

# A Sermon.

By the late REV. JOHN MACDONALD, Ferintosh.

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested” – Romans 3:21.

The obvious design of this epistle is to illustrate and confirm the important doctrine of the sinner’s justification before God – a doctrine which lies at the very foundation of Christianity – which includes in it, and connects with it, all the blessings of eternal life; and apart from which no hope or comfort is left for man, either for time or for eternity. The Jews, though possessing all the advantages of a divine revelation, had fallen into sad mistakes regarding this doctrine. “For they being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, had not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3); and sought justification, “not by faith, but, as it were, by works of the law” (Romans 9:32).

The apostle, aware of the fatal consequences of such mistakes, not only to the Jews, but to the world at large, was led, under the guidance of inspiration, to write this epistle chiefly for the purpose of setting this doctrine in a just light. Other points are noticed, it is true, and points of great importance, but these are evidently introduced in their subserviency to this doctrine, or as arising out of it.

In pursuing his design, the apostle sets out with the fact, which cannot well be denied, that the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, “are guilty before God,” all having sinned and come short of His glory. And it falls by natural consequence, that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law,” he adds, “is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:19,20). Of course, if another method of justification, and a method altogether different from anything which man could devise, had not been revealed, man would have been utterly and eternally undone. Such a method, however, the apostle proceeds to unfold. “But now,” says he, “the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; – to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:21-26).

The whole of this interesting passage merits the careful perusal of every reader as containing one of the clearest and most comprehensive views of the doctrine of justification that is to be met with in any part of the sacred volume. It exhibits to us at once a righteousness which constitutes the ground of the sinner’s justification, and the manner in which a sinner obtains an interest in it, so as to enjoy the benefits resulting from it. This is by faith, and by faith without the deeds of the law. It points out to us also the ground upon which the sinner may warrantably receive it, and plead an interest in it; or that which may be called the right of acceptance – viz., the free offer of it in the gospel; for “it is unto all,” as the light of the sun, for the benefit of the world. We learn from it, further, that this righteousness is actually imputed to every believing sinner, or transferred, in law-reckoning, to his account, so as to avail him for the purposes of justification and eternal life. It is upon all who believe, as a garment (for to this the word alludes), in which they stand covered, clothed, and adorned before God. And finally, this method exhibits not only the grace of God, which it does in a marvellous manner – for believers are said to be “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” – but also the glory of his moral character. For hereby

“his righteousness is declared;” and it appears that he “is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”

The limits to which I must confine myself will not permit me to enter on the consideration of each of these particulars. What I design at present chiefly is, in reliance on divine strength, to direct the attention of my hearers –

I. To that which may be called the foundation of the whole, in this procedure of grace – the righteousness of God. And

II. To this righteousness as now manifested.

The consideration of these points cannot be inapplicable on any occasion on which we have to address immortal souls; and it is hoped will be seen to be not unsuitable to that which has called us together this day. Our attention, then, is directed –

I. To that which is here called the righteousness of God, and which is represented as the foundation, or meritorious ground, upon which God bestows on man pardon, acceptance, and all the blessings of redemption. In Scripture the term “righteousness” is not unfrequently used in a different sense from that in which it is employed here; and it will not be foreign to our purpose for a little to advert to this. It sometimes signifies the righteousness of the divine nature, or that which has been commonly called the moral rectitude of God – a character which is inseparable from His nature, which is displayed in all His works, and by which He makes it manifest, that as He regards sin with infinite detestation, so He regards moral excellence or goodness with ineffable delight – a character, in short, which includes in it all the perfections of his moral nature – such as holiness, justice, and truth, and which is, therefore, essential to His very being. Hence He is said to be “a God of truth, and without iniquity” (Exodus 32:4); to be “justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges” (Psalm 51:4); to be “righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works” (Psalm 145:17); the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness; and whose “countenance beholdeth the upright” (Psalm 11:7).

It is evident, however, that this cannot be the import of the term in the passage before us. For the righteousness of the divine nature neither is, nor can be, a ground of justification to sinful man. It is rather that which reveals the divine indignation against sin, passes a sentence of condemnation on account of it, and renders it indispensable that sin be punished. Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance to entertain just conceptions regarding this view of the divine character; for although this is not, and cannot be, the righteousness which justifies the sinner, and which is here referred to, it is not to be considered on that account as having no relation to that righteousness, much less (as many, alas! are too apt to think) as being at variance with it. On the very contrary, there exists the strongest affinity and harmony between the one and the other; for the righteousness of the divine nature is that which (on the supposition that sinners were to be saved) rendered it necessary that the other righteousness by which we might be justified, should be wrought out, and thus becomes the very reason of the existence of this other righteousness. This righteousness or character of God is, besides, the rule or standard to which the righteousness which justifies the sinner must be conformed, and with which, in all its essential characters of spirituality, equity, purity, and perfection, it must correspond. And, lastly, the righteousness which justifies the sinner must be such as to become a transcript of the other, and the mirror which exhibits its true character and glory to men.

