself, and can no more account for the union of soul and body – two substances, yet one person – than he can comprehend a subject infinitely removed beyond the narrow ken of the human understanding – this great mystery of godliness, the manifestation of God in the flesh.

That our glorious Redeemer is God as well as man is a most comfortable truth, of which we have the fullest and clearest evidence from the Word of God. “Without controversy,” says Paul, writing to Timothy in the passage just alluded to – 1 Timothy 3:16, “great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” And in his Epistle to the Philippians 2:6, speaking of Christ, he says “Who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” If the heavens declare the glory of the Lord and the firmament showeth His handy work – if the vast creation bears the stamp of an almighty agent; if the Cherubim and Seraphim that shine around the throne of God proclaim that the hand that made them is divine, then this honour is due to Christ: “For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist” – Colossians 1:16-17). Again, He is expressly styled “the Beginning and the End” – Revelation 22:13); the Beginning, that is the efficient cause from which all things proceed; and the End, that is the final cause to which all things are referred; and nothing higher can be said of God the Father. It is this infinite dignity of Christ that imparts infinite worth to His obedience, and sufferings, and gives virtue and efficacy to His sacrifice, which the sufferings of the whole human race would not have, if they had been doomed to everlasting punishment.

This transcendent glory of Christ imparts infinitely attractive virtue to His Cross. He who humbled Himself for our sakes was higher than the heavens; He who emptied Himself had the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily; He who endured the Cross, despising the shame, was that great and glorious Being whom highest angels worship and adore. His humiliation, His poverty, His shame and sufferings, have, therefore, not only infinite merit in them to expiate the evil of sin and satisfy divine justice, but likewise an infinite virtue to bring nigh those who were far off, and to draw unto Him the remotest wanderers, – sinners from the utmost ends of the earth, yea, from the very confines of hell. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else; besides me there is no Saviour” – Isaiah 45:21,22. This is Christ’s call to us in His word. The great business then of ministers of the gospel is to publish and urge this gracious call, and to direct perishing sinners to Him as the great God, and the Saviour lifted up upon the Cross, to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty, might be rich” – 2 Corinthians 8:9. The knowledge of this grace, which can never be fully comprehended, which angels contemplate with wonder, and which the redeemed of the Lord shall celebrate in eternal halleluiahs of praise; the knowledge and admiration of this grace must be proportionate to the views which the soul has got of His glory who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. It is by the display of Christ’s glory that the grace manifested in His humiliation and sufferings is illustrated, and its attractive influence comes to be experienced. In preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, when

accompanied by the influences of the divine Spirit, whose peculiar office it is to testify of Christ, and to glorify Him, a powerful and irresistible attraction is felt flowing from the grace and condescension which brought the only Begotten of the Father to become an outcast of men, and the Lord of life and glory to expire on a Cross for the salvation of sinners and enemies.

Christ is “the desire of all nations;” it was said of Him in prophecy that the Gentiles should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising; and when He is set forth in the preaching of the gospel as the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the express image of His person, voluntarily substituting Himself in our room, submitting to the curse which we had incurred, and pouring out His soul unto death on the accursed tree for wretched sinful men, such ineffable glory united with such astonishing grace, viewed in the light of the spirit of wisdom and revelation, overcomes man’s natural alienation of heart from God, converts enemies of the Cross into faithful followers of the Lamb – renders a crucified Saviour altogether lovely, altogether desirable in the eyes of His people – worthy that kings should fall down before Him, and that all nations of the earth should serve Him. “I will now turn aside,” said Moses, “to see this great sight, the bush burning and not consumed.” It is by the representation of the glory and of the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the bush, that thoughtless perishing sinners will be induced to turn aside from the downward paths of sin and folly, to contemplate this astonishing sight, the Son of God in our nature lifted up upon a Cross, till by the view their hearts are melted, won, and drawn, till they are brought to enlist under the banner of the Cross, and to say with Paul, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world” – Galatians 6:14.

Secondly. That sinners may be effectually drawn to Christ, it is necessary to represent to them the evil and the danger of sin as manifested in the Cross of Christ. It was part of God’s commission to the prophet – Ezekiel 3:17-18, “Son of Man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand.” That the sinner’s life may be saved, or the watchman acquitted of his blood, sin must be laid faithfully before him in its native deformity and malignity, in its fatal consequences and dreadful desert; as that accursed thing which God’s soul hates, and against which He has denounced indignation and wrath, tribulation and eternal anguish. Though much of the pernicious nature of sin may be learned from the woes without number under which the creation groans, yet none of its dismal consequences alone, nor all of them united, set its evil and danger in so awful a light as the Cross of Christ. The dying groans of the Son of God declare this more loudly than the wailings of the damned. How atrocious must that guilt be which nothing but the costly sacrifice of the Lamb of God could expiate. How deep the stain which nothing but the blood of God could efface. When Christ is held forth in the preaching of the gospel as lifted up upon a Cross, and when sin is viewed as the procuring cause of all His sufferings and sorrows; of the bloody agony and ignominious death of the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, how must the conscience-stricken sinner shrink with horror and tremble for his own fate!

Seeing thus in the glass of Christ’s sufferings, and by the light of the divine Spirit, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, and reflecting with himself, “If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry,” he is brought to listen with eager attention to the offers of salvation through Christ, and to fly as if he heard the footsteps of the avenger of blood behind him, to lay hold of the hope set before him in the gospel. As there is no sanctuary for the sinner, no place of security from the wrath that is to come but the Cross of Christ, so there is no other point of view from which sin appears so exceedingly

sinful, so much the object of God's detestation, and so contrary to His divine nature. The soul therefore to whom sin has been discovered in this light must be deeply convinced of *their* fatal error who hope for salvation whilst they indulge themselves in the practice of sin, and must feel drawn to Christ no less powerfully to obtain redemption from sin than to obtain deliverance from wrath. As the children of Israel, when stung by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, looked for healing to the brazen serpent elevated by the divine appointment on a pole, so it is by the faithful representation of the evil and danger of sin as manifested in the sufferings of the Son of God, that the sinner is led to look with eagerness to Christ lifted up upon the Cross for the healing of the nations, and to apply to Him for remedy from the malignant poison of the old serpent by which his nature has been tainted, with no less ardour than he repairs to Him as his hiding place from the wind, and his covert from the tempest of the divine wrath, or as the high tower to which the righteous flee and are safe. But