Were these things but duly considered by many, they would not blindly or presumptuously trust in what they call the mercy of God, nor venture to approach Him for pardon and acceptance on the footing of any deeds, or even sincerity and penitence of their own, while the righteousness of the Divine nature stands in the way, precludes the exercise of

mercy, except in consistency with justice, and fences around for ever the rights and prerogatives of divinity. They would, on the contrary, renounce every pretension of this nature, and most humbly and thankfully acquiesce in that wonderful plan, in which “mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psalm 85:10).

But, as distinguished from this righteousness of the divine nature and character; that to which our text refers is evidently that which was wrought out by the Son of God in behalf of sinners of mankind. This, and this alone, is that righteousness, “which is by the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them who believe;” the righteousness, on account of which God accepts the sinner, and which is manifested to the faith and acceptance of men for this purpose.

In regard to this righteousness, it is of importance to observe:

1. That it consists in the complete fulfilment of the law in all its precepts and penal sanctions. The law as a covenant of works required of man perfect obedience as the condition of life; and, at the same time, denounced death as the penalty of transgression. The Lord Jesus Christ, accordingly, met the law in both these respects, fulfilled its precepts, and endured its penalty; accomplishing the one by the holiness of His nature and the righteousness of His life, and the other by the awful and unparalleled sufferings of His death. The whole course of His obedience, then, commonly distinguished into active and passive (with what propriety I do not at present inquire), is that which constitutes the right in question and by which, in virtue of the divinity of the person who wrought it out, the law is “magnified and made honourable.”

2. The righteousness thus wrought out in fulfilment of the law by the Son of God was altogether of a vicarious nature – it was in behalf of others and not for Himself. He stood wholly in a public, never in a private, capacity. He stood as the representative of sinners. In order to redeem them he assumed our nature, was made under the law, submitted to all its vast demands, and suffered its awful sanctions; for “He was made a curse for us;” says the apostle. If He was wounded it was for our transgressions; if He was bruised it was for our iniquities; if He died the just it was for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Thus for men He lived, for men He died; and all that He hath done and suffered is to be considered wholly on their account and in their actual room and stead.

Some, indeed, talk as if His human nature owed obedience to the law for itself, and that only His sufferings were on our account, as procuring for us release from punishment, but that we are left to work for life as we can. This, to say the least of it, affords but poor comfort to the sinner, and in effect leaves him just where he was. But it should be remembered, that Scripture never represents the Son of God as having assumed the human nature for Himself, but wholly for others – “Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15). It should also be remembered that the human nature in Him never subsisted in a state of distinct personality, but always in inseparable union with the Godhead, in virtue of which, whatever conformity it might possess to the law as a rule, it could owe no obedience as a covenant; under which form it demanded obedience of man, and consequently of the surety. Let us hold, then, by the consoling truth, that our divine Redeemer fulfilled the precepts of the law, as well as that He endured its penalty for man; in consequence of which the righteousness which he wrought out has procured a title to life as well as a release from punishment, and bestows the twofold blessing of pardon and acceptance, on every one that believeth. Let us also rejoice, that if this righteousness was wrought out in behalf of others, it will also be readily conferred upon them, and eventually be applied to the myriads for whom it was thus accomplished. And let

the guilty and condemned sinner avail himself of a righteousness which he is not only warranted, but invited, and even commanded, to accept, for all the purposes of salvation.

3. It is a righteousness of infinite value, and therefore available to all the purposes for which it was designed. Wrought out by the Son of God in our nature, it was not only perfect as a complete fulfilment of the law, but a righteousness of such value as to merit life and salvation for others. We can conceive of a perfectly holy human nature giving complete obedience to the law; but in all this there is nothing that could avail for others. The obedience of the highest angel in glory could merit nothing for man: because a finite nature can never exceed that which it was its own duty to perform. But the Son of God, as was noticed already, having assumed the human nature into intimate union with the divine, all the actings and sufferings of that nature derived immediate and infinite value from the divinity, and, properly speaking, are to be considered (and in the estimation of law and justice actually are so), the actings and sufferings not of a finite nature, but of Him who is God in our nature. This is what stamps a value and glory on this righteousness, in consequence of which the law is not only fulfilled, but magnified and made honourable, divine justice infinitely satisfied, redemption obtained for man; and “God is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”

4. This righteousness has been actually sustained by Jehovah in behalf of sinners, and acted upon in all ages by Him as the ground of their acceptance and complete salvation. This, indeed, might be inferred from what has already been stated; for, if wrought out in obedience to the law, in the room of the guilty, and by the Son of God, we must conceive it to be a righteousness worthy of God to accept and sustain. But, besides this, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, His ascension and reception to glory – the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and frequently since, the promulgation of the gospel in the world, the dispensation of means and ordinances in the Church, the conversion of sinners, and the experience of saints in all ages – confirm the interesting truth that God the Father, as the righteous Judge, has actually sustained the righteousness of His Son in behalf of sinners, and has actually proceeded upon this as a foundation in receiving sinners into His favour and conferring on them all the blessings of eternal life. Oh, glorious righteousness, through which such blessings flow to man, and such rich revenues of glory accrue to God!