Thirdly. What gives peculiar attraction to the Cross of Christ, and communicates to it the most powerful influence in bringing nigh those that were far off, is the love therein manifested to the sinful, perishing children of men. Much of the goodness of God may be seen by an enlightened eye in creation, much in His providential care over His creatures; but it is in the Cross of Christ that the glory of divine love has been most eminently displayed, and shines forth with a lustre surpassing all wonder and praise. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; but Christ hath recommended His love to us, in that, while we were sinners and enemies, He died for us. He hath recommended His love in submitting for *such* not only to the tortures of crucifixion to be lifted up as a spectacle of ignominy and woe on the accursed tree, but in submitting to sufferings of a nature far more exquisite, to the hiding of His Father's face and to the unknown sorrow of soul-suffering, which threw Him into sore amazement and a bloody sweat, which extorted from Him strong crying and tears, and made Him, though silent as a sheep before her shearers, amidst all the cruelties and indignities He met with from men, to pour out, in the anguish of His soul, that bitter complaint, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Oh! what manner of love was this! Oh! the height and the depth, the breadth and the length, of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge! If we conceive of Christ lifted up upon the Cross, and addressing us in the pathetic exclamation of the prophet Jeremiah, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow?" Must we not reply with admiration and gratitude, "No, Lord, never was sorrow like unto Thy sorrow; never was love like unto Thy love?" And how must admiration of this love be heightened; how powerful must its attractive influence be felt, from the believing contemplation of the holy alacrity with which our blessed Lord, knowing all things that were to come upon Him, went forth to surrender Himself to these tremendous sufferings, and of the wonderful meekness, the patience, the constancy, and the willingness with which He persevered in the dreadful conflict! He failed not, nor was He discouraged till He brought forth judgment unto victory, and, having power over His own life to reserve it, or lay it down when He pleased; yet He did not save Himself, because He would save others; nor did He yield up the ghost till He had drank out the dregs of the cup of wrath, till He could pronounce, "It is finished," – till he had paid His people's full ransom, and obtained for them redemption and everlasting salvation.

Christ is therefore to be held forth in the preaching of the gospel, as voluntarily submitting to be lifted up upon the Cross; He is to be represented there in His dyed garments and red apparel, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; His pierced bleeding heart panting with desire for the salvation of sinners; His blessed arms extended wide to invite and welcome them into this glorious sanctuary, that by the powerful magnetism of His dying love their hearts may be won to Him; and aliens converted, in the day of His power, into fellow-citizens with the saints; and strangers and foreigners into faithful members of the household of God. Christ is thus to be held forth in the preaching of

the glorious gospel as lifted up upon the Cross, and as addressing perishing sinners in the tender, affectionate strain of Joseph to his brethren: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt, come near unto me I pray you;" so that, drawn by the cords of this mighty love, and by these bands of a man, His seed, as foretold by Isaiah, may be brought from the east and gathered from the west, that the north may give up, and the south keep not back; that His sons may be brought from far, and His daughters from the ends of the earth; and that they may be seen flying to Him as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows, seeking Jesus who was crucified, and asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." "Thine are we, David, and on thy side thou Son of Jesse." "Hosannah! to the Son of David, blessed be he who came in the name of the Lord to save us, Hosannah! in the highest."

Fourthly. The harmony of the divine attributes, as displayed in the Cross, has a powerful influence in drawing sinners to Christ, and encouraging their approaches to God through Him. To reconcile the seemingly opposite interests of justice and mercy in the salvation of sinners, must, to us, have forever appeared impossible. But in the Cross of Christ, the incomprehensible wisdom of God has revealed a method for the accomplishment of this infinitely important object; a method which excites the wonder and animates the praises of the blest above; a method from which glory arises to God in the highest – peace on earth and goodwill to the children of men; a method by which the glory of God's justice and holiness is reconciled to the amplest exercise of His mercy and love, in the eternal salvation of the guilty, humbled sinner. It were easy to conceive of God's righteousness declared in the punishment of sin; it is the Cross of Christ alone that declares His righteousness in the remission of sin. It manifests justice in the way of pardoning sin, and mercy in the way of punishing it. In the sufferings of a Surety of such infinite dignity, the justice of God is more awfully displayed than if the whole human race had been doomed to everlasting destruction, and mercy at the same time shines forth in a more amiable way than if justice had been entirely dispensed with, and sin left altogether unpunished. Here, then, spotless justice, inviolable truth, infinite mercy, and love shine all at once, none of them obscures the other; each gives lustre to the rest, they mingle their beams, and shine forth with united and eternal splendour, as David speaks: "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other" – Psalm 85:10. Mercy and peace must have been ever inclined to serve man, but truth exacted the performance of God's threatening, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and righteousness could not but give to every one his due. God must be true in all His ways, and righteous in all His works.

Now Christ is to be set forth in the preaching of the gospel as lifted up upon the Cross, satisfying the demands of all these claimants, restoring union between them, and showing, in His death, how God's Word can be true and His work just, and the sinner notwithstanding find mercy and obtain peace. Is the sinner convinced of his obnoxiousness to the stroke of divine justice, how attractive in this view is the Cross of Christ, and with what joy must he welcome the call to repair thither? Contemplating from thence stern justice and soft smiling mercy (as an illustrious writer expresses it) in perfect concord, supporting in full majesty the throne of God; hearing from thence the justice of God calling for grace, mercy, and peace to be multiplied to the penitent believer in Jesus, must he not, in holy wonder, cry out, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it?" Who is a God like unto Thee that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of Thine heritage, who retainest not Thine anger for ever, because Thou delightest in mercy? "Oh! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out."

Fifthly. That sinners may be brought to experience the attractive influence of the Cross of Christ it is necessary to represent to them the victory obtained thereby over all the powers of darkness and the enemies of our salvation. It was on the Cross that the seed of the woman bruised the head of the serpent. It was by His death that Christ destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil. By the expiation of guilt on the Cross, He disarmed death of his formidable sting, and spoiled the powers of darkness of the trophies they had gained, by drawing man into their own apostasy, and subjecting to themselves this part of God's rational creation. Accordingly, says Christ in the verse preceding our text, speaking of the death He was about to accomplish: "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the Prince of this world be cast out." When He made His soul an offering for sin, and laid down His life on the Cross, as a ransom for many, not only did He overcome the world with all its terrors, but trampled on death and hell, and on sin the author of both; expelled Satan from the empire which he had so long usurped over the minds of men, and took the prey from the mighty and delivered the lawful captive. It is through manifold tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven. The enmity betwixt the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent never ceaseth; those whom Christ hath chosen out of the world, the world will hate. Satan desires to have them that he may sift them as wheat, and still goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

To the soul enlightened to see its danger, and ready to be oppressed with fear and sorrow from such a host of spiritual foes, how attractive must the Cross appear, when Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, is there represented to the eye of faith, in His dyed garments, and in the greatness of His strength, wresting by His pierced hand the keys of death and of hell from Satan's possession and trampling with His bruised feet all the enemies of God's glory and of our salvation; making a show of them openly, and triumphing over them on the Cross, and by His victory securing victory to all His faithful followers. For they also shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the power of His grace, and turn out conquerors at length, and more than conquerors through Him that loved them.