After what has been stated, it will be scarcely necessary to detain you by mentioning some of the reasons why it is here called the righteousness “of God.” It is so, as we have seen, because wrought out by Him in our nature. It is so also, as exhibiting His glory and moral rectitude to man. It is a transcript of His moral character, and the mirror in which man may behold it. It is so likewise (and perhaps this is the principal reason of its being so called in the text), as being altogether of His provision and appointment. In this, as well as in many other respects, it is opposed to any righteousness of man, and the economy of grace connected with it, to the natural tendencies of his carnal, proud, and legal spirit; so much so that it would never have entered into his heart to conceive of this astonishing method of salvation.

But further, it is called the righteousness of God “without the law.” Not that it has no reference to the law, for we have already seen that it was wrought out in fulfilment of it, and therefore that the interests of the law, in all its glory and dignity, were fully consulted in the working out of it. Nor are we to suppose that the sinner is to have no regard to the law in receiving this righteousness. On the contrary, he recognises it in all the extent and spirituality of its demands; and it is under an impression of the equity of its demands, and of its awful sanctions, that he actually submits to the righteousness of God. But it is a righteousness conferred on the sinner without regard to the deeds of the law, or any works of his done in obedience to the law as a covenant, and to which He looks, in whole or in part, as the ground of his acceptance with God.

There is a tendency in man to seek justification by works; and he will, even when pressed hard by the law, endeavour to work up in himself convictions of sin, and certain penitential feelings, by which to recommend himself to God for an interest in the righteousness of His Son; – not recollecting that such convictions and inward feelings are designed to prompt us to accept of that righteousness, and not to entitle us in the least degree to an interest in it. The righteousness of God, however, neither proposes nor accepts of any compromise with the law in this respect; and it is the mercy of the sinner, did he but know it, that this is the case.

Lastly, this righteousness, it is said, is “witnessed by the law and the prophets.” The ceremonial law in almost all its types and sacrifices prefigured this substitutionary system, or justification by the righteousness of another. And though the moral law did not give any direct information of it, nevertheless, in the perfection of its demands, and the awful nature of its threatenings, it pointed out the necessity of such a righteousness. The prophets all witness concerning it, “Surely,” says Isaiah, “shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength” (Isaiah 65:24). “And this is the name,” saith another prophet, “whereby He shall be called, the Lord our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6). And Daniel tells us that He – Messiah the Prince – should “bring in everlasting righteousness” (Daniel 9:14). In short, “to Him give all the prophets witness, that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). Of course, this was not a new and hitherto unheard of doctrine, as some of the Jews were apt to imagine. It was a doctrine known to their fathers, a doctrine recorded in their own writings, and which possessed a peculiar prominence in their system; which, therefore, nothing but wilful blindness and determined unbelief could prevent them from perceiving. And thus God in testifying concerning this righteousness by the law and the prophets, thereby declared not only His high approbation of it, but that it has ever since the fall of man been the exclusive foundation upon which He justifies the ungodly, and confers upon him that believes all the blessings of salvation.

This, then, is the righteousness to which our attention is directed in the text; a righteousness of infinite value and glory wrought out by the Son of God in behalf of sinful men, a righteousness without the law, and a righteousness witnessed by the law and the prophets, a righteousness which has procured for man deliverance from wrath and a title to life, and which actually confers on him who believeth these and all other spiritual blessings, in all the fulness of their extent and eternity of their duration.

II. Let us consider this righteousness, as now manifested. The apostle has evidently a reference here to the gospel dispensation, as having brought this subject, together with every other part of redemption, clearly to light. Under the law, these things were adumbrated by a variety of types, ceremonies, and sacrifices. But under the gospel the veil is rent in twain, the shadows have given way to the substance, the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, and a day has dawned upon the world in “the light of which men shall see light.” We may observe –

1. That the righteousness is manifested in the gospel as actually wrought out. Here we see the Son of God no longer prefigured by types and sacrifices only, but actually appearing on the field of the world, tabernacling among us, suffering hunger, fatigue, poverty, and reproach, obeying the law in all its precepts, and during the whole course of His active life. We see Him endure its penalty, enter the garden, His soul exceeding sorrowful there, ascend Calvary, suffer Himself to be stretched on the accursed tree, and there, bearing the insults of men, the malice of devils, and, what infinitely exceeded all these, those hidings of His Father’s countenance, which led Him to exclaim, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!” But we hear Him at last cry, “It is, finished!” And thus, having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, “He brought in everlasting righteousness.” The gospel thus reveals to us a righteousness actually accomplished. The law pointed to it as a righteousness to be manifested, and ancient believers looked forward with longing expectation to its accomplishment; but the gospel points it out to us as actually

wrought out, and manifested as such for the justification of sinners. What a confirmation is this to the faith of God's people, and how daring the presumption of the sinner, who, in the matter of justification would propose to superadd any doings of his own to a righteousness thus manifested as actually and perfectly wrought out!