We are therefore, in the preaching of the gospel, to direct the afflicted in the world, for comfort, to the Cross of Christ, and to bid them possess their souls in patience, whilst they hear His gracious saying, "My kingdom is not of this world." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and in me ye shall have peace." Those tossed by the tempests of temptation, we are to guide thither for rest, and we bid them dismiss their fears, while they view the glorious captain of their salvation leading captivity captive, and thereby giving them the assured hope, that the God of Peace shall shortly bruise Satan underneath their feet also.

The bowed down under a sense of guilt we are to lead to the same blessed resting place, that they may lift up their heads and behold with joy the Man of God's right hand, who is mighty to save, taking away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of Himself, bearing it into a land not inhabited; so that when the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for there shall be none, and when the sins of Judah shall be sought for they shall not be found. It is by exhibiting thus the glorious conquests of the Cross, and proclaiming there liberty for the captives, and comfort to all that mourn, that the outcasts of Israel shall be assembled and brought nigh, and the dispersed of Judah gathered into one; that the weary soul shall be satiated, and the sorrowful soul replenished with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And in that day as the prophet Isaiah speaks, "There shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious" – Isaiah 11:10.

Lastly. That sinners may be effectually drawn to Christ, we must lay before them the inestimable purchase of the Cross. Of the glorious blessings which Christ hath purchased by His death, and now dispenseth in the most gratuitous manner, little indeed of the value can be conceived or uttered by us. To the redeemed of the Lord they shall be the subject of eternal

wonder and praise. The apostle Paul tells us that he made peace by the blood of His Cross, that he submitted to that accursed death, “that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles that we should receive the promise of the Spirit through faith;” and that He entered in once by His own blood into the holiest of all, having obtained for us eternal redemption. Christ is therefore in the preaching of the gospel to be represented as lifted up upon the Cross, purchasing for the rebellious peace and reconciliation with God, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. How attractive in this view must the Cross of Christ appear! How suited to man’s wretched condition by nature are those blessings for which He there shed His precious blood! and how graciously calculated to satisfy and solace an immortal spirit formed originally for God and eternity. The Scriptures of truth represent man by nature as in a state of enmity and rebellion against God: as enemies to God in their minds and by wicked works. The soul convinced of the misery of such a state and trembling under a sense of its danger from hearing as from the mount covered with tempest and that burned with fire, that awful denunciation: “Let the potsherds of the earth strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe to the man that striveth with his Maker.” Such we are to direct to Mount Calvary, there to behold the Son of God, pouring out His soul unto death; there to hear His blood speaking better things than the blood of Abel; speaking in a voice the sweetest and loudest in the world, louder than the thunder of Sinai; a voice that reacheth heaven and earth, pleading with God in behalf of men, and beseeching men to be reconciled to God; a voice more melodious to the self-condemned penitent than the sound of the jubilee trumpet to the captive and oppressed Israelite of old: a voice that turneth into a heavenly calm the tempest of the troubled soul, that diffuseth into the contrite heart a joy with which strangers shall not intermeddle, and a peace that passeth all understanding.

The Scriptures again represent our condition by nature, as without God in the world, not having the Spirit nor the fruits of the Spirit, without light, without hope, without joy; like the earth in the beginning, till the Spirit of God moved on the face of the deep; without form and void, and overspread with darkness. The soul brought to feel and lament the misery and wretchedness of such a state we are to direct to the Cross of Christ, that he may behold Him there purchasing the gift of the Holy Spirit without measure, and that he may behold Him now, exalted at the right hand of God, in virtue of His obedience unto death; in order that from a throne of grace on high He might breathe on the spiritually dead, and say unto them, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost;” that He might thus form them into living temples, into a habitation of God through the Spirit; and fill them with hope, and light, and joy in believing, that out of His fulness He might communicate to them grace for grace; that unction from the Holy One which teacheth all things, and those consolations of His Spirit which can make His people to rejoice even in the midst of tribulations.

We are all by nature children of wrath, and liable to that eternal death which God in His Word has declared to be the just wages of sin. To the soul trembling under that conviction, and crying out with the awakened jailor of old, “What shall I do to be saved?” how reviving the tidings of the gospel, the glorious doctrine of the Cross, when Christ is there represented to the eye of faith, suffering the just for the unjust, that He might bring sinners unto God; not only to deliver them from the wrath that is to come, but likewise to consecrate for them, by the rending of the vail of His flesh, a new and living way into the Holiest of all; to the possession of an inheritance eternal in the heavens. With what holy ardour must such sinners welcome and obey the call to view the blessed and divine Redeemer wearing a crown of thorns to purchase for them a crown of glory! to hear Him saying as from the Cross, “I lay down my life for my sheep, I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any be able to pluck them out of my hands. In my Father’s house are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also.” Christ is called the

Prince of Peace. With reference to Him it was said in prophecy, that the “gathering of the people should be unto Shiloh.” When He is represented in the preaching of the gospel as lifted up betwixt heaven and earth, to make peace between both, His precious blood streaming forth, from His sacred mangled body, and the waters of life, oceans of spiritual and eternal blessings, issuing freely from the same source, for the guilty and perishing children of men; it is thus they shall be brought to enlist with joy under the banner of the Cross, and that the children of God, scattered abroad, shall be gathered together into one, and come to be blessed in Him, and to call Him blessed; of whom it was foretold that “in Him all the kindreds of the earth should be blessed.”

I shall not trespass on your patience by any application of this subject further than just to observe, that from the faint imperfect view laid before you of the attractive influence of the Cross of Christ, we may learn with what a rich variety of motives the doctrine of the Cross furnishes the minister of the gospel, to urge and encourage sinners to repair to Christ for salvation, and the obligation resulting from thence on him to determine, with Paul, on making Christ crucified the chief subject of his discourses. And having the grace given him of God to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and knowing that, with regard to one and all of those to whom he is sent with the message of salvation, it must prove either the savour of life unto life, or of death unto death; must he not cry out, Who is sufficient for these things? But our sufficiency is of God, who hath committed the treasure of the gospel to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us; and whose encouraging declaration to His faithful servants is, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

[February 1902]

A Sermon

By the eminent ROBERT ROLLOCK, first Principal of the
University of Edinburgh. Died in 1599.

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil,” etc. – Matthew 15:21-28.

In this text which we have read, – well-beloved in the Lord Jesus, – we have a wonder that the Lord wrought on a woman, a Canaanite, a Gentile, of a cursed generation, the generation of Canaan. The wonder is, the healing of a woman’s daughter that was possessed and sore and miserably vexed with a devil. The woman having the occasion to meet with the Lord through His coming to these parts where she abode, she slippeth not the occasion, but seeketh mercy and grace; she findeth at the first great hardness and difficulty to get mercy; but at last, overcometh all by her faith, and getteth mercy.

Now to go through this history so shortly and plainly as the Lord shall give the grace. This woman is called a Canaanite; that is, descended of that old and rotten stock of Canaan, that was destinate for wrath and destruction, – Genesis 9:25. Look to her estate – she is come of a cursed race, she is lying in sin and security of sin. This is the estate of every one of us – we lie in sin. Conceived in sin, and born in sin, we feel not the sin and that deadly sleep of security is worse than the sin we lie in. There is none of us better by nature than this woman was. Then, when she is thus lying in sin and security, the Lord from the heaven sendeth her a wakening and a sharp wakening; for the judgments of God are like so many messengers from heaven to waken us. In the example of the woman we see that the Lord’s children must be wakened; and oftentimes our first wakening is very sharp, doleful and fearful, as it is with one that is wakened in the rage of a fever. Yet there is grace here. Well is the man that is wakened, though the wakening were never so sore and sharp, for the multitude of the world die in security, and never waken till the fire of hell waken them. Well is thee, and thou be wakened, albeit it should be with never so heavy a judgment; yea, though thy daughter or thyself, should be possessed with a devil.

Now when this poor woman is thus wakened, and is wrestling under the heavy hand of God, the Lord casteth an eye towards her (for no doubt, howbeit she was one of the race of cursed Canaan, yet she was chosen to eternal life), and of very purpose He casteth Himself into these parts where she was. Whatever other errand He had, there is no question but He had a particular respect to her, that she might have the occasion to come to Him, and this was a great grace. When we are wakened out of security, then the mediciner hath his time, and this is a greater grace. It is a great grace to be wakened, but it is a greater grace to find a mediciner to cure thy disease; for, as multitudes die in security, so also multitudes die in pain, torment and desperation after they are wakened. Well, she hearing tell that He was come to these parts, and that He was such a man, “a wonderful man,” as the prophet Esay calleth Him, “who cured all sorts of diseases, who restored sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, cleansed the leprous, and raised up the dead,” she is moved to seek grace and mercy at Him. Had not the Lord prevented her, and come down thither and sought her to draw her to Him, there had never been such a thing, that she had sought for Him. All thy misery, albeit it were never so great, will never draw thee to Him, except He seek thee first, and draw thine heart unto Him.

Well now to come forward: When she seeketh Him she findeth Him and getteth His bodily presence. Christ and His disciples were walking together after His accustomed manner. At the first meeting, saith the text, “The woman crieth:” He is apparently going before, and the woman followeth after, and crieth; misery constraineth her to cry. And if the Lord lay His hand upon thee, He will compel thee to howl and cry. O that power and might that is in the Lord over His creature!

But I doubt not, considering the words and communication that the Lord hath with this poor, miserable, and sinful woman, but it was that spirit of adoption that opened her mouth so wide to cry upon Him so, “O thou son of David, have mercy on me.” What crieth she? Mark her words: she crieth, “Have mercy upon me.” How many of Jerusalem cried after this manner? A heathen, a Canaanite, crieth this way: misery compelleth her to cry. But what maketh her to cry “Mercy?” We will rail and blaspheme God when we are in misery; but what caused her to cry “Mercy?” No question, the conscience of her demerits caused her to cry “Mercy.” She felt herself to be worthy of all that misery wherewith she was burthened. The voice of a miserable sinner that feeleth misery is, “O Lord have mercy upon me:” but lo, how she styleth Him, “O Lord, the son of David.” These were the common styles, indeed, of the Lord in this life: He was called of the multitude “Lord,” and, “The son of David.” But certainly I am of this mind, that this woman took these styles otherwise than the common multitude. The very eye of her soul was opened to see Jesus Christ to be the Lord, and to be

the Son of God manifested in the flesh, of the seed of David – howbeit, I will not attribute unto her a distinct and clear knowledge of both His natures in one person, and of His offices.

Then, Brethren, ye see two grounds of her petition: The first is, a lordship, and power, and dominion in Him of whom she sought mercy; the next is, a pity, a mercy in Him of whom she sought mercy. She sought mercy at a merciful face, grace at a gracious face. Look that thy prayer be well grounded on the Lord; when thou openest thy mouth to seek mercy at that Lord, look that thou acknowledge that there is a power in that Lord to give thee every thing that thou standest in need of. And, chiefly, look that thou acknowledge that there is an infinite passing mercy in that Lord, surmounting all thy sins, and then shalt thou pray from the heart with confidence and liberty; otherwise thou mayest well seek mercy from the teeth outward, but never with thine heart. Then she letteth Him see a good cause wherefore she sought mercy: “Lord I have need of a physician, for I am sick.” What sickness is sorer to a poor body than this, to be rent both in soul and body with a devil? “Lord, my poor daughter is tormented with a devil.” As in thy prayer thou must have a sight of the infinite power of thy God, of the mercy of thy God, so scorn Him not with a senseless heart: no, if thou gettest not a sense and feeling of thy misery, of thy trouble, and vexation in thine heart, call not upon the name of the Lord. It is true, indeed, the Lord sees and knows thy misery as well as thyself, albeit thou speak not a word unto Him of thy misery; yet, for all that, the Lord takes pleasure to hear thy misery out of thine own mouth. He will not only have thee to feel and groan in thy heart for it, but He will have thee to utter it unto Him with thy tongue also, if opportunity serve; He will have thee to make it known unto Him, as if He knew it not; He will have thee to bring up thy misery from the ground of thy heart, and as thou feelest it in the sadness of thy heart, so to utter it in thy voice; for the Lord delights to hear miserable bodies speaking of their misery.

Now to go forward. When she hath made her petition, see the meeting. The text saith, at the first He answered her not a word, but goeth forward with the disciples, and letteth her follow on, crying, “O Lord, have mercy upon me,” not once or twice, but the cry goeth never out of her head. This is wonderful. He that prevented her with grace, and gave her grace to seek Him, will not make her one word answer, but goeth His way, and will not speak unto her. Yea, thou wilt find that He who prevented thee with grace, and sought thee or ever thou soughtest Him, and gave thee grace to cry and pray, “Have mercy, O God!” yet He will seem to misknow thee, and make thee none answer. Thou wilt cry, in sickness, “Mercy,” but wilt thou always find mercy? No, no; thou wilt cry in other troubles, “Mercy,” and His Spirit, no question, will intercede for thee, and yet for a time He will make thee none answer. What meaneth this? why doeth He so? Now when He hath given thee grace to cry for mercy, a thirst and a hunger for grace, – “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst,” – when He hath given thee this first grace, He will let thee cry a great while to try thy constancy. We never get a spiritual grace in this life, but with the grace we get always a trial; and when He giveth us grace to cry, He will try if we will cry on; and to speak the truth, brethren, all our life here is but a trial of the graces of God, which He hath given us. We get not our heaven here, but a faith to look afar off unto it, a hunger, a thirst, a desire of it; and with our thirst, a trial of our faith, a trial of our hope, of our desire to see if we will stand in it. “And then,” saith Peter, “in the life to come, the trial of thy faith, and hope, and patience being ended,” – what shall follow? – “Praise, and honour, and glory when Jesus shall appear” – 1 Peter 1:7. Thou shalt be filled with satiety and fulness of joy – thy hunger and thirst shall be satisfied as soon as ever thou seest thy Redeemer.