2. It is manifested in the gospel, in the universality of its benignant and beneficial designs regarding sinners of mankind. Under the Mosaic economy, all the blessings connected with this righteousness were confined to one nation, and shut up within the pale of one church. This, with a few exceptions, was the state of things for ages; and the righteousness in question was during that long period unpublished and unknown to the world at large. But now, it is unto all, not only sufficient in itself for the salvation of all, but designed freely for the benefit of all, exhibited to the faith and acceptance of all indiscriminately, and commanded (or so the commission runs) to be preached to every creature for this purpose. For "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free: but Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11). And this righteousness, which is unto all, starting from Calvary, whence it burst forth in its glory on a benighted world, shall continue its career until all nations shall see its manifestation in the gospel, are brought within the sphere of its influence, and blessed with that salvation of which it is at once the medium, and the procuring cause to men. O glorious thought! what a warrant to sinners of every description, and of every nation to whom it is proclaimed, to accept of it. And what an encouragement! nay, what an imperious call to communicate the intelligence of it to all nations, far and near, that they may hear of, believe, and be found in this righteousness!

3. In the gospel it is manifested in the greater extent of its triumphs in the salvation of men. Under the ancient economy, confined as it was to one nation, there were but few among them who believed in the report, and few to whom the arm of the Lord was revealed. But under the glorious gospel of the blessed God, thousands and tens of thousands have been led to believe the record concerning it; to rely on this righteousness as the ground of their justification, and to experience its justifying effects in the enjoyment of pardon of sin, peace with God, access to His presence, and the hope of eternal glory. They have also experienced its sanctifying effects; for it provides for the sanctification of all who receive it, and this remarkable change is inseparably connected with it, and is its never-failing result. For every believer finds that it is "grace reigning through this righteousness" that renews his heart, overcomes his prejudices, subdues his corruptions, detaches him from the world, elevates his affections to the things which are above, inspires him with zeal for God and devotedness to His cause. In short, it directs, prompts, and strengthens him to abstain from all appearance of evil, to resist the devil, the world, and the flesh, and to follow that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." If these effects do not ensue, men but deceive, and sadly impose upon themselves, by imagining that they trust in this righteousness, while their trust is but a mere pretension; for if any man be in Christ, and therefore clothed in His righteousness, he is a new creature. And Christ is made to all who believe in Him, not only wisdom and righteousness, but sanctification and redemption. And thus, instead of making void the law, they, on the contrary, establish it. And if such be the triumphs connected with the salvation of one sinner, what shall we conceive of those displayed in the salvation of the thousands and myriads who, in the days of the apostles, and in every succeeding age since, have been brought under its influence, and made to experience the blessed results of the imputation of this righteousness; – of thousands and myriads, too, of every description, rank, character, kindred, nation, and tongue; and thousands and myriads who have given evidence to the world, by their devotedness to God, their firmness and fidelity in His cause, their patience under affliction, and the holiness of their lives and conversation, that they owed all their

ability thus to act, and all the hopes and prospects that animated them during their Christian journey, to the righteousness of God manifested in the gospel!

Thus the righteousness of God is manifested in the gospel more clearly than ever under the law. It is manifested in the gospel as wrought out; it is manifested unto all, in regard to its tendency and design, and it is manifested in its triumph or actual effects in the salvation of many. And does not the manifestation of it in these respects speak to us? Does it not proclaim to us the invaluable privilege which the Lord has bestowed on us in giving us our lot under such a manifestation of His righteousness, while to many this is denied. How, then, should we remember that “to whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.” How inexcusable, besides, does it leave those who shut their eyes to its value, and refuse to submit to it, expecting by other means, and means of their own devising to recommend themselves to the favour of God; or who, if they would not altogether reject this righteousness, for their own justification, yet would bring their own works, their sincerity, their repentance, and some even their faith, as a price in their hands, by which to acquire a title to this blessing; or who would conjoin these with the righteousness of Immanuel, in order to procure the desired acceptance in the sight of God; thus acting as foolishly as if one should by lighting a taper endeavour to assist and increase the light of the sun. Such conduct carries absurdity, as well as criminality, in its very face. And those who are guilty of it would do well to look to their state in time, and to betake themselves to the true foundation ere it be too late, and the door of mercy be for ever shut, otherwise they shall find that “the hail shall sweep away every refuge of lies, and that the waters shall cover the hiding places.”

A very extensive improvement might be made of this subject; but I shall confine myself to the three following observations which I deduce, by way of inference, from what has been said. And –

1. We may hence see of what importance it is, that every one of us, for himself, be satisfied that he has submitted to this righteousness, and so fallen in with the design of its manifestation, that we have received it as the righteousness of faith, that we rely upon it exclusively for pardon, acceptance, and eternal life; that we desire to be found in it, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, and that we enjoy the benefits resulting from a personal interest in it, particularly peace with God, filial confidence in His presence, spiritual intercourse with Him, the sanctification of our nature, and the hope of eternal glory. Everything depends on this. Oh, then, let us not rest satisfied without sure and Scriptural evidence regarding this most important of all points. If we are right regarding this, we cannot be materially wrong in regard to other matters relative to salvation; but if we are mistaken here, be it remembered that we are mistaken for eternity.

2. We may also from this subject see the necessity of divine influence to give effect to this important doctrine. The righteousness of God is manifested, but men do not naturally see it. The sun shines, but the blind cannot behold its light. A vail covers the face of man by nature, which hides the glory of this righteousness from his view. It is God alone that can remove this vail (Isaiah 25:7). It is He who “commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, that shines into the heart of benighted sinners, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6). It is the peculiar province of the Spirit to “convince men of sin, righteousness, and judgment;” “to guide them into all truth,” and “to glorify Christ” (John 16:13,14). It was He who led three thousand on the day of Pentecost to believe the report, and to submit to the righteousness of God. And it is He who, in all ages, discovers to sinners their need of this righteousness, reveals its glory, efficacy, and excellence, to their view, disposes them to acquiesce in it as the foundation upon which they would stand with acceptance before God, and enjoy all the blessings of eternal life and glory. And it is He alone that can give efficacy to the means appointed by God for the salvation of men, and to all the efforts of His creatures to communicate the knowledge of that salvation to

their fellow-men, wherever it is preached. How necessary then is it that we should depend much on the Spirit in all our exertions, and pray that His power and presence may be felt by ourselves individually, and accompany our feeble endeavours to instruct others around us in the knowledge of those things which relate to their everlasting peace; that so the righteousness of God, which is manifested in the gospel, and whose light shines around them, may thus be manifested in the hearts of many, bringing all the blessings of time and eternity in its train!

3. But, lastly. May we not from this see the obligations which lie on all who enjoy the benefits of the righteousness which is thus manifested, to communicate the knowledge of it to those who are still in darkness and ignorance regarding it? Many both at home and abroad are in this deplorable condition, and must be considered as “perishing for lack of knowledge.” And are not we, upon whom the Lord has bestowed the privilege of this revelation, bound by every consideration to do all that we can to meliorate their condition? Are the means afforded us, and shall we withhold these means from them? By so doing should we not be accessory to, and even implicated in, their ruin? “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we know it not, doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it? and shall not He render to every man according to his works?” (Proverbs 24:11,12). But I trust that many among us are otherwise minded; and that from a regard to the glory of God, and love to the souls of men – from a view of the righteousness which is manifested in the gospel for the benefit of all – from considerations arising out of the love and grace of God manifested in this righteousness, and of the responsibility under which they are placed in reference to a final tribunal, they are willing to “know” the situation of “them that are drawn unto death;” and to afford them the means of deliverance.

[This sermon is taken from the volume entitled “Precious Seed. Discourses by Scottish Worthies.” – ED.]

[May 1903]

## The Weeping Mary at the Sepulchre.

(Extracted from the Volume of Samuel Rutherford’s “Quaint Sermons.”)

“For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two

angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him” – John 20:9-13.

[In MS., “Preached upon the Monday after the Fast;” that is, evidently the Fast, August 22, 1640.  
This sermon is perhaps the best of the series.]

In these passages of our Lord’s Word, beloved in Him, we have first set down the earthly witnesses that came to the grave to seek our Lord after He was risen from the dead. And they be of two sorts. The first sort of them are public men in a public charge, Peter and John, the Lord’s disciples; and how they sought Christ, and what speed they came in seeking Him! The second sort of persons are private persons coming to seek our Lord, Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had before casten seven devils. And good reason that such think meikle [much] of our Lord, who have gotten renewed souls, or any good thing from Him. Then we have the fruit that follows the apostles’ seeking of our Lord. They go their ways home again and find Him not. Again you have the fruit of this woman’s seeking of Him. She will not give over her seeking Him, albeit she cannot find Him at the first. Indeed, it is a blessed thing for a poor soul to wait on still at Christ’s door till they get Him, albeit they should die there waiting for Him. And in her waiting for Him, first of all she meets with the angels. And after she was comforted of them, telling her that He was risen from the dead, and was rebuked of them for her weeping and seeking Him there, she leaves them and goes on to seek Him. And she meets with Christ Himself and speaks to Him, but she miskens [mistakes Him for another] Him, as many times the children of God are speaking to Him, and He is speaking to them again, and yet they misken Him. She supposes Him to be the gardener, and speers [asks] if he had carried Him away, and where he had laid Him that she might know where He was. And then our Lord discovers Himself unto her by a short preaching that He made as our Lord. He is evermore kent [known] by His word, and when she hears Him speak she turns herself to Him, and she being willing to embrace Him, she is forbidden to do it at that time. He would not have her to think so meikle [much] of her bodily presence at that time, because there is a better presence coming when He is ascended to His Father. Only she is commanded to tell the Lord’s disciples of that which she had seen, and so she is made the first preacher of Christ’s rising from the dead.