Now to proceed: the disciples that followed the Lord they are troubled with the cry of the woman, and say to the Lord, “Either give her one answer or other, and let her go her way.” Surely, I think, this suit of the disciples was not so much for any desire they had that He should help her, as to be quit of her crying, because they were deafened with her. So, then,

the Papists need not upon this to ground their intercession of the saints in heaven for us that remain here on earth; for this ground is as weak as their doctrine of intercession is. And she directeth not her speech to the apostles here, to Peter, James or John, that they should intercede for her, but to the Lord himself: she speaketh to none of them, but she passeth and speaketh to the Lord immediately. So should we leave all the saints, and with confidence go to the Lord himself. The disciples are deafened and troubled with her crying: the Lord himself letteth her cry on, and this is a token that He is not wearied with her crying. Well, then, thou findest a comfort here when thou criest night and day: He never wearieth with thee: He saith not “Thou troublest me:” all thy cries, sighs, and sobs are pleasant to Him. Men will be weary sometimes with thy crying, as we read that unjust judge was importuned by the just suit of the poor woman, and dispatcheth her away, and saith, “Thou troublest and irkest me night and day,” – Luke 18:1. But the true righteous Judge is never wearied with thee; when He letteth thee cry out, He will not answer with a grudge, as the judge did, but cheerfully. The Lord that loveth a cheerful giver He himself giveth cheerfully. What meaneth that joy that the faithful find in their hearts, accompanying the benefit that cometh from Him, but that the Lord giveth his benefits cheerfully? For if the Lord gave them not thee cheerfully, but in anger and wrath, and threw them to thee as to a reprobate, thou wouldst never have joy in the receiving of them. There is not such a thing as a reprobate can have joy in the giver, or ever have his mouth open with true thanksgiving to the Lord to say once, “I thank thee.” Why? Because the Lord giveth him not his benefits in love, but in anger. So this is a sure token when thou findest joy in thine heart, and a contentation in thy prayer, and a purpose to be thankful, that the Lord giveth thee cheerfully, and heareth thee joyfully; and if thou canst get but a joyful look of thy God, thou mayest be assured that it proceedeth of mercy. When He looketh so unto thee He doeth not as earthly kings, or any earthly creature used to do, for they can keep a fair countenance and yet have little goodwill in their hearts. Well, the woman crieth, and the disciples cry: the Lord must answer once, but He maketh an answer little to her contentment: – “I am not sent,” saith He, “but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. What have I to do with that poor woman? She is not one of my sheep; she is of a cursed generation of the Canaanites, ordained to destruction and wrath.” In a word, He debarreth her from grace, He closeth the gates of heaven upon her teeth; for when He saith He is not sent to her, He shutteth her out of heaven. We ought to mark this well, for we are Canaanites, that is to say Gentiles. It is true, indeed, the Lord coming down from the heaven, and manifesting himself in the flesh, He had His commission first and principally to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles, – not to Scotland – nor England, nor Germany, nor France, chiefly and principally. As Christ said to Jerusalem, “Oh! that thou couldst see the day of thy visitation” – Luke 19:41. He was sent with commission to the Gentiles, but in case of the contumacy and rebellion of the Jews; as if the Lord had said unto Him, “Go thy way unto my own people, whom I have chosen from among all the nations of the earth, and see if thou canst win them: go no further.” And if the Jews had not been rebellious and disobedient, we had never gotten mercy and grace. Look Romans 11:11. The fall of the Jews was the raising up of the Gentiles, and the diminution of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles. “How got ye grace?” saith He. By their contumacy and rebellion. So Christ, sending out His disciples to preach, biddeth them go, not unto the Gentiles, or unto the Samaritans their next neighbours, “but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” – Matthew 10:5. And Paul, in a preaching before both the Jews and Gentiles – Acts 13:46, “The word of God,” saith he, “behoved first to be preached unto you, the promise belonging unto you: But, because ye will not receive the word, and have made yourselves unworthy of life everlasting; therefore, I will turn and preach to the Gentiles;” and so he bade the Jews good-night, and turned him to the Gentiles. And the text saith, that then the Gentiles rejoiced exceedingly.

So we were strangers from heaven, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. And we learn, in the example of this woman, that our entry to grace, and to heaven, was very hard and difficult. And as our entry to grace was hard, so if we fall from grace, our re-entry to grace shall be far harder. And if thou fall once from grace, hardly shalt thou get grace again. A Gentile that falleth once from grace, and treadeth under his feet the blood of Jesus, shall never be renewed with grace again. And I say to thee, O Scotland, if thou fallest from grace, look never for grace again. Look to the cities amongst the Gentiles that fell from grace, look Corinth, look Phillippi, look the Galatians, &c. Got they ever grace again? No: so if Scotland fall from grace, it will be a wonder if ever it get grace again. The wrath of God shall be poured forth upon every one, from the greatest to the smallest. For if He received not the Jews, His own people, into grace, after that they were once fallen from it, shall He take thee up again, a Gentile, a vile dog, in respect of them? And yet our men in this country care not to cast themselves and their whole land into hell, and into everlasting abjection from grace with all hope of recovery.

So this is a hard answer, she findeth no grace at all. They that follow Jesus Christ, and seek for grace, will find in their way a sore trial. Men think that heaven is but a common benefit, and that it is easy to a man to come thither: but albeit thou be a king, an emperor, or monarch, thou will find a hard entry therein. Will thy kingdom or thy lordship bring thee to heaven? No: if thou sleep on in careless security, thou shalt never see heaven. So if there were no more but this example of this Gentilish woman, it teaches us, that it is hard to win heaven, and that the gates of heaven at the first shall be shut upon our teeth. What is the cause of this? Thou art further from Christ, and from grace, from heaven, and from the joy of heaven, a thousand times more than the natural earth is from the natural heaven. Thou art a Canaanite, come of a cursed generation. What ado hath a Canaanite with heaven; so unworthy a thing, with so worthy a thing? The Lord, before He opened the gates of heaven unto her, He would let her understand, that she had nothing to do with heaven. And I say unto thee, that the Lord, ere ever He give thee grace, He will have thee knowing by tentations and trials, that thou art a Canaanite, descended of a cursed and reprobate generation, and unworthy that ever thou shouldst see heaven, or have ado with heaven. And if He bring thee not to this sight and this fear, I give thee thy doom, thou shalt never see heaven.