First. We observe one thing in the general, that concerns the estate of our Kirk at this time, Herod and Pilate, and Jew and Gentile, they have all joined themselves together at this time to do the worst they can to Christ our Lord, and yet, when they have done all that they can, they cannot mend themselves. For now they had buried Him to hold Him down, and yet for all that that mends them not. The worst that the enemies of the Kirk can do to the Kirk is to put her to death, and yet, when they think they have gotten that done, it will not do their turn when all is done. For wherever our Lord’s bride be, albeit she were even in the grave, she maun [must] rise again, and in a triumph over her enemies. Let our Lord and His Kirk be where they will, He and His Kirk and cause, albeit they were dead, they maun live the third day again, as Christ Himself did, according to that triumphant and glorious word which He spake (Revelation 1:17,18) – “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” When John had seen His glory, and fell down dead because he was afraid thereof, He says that to him. There is news to comfort the Kirk of God, and to comfort all those who doubt whether our Lord will tyne [lose] the battle that He has against His enemies or not. No; He will make good that word that He speaks there of Himself – “I was dead, but I am alive; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” Fra [Since] a dead man cannot do the turn, He will let it be seen that a living man can do it. We need not to doubt of it, but the enemies of Christ they thought that they were quit of Him now, that He would cumber them no more; but it is not so for all that yet, for He shall live when all is

done, for all the ill they have done to Him. And within these few years our adversaries, they thought with themselves that long or now they should have been quit of our cumber, and that this gospel should [have] been clean borne down long or now. But with their leave Christ is letting us see this day that He will not have it to be so, that He will have that gospel which they thought to bear down so far to come to some perfection again. So is the Kirk brought in, speaking in Hosea's prophecy (6:2) – "After two days thou wilt revive us again, and the third day we shall live." This gospel it maun live, whoever they be who are against it, for the bearing down thereof, and the end of it maun be glory to Christ, and so those who are upon His side of it. Now, to say nothing of the race that Peter and John had in going to Christ's grave, it is said the other disciple he outran Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. John is he who is called the other disciple, and he outran Peter. As it is among the children of God, all of them have not the like speed. Some of them get a sight of Christ before others ever get a sight of Him. Christ has some into His Kirk that are old and experienced with His ways, and so they run fast in the same; and He has others also, who are His children and belong to Him, who are young ones and cannot run so fast. But whoever they be who have the life of God in them, and so are walking on towards Him, they shall, either first or last, meet with Him without doubt.

He which came first went into the sepulchre and saw, and he believed. He might [have] believed that Christ was risen by that which he had heard, but he believed not till he saw. Many a time had the Lord said to them that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, and must suffer many things of them; that He must die and be buried, but the third day He shall rise again; but notwithstanding of all that He had said, John believed not till he had seen tokens that He had risen from the dead. However it be, yet this is sure, that it is good for everyone to use the means that God has appointed for attaining to the knowledge of anything. For John gat this meikle good by using the means at this time and coming to the grave – that he was assured that Christ was risen. Who was there ever that made a race for Christ but gat some good by their seeking after Him? Seek ye and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. Zacchaeus, he had a longing desire to see Christ, and because he was low of stature, and the throng was great, he ran before the multitude, and clamb up upon a tree to see Him; and ye have heard what good come of that, as there comes aye [always] good of seeking Christ rightly; He says – "Come down, Zacchaeus, this day is salvation come to thy house." He will not fail, but He will make that word good which He has spoken Himself, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Could we be earnest in seeking our Lord – and I am sure ye know that this is a seeking time now, and never was there more need to be seeking at the hands of God – as the Lord lives, I durst promise it in His name, if we would seek Him we should see the salvation of the Lord. And so, albeit ill news should come unto us, let us not be discouraged for the same. But let us rest upon this, and put our confidence in the same, that our Lord is to be found of them that seek Him; and He has given signs thereof already unto us, and will do so hitherto if we will seek unto Him.

"For as yet they knew not the Scripture that they must rise again from the dead." The rest of the disciples, they believed not these Scriptures that foretold of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Can it be possible that there can be a scholar in Christ's school that has not learned his lesson that Christ taught him? Can it be that any who has heard Christ Himself make so many preachings of His resurrection, that they believe not for all that? Aye, ye may see the proof of it here. The doctrine that arises from this it is clear that it is not the means, nor hearing Christ as a man preach out of His own mouth, that will do the turn to bring us in to God, and to make us understand things spiritual. Preaching, indeed, is God's mean that He has appointed for that end, and the way that He ordains for bringing in souls to Him. But when all is done, it is not the only means of bringing us to Him. The special thing is that

which is spoken by our Saviour Himself (John 3:8), that wind that bloweth where it listeth, and no man knoweth whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. We may preach unto you until our head rive [be rent] and our breasts burst; aye, we may preach unto you until doom's day, and yet that will not do the turn unless the inward calling of the Spirit be joined therewith. For an outward sound to the ear is one thing, and Christ's loosing all knots and removing all impediments another thing. Christ says Himself while He was in the flesh (John 6:44), "No man can come unto Me unless the Father draw him." Christ is speaking in that place to them who had the outward means, and yet He says, it is no strange thing that they come not unto Him, albeit they have the means, because they want the Father's draught to draw them to Him. The scribes they heard Christ oftime preach, and yet for all that they consented to the slaying of the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:8). Christ is preached there both to the Jew and to the Gentile, and yet for all that to the Jew He is a stumbling-block, and to the Grecian the preaching of Christ is foolishness. We have meikle for us when the Lord's word is preached to pray to Him that He would join His Spirit and His wind with His word. Ay, all means that can be used by ourselves or by others are nothing without that be joined. It is in vain for us to rise early and to lie down late, and to eat the bread of sorrow all the day, if the Lord give not the assistance of His Spirit to the means that we use.

And again, we may learn from this that arms of men are not the thing that will save us, if so be that the Lord Himself watch not over the camp. God keeps evermore the issue and the event of all things into His own hand. And this serves to teach us not to trust in means of any sort whether it be inward or outward matters, we should not lippen [trust] in man, nor in weapons, nor any second causes whatsoever, but only in the Lord Himself, that is the only strength of His people. And so learn to overlook second causes when you look that way, and look no lower nor [than] heaven, to Him who sits there, and guides and overrules all battles in the world, and all things else, and will let it be seen in the end – salvation, salvation, even His salvation to all them who trust in Him.

What gars [causes] that it is not said, "They believed not Christ," but they "believed not the Scriptures" concerning this point? For there is no part of Scripture so clear as the Lord Himself when He is preaching with His own blessed mouth concerning that article of the resurrection from the dead, albeit it is true the five books of Moses and other Scriptures spake also of this article.

The reason of this is to teach us that Christ and the Scriptures they have but one tongue, and they who believe not the Scriptures they believe not Christ. It is not the sound of Christ's trumpet that many who profess to be preachers blow, but a sound from themselves and from men. This tells us what is Scripture and what is no[t] Scripture. That only is Scripture and no other that agrees with the will of the Son of God, and is according to His will revealed to us in His word. And again, that is not Scripture, and so not to be believed or practised, which is not according to the Word of God. And so we may see that ceremonies and inventions of men they are but a dumb Bible, and a ground that none should follow for their salvation. If we have no other ground for our faith but only this – that the Pope or the Kirk has said such a thing, or the great learned doctors have said it, and, therefore, we believe it. As the poor men yonder over in the north [Aberdeenshire was at that time the stronghold of Arminianism and Prelacy], they have been deceived by believing what grave-like men spake to them, and men who gat the name of learning. That is a blind guide to follow, and will lead us in the mire. But these that are indeed the called and the elect of God, they can discover the voice of Christ from the voice of men, and they only will follow Christ's voice, and will follow no other, whatever they be.

"Then the disciples went away again unto their own home." They were oversoon tired of seeking, for they might have waited on as well as the poor woman did. But God has our seeking of Christ, and all our supernatural works of that kind, into His own hand. We believe; pray, repent, seek after Christ and His Spirit, praise, hear, read aright, etc., as long as Christ

holds us by the hand, but we do it no longer. A stone that is up in the air is out of its own element, and so long as it has an impediment it will stay there. But take away the impediment that holds the stone from the ground, incontinent [immediately] it falls to it again. Even so is it with us. When we are employed about these spiritual duties we are out of our natural element; and if the Lord take away His hand from the strongest of His children, a woman will go beyond them in doing good duties. Thank God for any good thing that thou hast, and that thou art kept in a good estate. They never kent [knew] Christ's help well who put man in such a tutor's hand as free-will, to be kept by it; who say that Christ has conquershed [acquired] salvation to all, and when He has conquershed it, He puts it in the hand of free-will to be disposed of as it pleases, to keep or not to keep it. This is to make Christ a fool merchant, and not to take accompt [account] whether it be misspent or not; but Christ is not so. He knows what shall become of all whom He has bought. You know it is evermore the happiness of the weaker to depend upon the stronger. So it is the happiness of the poor soul to depend upon Christ and upon free grace. The happiness of the ship stands in that to have a good pilot; the happiness of the lost weak sheep depends on a good shepherd to seek it in again, and to keep it from the enemies thereof; the happiness of the weak, witless orphans depends in a good, wise tutor. Even so the happiness of lost and tint [perishing] souls depend on this, to lippen [trust] to Christ and His strength for their salvation, and not to such a changing tutor as their free-will is.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping. Here is a strange thing to think on. The Lord's own disciples they ran away from seeking of Him. One of them that had said, "If all should forsake Thee, yet shall I never forsake Thee;" and yet here is a woman more forward and more constant in seeking Christ nor he is, for all his fair profession. It is not fair words and a golden profession that will take a soul to heaven, and will make us to seek Christ rightly. We are all meikle oblist [much obliged or indebted] to saving grace in our seeking Christ. Here is a woman more forward in seeking Christ nor all His eleven disciples are. Because she gat not her errand that she was seeking, she could not get Christ, and therefore she will not leave, nor give over, but will wait on and seek Him. A soul that is in love with Christ, they never get their errand till they get Christ Himself. Ye that are seeking Christ, never give over seeking till ye meet with Him, for they shall at last meet with Him who lie at His door, seeking, as this woman did, who say, "I shall lie still at Thy door, let me die there if Thou likest, and albeit it should come to that, I shall die, or I go away and meet not with Him." Ye may know the ardent desire of a soul after Christ can be satisfied with nothing but Himself.