Now mark, He hath closed the doors of heaven upon her. And, certainly, this answer might have caused her to have gone away with shame and confusion. But for all this tentation, she continueth still, she crieth still, and hopeth for mercy. Hold upon mercy, hope still, believe on still, and that hope shall never make thee ashamed. She hath cried for mercy, the gates of heaven are shut against her. What doeth she? Goeth she her way? No, no; she tarrieth still, and knocketh. And if thou knewest what heaven were, and what hell were, thou wouldst be loath to leave heaven. Oh! the torments that remain for them that fall into hell! So she knocketh, and falleth down upon her face, and adareth, and saith, "O Son of David, have mercy on me." This adoring was not only for the casting the devil out of her daughter. No, no; she sought everlasting life at the hands of the Lord, and that healing of her daughter was an earnest-penny of that life. This was the mind of the woman, no question. It is said in the Scripture, "Seek and ye shall find, ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" – Matthew 7:7. If the seeking fail ye, yet tarry still, and knock. And if it had not been the Lord's will that a sinner, when he findeth heaven's gates closed upon him, should tarry still, and knock, would He have bidden him knock? It were a presumptuous thing for a beggar to knock at one of our doors. But seeing the Lord hath expressly commanded thee to knock, then knock on boldly. And if thou go away with the first answer, or the first naysaying, thou wast never truly hungry nor thirsty, and it is a token that thou countest little of the grace of God. If thou knewest how precious a thing the grace of God and Jesus Christ were, and what heaven were, and what hell were, thou wouldst never cease knocking, day nor

night, all the days of thy life. For if thou go away proudly, and tarriest not upon God's answer, but speak presumptuously, and say, "If He will not give me grace, let Him hold it to Himself," as blasphemous men will say; then he will shoot thee into hell. For if thou wert a king of all the world, thou shalt never get thine head in at heaven gates, except thou knock. Lord, if the world knew how hard a thing it is to get entry there! Men think that they will come easily and sleeping to heaven, albeit they take their pleasure and pastime. But they deceive themselves, there must be much striving and fighting ere they get heaven. Before that heaven could be opened, it behoved Jesus Christ to shed His precious blood.

Now, brethren, ye may say unto me, alas, who can knock? Who is able to come there? No, thou hast no power once to lift up thine hand to knock at that gate, except that the Lord put out His hand and hold thee up even in the mean time when He is holding thee back. So wonderful is the Lord's working with His own, He will be holding them aback with the one hand, and He will be pulling them in to Him as fast with the other hand. When He will be dissuading He will persuade, when He forbiddeth to approach unto Him, He inwardly allureth men to come unto Him.

Now, will ye hear the Lord's answer? If the first answer was hard, this is as hard and rough; for with an angry countenance, no doubt, He answereth; "It is not lawful," saith He, "to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs." It is even as much as if He had taken her by the shoulders, and thrust her out. First He saith, "Thou art but a dog, a Gentile, and this that thou seekest is a precious thing – the bread of life – this appertaineth only to the children of God; shall I take that, and give it unto a dog?" As if He had said, "Go thy way, dog, thou shalt not get such a precious benefit as thou requirest."

Then we see here, because she was a Gentile, therefore He calleth her a dog. Suppose thou be a King, (I pray thee be not too proud in thine own conceit), and yet a Gentile – *ergo* [In consequence of being a Gentile, thou art by nature, &c.], by nature a dog. He will cast a kingdom, an empire, a monarchy to a man, as one will cast a bone into the mouth of a dog, but all is nothing in respect of one drop of grace, and the hope of the kingdom of heaven. Albeit thou be a beggar, and yet gettest but one drop of grace through Jesus Christ, any hope of the kingdom of heaven, any beginning of regeneration, then thou has gotten a greater grace, a more precious thing than Caesar, that got all the world. There is no comparison betwixt the meanest spiritual and heavenly gift, and betwixt the greatest temporal and earthly thing.

Now I note again the hardness to win to the kingdom of heaven. Would ye not think it a marvellous thing to turn a dog into the Son of God? It is as great a wonder to see a Gentile to be called to heaven, as to make dogs and stones the sons of God. Now know, that before thou gettest access to heaven, although thou wert a king, thou must be humbled in thine own conceit, thou must know thine own estate and condition, thou must think thyself as vile and contemptible as a very dog by nature, as this woman was brought to say; otherwise thou shalt never get heaven.

Then, brethren, if the entry to the kingdom of heaven be so hard, if thou like a dog return to vomit, or as a sow to the puddle, as Peter sayeth – 2 Peter 2:22, after thou art washen with the blood of that immaculate Lamb, then it is a wonder if ever thou get grace to re-enter again. Now hear the poor woman's answer; she granteth all: – "It is very true thou sayest. I am but a dog, a vile and an unworthy wretch, and that bread of heaven is a precious thing, I am not worthy that it should be casten unto me. Yet" (saith she), "the whelps do eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. If thou wilt not shew me this grace to eat bread with the children yet let me eat the parings and crumbs under the table." Ere ever the Lord bestowed grace and eternal life upon thee, He will have thee to accompt thyself unworthy of any grace; yea, He will have thee to accompt as vilely of thyself as of a dog, albeit thou hadst never so many great prerogatives otherways in the world. Ere thou get that life, thy conscience will accuse thee to be unworthy of such a life, and such a joy as the Lord ordained

for His own. She skipped before, now she thrumbleth [pusheth] and thrusteth in at the gates of heaven, and goeth like a violent woman – not indeed pressing like a sturdy beggar, to be in whether the Lord would or not; but by humility and acknowledging of her own unworthiness, in all submission, coming – as it were, creeping like a silly whelp under the table; that is “the violence that is done to the kingdom of heaven” – Matthew 11:12. She taketh up heaven by violence, in all submission and humility. And if thou be once but a whelp under the table of God, in the house of God to gather up the crumbs of that plentiful table, thou art called to a greater honour than if thou wert made king of all the world. “I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than to be king of all the world.”

Now, brethren, when she is thronging in, He is loath to put her out again. No; [He will not put her out again] He saith, “O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee as thou desirest; thy faith hath won the victory.” From whence had this poor woman all this perseverance, and this continuance and this constancy, but from Him? And yet He standeth wondering at His own graces. The Lord, – behold His doing, – when He hath given thee grace and perseverance, when thou comest to heaven, He will wonder at thee; and there is the end of all thy perseverance, a fair crown of glory.

And what more doeth He? That same moment, that force that was in the word, that proceeded out of the mouth of Jesus, extended itself to the woman’s daughter, and healeth her, and casteth the devil out of her. Now she sought only to creep in as a whelp under the table to eat the crumbs, and now the Lord setteth her up at the table to sit with Him in glory; as Christ Himself sayeth, “I say to thee,” saith He, “many shall come out of the east, and out of the west, into mine house, into the kingdom of heaven, and sit down at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” – Matthew 8:11. And from whence are we come? Even out of the furthest point of the west. And, O Scotland, believe in Jesus, seek earnestly grace at Him, and wait patiently, when He trieth thee, and thou shalt find that thou shalt be set down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in glory. We are the sons of God indeed, but it appeareth not yet what we shall be; but one day it shall appear, when we shall be crowned with the crown of glory. The Lord work this faith and earnest desire of grace in us for Jesus Christ’s sake! To whom be all glory, honour and praise, for ever and ever. So be it. [March 1902]

THE ROSE OF SHARON.

Notes of a Sermon

By the late REV. DONALD MACDONALD, Shieldaig, preached in Pulteneytown,
Wick, on Monday, 30th April, 1894.

[These notes were taken by a hearer.]

“I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste” – Song of Solomon 2:1-3.

I. – “I am the rose of Sharon.” The rose is considered the choicest flower of creation, both for its beauty and for its fragrance, and the rose of Sharon excelled all others in loveliness; it was specially beautiful and fragrant beyond all roses, and it was the admiration of all who saw it. Now, Christ who is here speaking to His Church, compares Himself to this beautiful flower which was known and noted for its loveliness. “I am the rose of Sharon.” All flowers, in order to their perfect beauty and maturity, need two things; they need sunshine and they need rain. They need rain that they may grow, and they need sunshine that they may bloom; and Christ the rose of Sharon had both. He had, from all eternity, the glorious sunshine of His

Father's love shining upon Him, and the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit ever resting on Him and dwelling in Him. And when He appeared on the earth in human nature, He grew up in the atmosphere of divine love. He lived in the communion and fellowship of His Father's love; the sunshine of His Father's smile rested on His person and on His work. "This is my beloved Son," was His Father's commendation of His person, and, "I do always the things that please the Father," was His own declaration as to His work. He had, moreover, the dew and influence of the Holy Spirit ever abiding on Him, refreshing and watering His holy human soul. Thus He was beautiful and fragrant in the eye of the Father. With complacency and with delight His eye rested on Him in all that He did, and in all that He was. He was the "rose of Sharon," yea, the rose of heaven in His Father's view while He dwelt on this sinful earth. Is He the rose of heaven to your heart to-day?

Also, the rose does not send forth its beauty and fragrance merely when it is growing, it sends it forth specially when it is crushed or bruised; then its perfume fills the air. And so, when Christ in His humiliation went forward to atone for the sins of His people, and was bruised in soul and body in their room and stead, the sweet odour that arose from that bruising filled the heart of Jehovah with indescribable satisfaction and delight. Spices were laid on the Old Testament sacrifices, so that when the sacrifice was burned on the altar the odour of the spices filled the air. When the fire of divine wrath kindled by divine justice took hold of the blessed sacrifice on Calvary, the spices of holiness, of love, and of submission, that dwelt in the holy soul of the ever blessed Victim, sent forth such a fragrance as that it reached the very throne of God. Jehovah inhaled that fragrance and was satisfied, yea, Jehovah feasted with joy on that sweet fragrance! The holy angels who ever worship and adore, felt that fragrance and sought to "look into" whence it arose. The saints in glory who had been redeemed and saved in virtue of that coming sacrifice were refreshed by that sweet odour. A wave of wonder and praise filled their glorified spirits. And the Church of God on earth when it is under a gale of the Spirit, it too apprehends something of that fragrance. Yes, friends, the Spirit of God sometimes has wafted something of this sweet odour to poor longing souls in seeking access to the Lord; yea, has wafted to some souls in Scotland even in our own day, a savour of that very fragrance that arose from Calvary to the heart of God! Oh, did a breathing of it ever pass through your soul?

Again, when one sees a beautiful flower growing, they may wish to pluck it. Men will sometimes pull a rose and pin it in their coat, and then the perfume is felt by all who come near them. So, if you had Christ planted in a broken heart, that would make you beautiful, and you would emit a sweet savour. Those who get a glimpse by faith of "the rose of Sharon," Christ, oh, they wish to possess Him, to lay hold of Him, and to have Him as their own; and sometimes under the light of the Holy Spirit making clear to them the word of salvation, they are enabled to lay hold of and to embrace Christ, and to place Him in their bosom, and then the fragrance will be felt by those around them. O sinner, get Christ into your heart, and the whole world will be the better of you.

II. – Christ in commending Himself to His Church calls Himself here also, "the lily of the valleys." Not "the lily of the valley," but "the lily of the valleys," and not the lily of the garden, but the lily of the valleys. And why? Well, we know that when men plant lilies in their gardens, they wall them round, so that others may not get at them or perhaps even see them. Now, Christ was at one time the lily of the garden. Under the Old Testament dispensation He was so walled within the Jewish Church, that only those who were inside its ordinances and ceremonies could get a sight of Him. But after He appeared in the flesh, that garden wall, "the middle wall of partition," was broken down, and He now manifests Himself as the lily of the open valleys, open to every sinner who passes by, to every sinner who comes under the sound of the Gospel. "Whosoever will, let him come," and "him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

More particularly, there are three valleys into which Christ came, which makes Him call Himself the lily not of the valley merely but of the valleys.

1. The valley of the Virgin's womb. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." Jehovah, in order that lost sinners might get possession of this lily, prepared for Him a human nature – "a body hast thou prepared me." And why? The infinite and the finite were to be united, and as the finite could not comprehend the infinite, the infinite took hold of the finite. The immortal became mortal, the Eternal Son became an infant of days, and took human nature into such union with His own divine person as that He had "two distinct natures" while one person for ever. Divine love now found a suitable channel through which it might burst forth toward its objects, for the beloved Son came to the Virgin's womb and there became incarnate; became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, dwelt in the valley of our human nature. "Unto us a child is born," says the Church.

2. Christ came into the valley of humiliation and suffering. His people were the lawful captives of law and justice; a broken law held them captive, and justice made fast their chains. They were thus in a hopeless, helpless condition, they were prisoners and lawful prisoners, and could in no way deliver themselves. But Christ appeared at the prison door, put on the prison garments, was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Yea, went down into the prison and took there upon Himself the curse of the broken law, submitted to the rage and fury of men and devils, and to the avenging wrath of Jehovah, paid the penalty of the transgressors, and set the captives free! Do you follow Him by faith in this prison of suffering? That will make suffering light to you, especially suffering endured for His sake.

3. Christ descended into the valley of the shadow of death on behalf of His people. "The wages of sin is death." The fruit and punishment of sin is death. Sin has left and ever will leave behind it, a shadow, a dark shadow, which is death, and which is the foretaste and forerunner of eternal death. Every child of Adam had, and has this shadow following him. And this dark shadow fell on Christ, for although He knew no sin He made Himself sin for His people, and had their sins laid upon Him and reckoned against Him. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," says His Church. And the further He went on in the path of humiliation as their surety, the darker the shadow became! It was so dark in Gethsemane that He exclaimed, "Oh, that it might pass from me, yet not my will but thine be done." And it became so dark on the accursed tree that He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why this shadow, this awful shadow? Why? It was, child of God, that you might not sink under that shadow eternally. Not but that you will have to taste death, to enter the dark valley of the shadow of death, but Christ, having been there before you, will take away the terror of that valley, and be a support and comfort to you. Yes, friends, a glimpse by faith of this fair lily passing for you, and passing with you through the dark valley, will make a death-bed a sweet bed to you. Will you have this lily to-day, O sinner? Will you take Him and place Him in your heart? If you do, you will then become a lily yourself.

III. – But Christ not only commends Himself to the Church as the "lily," but He condescends to call her by the same name, for He says in the next verse, "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." As He is a lily, so she in her measure is a lily also. He is *the lily*, and in the measure in which His spouse resembles Him, she is a lily also. But she is a lily among thorns. "As the lily among *thorns*, so is my love among the daughters." Not easy for a poor lowly lily to be growing up among thorns. And the thorns that surround the spouse of Christ are many and painful. Satan and his hosts are thorns; ungodly men are thorns; the snares of the world are thorns; the corruptions of sinful nature are thorns; and the lusts of the flesh and of the mind that still dwell within the unrenewed part of the spouse herself are thorns. And thorns have pricks, and all these thorns will be pricking the poor lily. Satan's temptations and her own corruptions will be pricking the poor lily; the troubles and crosses of the world will be pricking her; the enmity and persecution of the

ungodly will be pricking her; and sometimes the ways and words of her fellow-believers will be pricking her, and these are often the sorest pricks of all. And what will heal all these pricks? I do not know unless it would be a sight of Him by faith who bore these pricks Himself, for it is written, "And they plaited a crown of thorns and put it on his head." Oh! the nearness of Christ to His poor tried people. He took their very thorns!

IV. – Lastly, Christ is compared in the text to the apple tree. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." Among us the apple tree is planted and cared for, but in Eastern countries it grows in the open fields, and is the most beautiful of all the trees of the wood. For it has not only beautiful spreading foliage affording shelter or shade to the traveller under the scorching rays of the sun, but it has beautiful fruit also, so that one parched with hunger or thirst may find food and refreshment. And moreover, the apple tree is so thickly covered with foliage and fruit, that one going through the woods where it grows, and where wild beasts roam and abound would be quite hidden and quite safe from the attacks of these creatures if he got beneath the covert of its spreading branches. The apple tree is therefore the foremost of all the trees of the wood for these various reasons; it is beautiful to look at; it is beautiful because of its refreshing fruit; and it is beautiful as a shelter from all danger. Now, Christ is as the apple tree to His people, the foremost and fairest beyond all others. As the apple tree excels all the trees of the wood, so Christ excels all others in the view of His Church. The other trees of the wood were desirable and pleasant, but the apple tree excelled them all. The image of Christ may be seen "among the sons" in more or less measure, and that makes them desirable, and pleasant, but Christ "among the sons" is beyond them all. The Old Testament prophets were pretty "sons," the New Testament apostles were pretty "sons," the martyrs and reformers were pretty "sons," and all who truly love His name are pretty "sons," but Christ is fairer than them all. "Thou art fairer than the children of men." Now, what is it in Christ that makes Him so fair and pleasant to His Church? We think it is this. His Church – every individual member of it – has something within their own bosom which when prompted by Satan ever seeks to make them miserable, and that is an accusing conscience. There are many enemies the Church has, outward and inward; but if she was free of an accusing conscience, these would not hurt her or grieve her as they do. Now, what is a poor child of God to do, where is he to flee when wounded and hunted by an accusing conscience? O friends, where is he to go but to Christ? and what does he find in Christ to pacify conscience, what but *His blood*? "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Nothing will give relief to a poor soul pursued by the terror of an awakened conscience, but a faith's glimpse of the blood that was poured out on Calvary. "It is the blood that maketh atonement for your souls." It is here the soul finds shelter from the wrath of God felt to be due to his sin, it is here he sees that reconciliation and peace are to be found, and so he says, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight." I can here take rest. I can here "sit down," for here I see a just God and yet a Saviour, God reconciled in Christ – "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

But the spouse not only found shelter and rest under the apple tree, but she found also food and refreshment, for she adds, "And his fruit was sweet unto my taste." Now, when a soul gets a little view of Christ in His atoning death, he gets also a little liberty to make use of Christ as a Saviour, to make use of Him in all His offices, and so to enjoy the benefits or fruits of His death. And oh, what a precious benefit as a fruit of Christ's death it is, when He as a prophet speaks a word in the Gospel on the ground of His blood to a poor needy soul! When He speaks a word of pardon and peace on the ground of the blood, that is a sweet fruit to the soul! And when as a priest He reveals to the soul something of the intercession He exercises on its behalf at the right hand of God, and when the soul sees that this intercession is carried on on the merit of the blood, that is a sweet fruit indeed! And when He as a King interposes sometimes by His Word and Providence to deliver the soul from harassing trials

and temptations, and manifests that it is for the sake of the “blood of the covenant” that the poor prisoner is sent forth out of the pit wherein is no water, that is sweet indeed! And when according to His promise before He left the world, He sends forth the Holy Spirit to dwell in the soul and to shed abroad there the love of God, and when that indwelling is seen to have been the purchase of blood, that is a sweet fruit indeed! And when there are moments when He vouchsafes His own fellowship and communion to the soul, whether in secret or under the ordinances of His appointment, and gives the soul some sweet nearness to Himself, a moment of a foretaste of glory, enjoying a blood-bought salvation, that is a sweet fruit indeed! And let me say, you that get a taste of these fruits, you may look out for trials. Not that the fruits bring trial, they bring blessedness, but trials are needed to put an edge on our spirits that we may relish those fruits for which by nature we have no appetite; and also to wean us from everything that would come between us and the enjoyment of these precious fruits. If Satan and the flesh get their own way with you, you will have little taste or relish for the fruits of the apple tree. Oh, keep near to it then, keep under its shadow, and you will find its fruit sweet to your taste.

And, O sinner, turn towards the apple tree, let your cry be, “We would see Jesus.” For if God wakens up law and conscience against you, and you have not the shelter of this apple tree, Christ, above you or around you, you will be a hopeless wanderer away from God, not only in time but throughout an endless eternity of woe! Let not Satan go back to his den this night saying with regard to your poor sinful soul, “It is mine yet.” The Lord grant you wisdom. Amen.

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