We use to say the thing that one longs for is the thing they maun [must] have, and no other thing will satisfy them. A man that is hungry, and longing for meat, he maun have meat, and meat only, or else he is not satisfied, albeit he get some other thing. A man that is in prison and longs to be free, nothing will satisfy him but liberty. Even so it is with this woman at this time; albeit the disciples were with her, yet nothing can comfort her till she get her lovely Lord whom she was seeking. Learn that lesson of spiritual importunity, never to give over seeking of Christ when once ye have begun to it. Blessed are they that ware [spend in this manner] their time this way in seeking Christ.

Mary stayed there weeping for want of Him, and yet looking into the grave to see if He were there. That is a good and blessed desire, and sorrow that is backed [seconded] with doing. That is heaven's sorrow indeed that is backed with doing and using the means. There are two things said of Jacob (Hosea 12:4), that he wept and wrestled in prayer with God. What is the matter of a dumb sorrow for the want of Christ? But that is a right sorrow for want of Christ that is joined with using the means to get Him. As it is in Solomon's Song 3:3, the spouse is wanting Christ there; she uses all means to get Him again. She goes to the watchmen, and says to them, "Watchmen, saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?" She goes round about the city, and to the daughters of Jerusalem, and charges them. That proves her sorrow to be a

right sorrow for the want of Christ. And ye know what sort of tears the Scripture says Christ had (Hebrews 5:7). He shed tears while He was in His flesh, and withal He offered up prayers and strong cries to Him who was able to save Him, and was heard in that He feared. And that is the grief and sorrow that will only hold the feet when men are sorrowful for want of Christ, and withal use the means to get Him; and not only has a raw wish for Christ, and will not want a morning nor a night's sleep to meet with Him. That sorrow that is so is but a vain sorrow, and will do no good. What followed upon this?

She saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. What need this guard to be here now when the Lord is risen from the dead? They stay here to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection, and to preach the same to this woman and to the disciples. And Matthew, he has a circumstance of this preaching of the angels that John has not. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Why are ye papists, to seek Christ at the holy grave now when He is risen? You may see that the work of man's redemption it is a very glorious and a very honourable work, for the angels in all the parts thereof are appointed to attend Christ and to wait. When He is born they maun [must] speak to Joseph and His mother to flee for His safety, they foretell His birth, when they are to return with Him again they tell them, and when He was in the garden the angels are appointed to wait upon Him, to dight [wipe] the bloody sweat off His face. And now, when He is in the grave, they are set to be a guard to His blessed and glorious body, and to preach His resurrection. When He shall come again at the last day to judge the quick and the dead, He shall come with innumerable multitudes of angels – to let us see that the work of our salvation it is a very honourable work; and the angels they wait well upon it and upon us. Even like a loving brother, who has his brother lying sick; O but he will run many errands for him in the time of his sickness, and will make all the house ado [astir] to get him well and at ease. Even so do the angels to us. They run many errands for us, and O but they are glad of our welfare; and (Hebrews. 1:10) it is said the angels are ministering spirits for the good of the heirs of salvation. Count ye little or meikle [much] of your salvation as ye will, yet it is the angels' great task that they are employed about. They are appointed to wait on Christ, when is about the working thereof, both in His birth, in His agony, in his burial, in His ascending to heaven, and shall attend Him in His coming again to judge the quick and the dead. The Lord has them sent out to all the airts [quarters or parts] of the world to bring in His elect ones. Woe to you who think little of salvation, fra [since] the Lord employs such honourable messengers about the same. Alas! the work of our salvation is little thought upon by many. Twenty – a hundred thoughts will come in men's heads fra morn to night. And scarce have we one thought of this great work at any time. And what think ye shall become of them who are so careless of the work of the salvation of mankind whereof the angels are so careful?

Thir [These] witnesses, they were clad in white. The angels, they have not our common country clothes, but they are like heaven in their apparel; to teach all those who are looking to be heirs of heaven to be clad like their country. The angels, they are clad with glory and with majesty, and therefore a sight of them will make a sinner to fall to the ground dead. If we think to be heirs of God in Christ, let us not be like the rest of the corrupt world. The apostle he has a word for this (Romans 12:2): "Be not conformed to the world, but be ye transformed in the spirit of your mind." When ye are drunkensome, and swearers, and break the Lord's day, as the rest of the world does, that proves you to be of the world, and not to have your affections up above. If ye would prove yourselves to be heirs of heaven, strive to be like your father, and like your country, and wear the livery of the house which is holiness: "Holiness becomes Thy house, O Lord." Mind the things that are above.

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? This would seem to be a needless question to propose to her, for she might [have] said, "I have tint [lost] my Saviour; who can blame me to weep? who can reprove me for it, seeing I want my Lord? But there is

something in this question that is unseen, that is the reason wherefore they ask it, and this is it – “Your salvation is now finished, and the devils are casten out of you, and so what gars [makes, causes] you weep now?” Our Lord would tell us by this, that oft-times we weep when we have cause to rejoice. She should have said, “This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice in it.” “This is a day when a decreet [the final sentence of a judge] is passed in heaven in your favours, that the lost seed of Adam is redeemed; and thou also art in the decree of redemption among the rest, therefore thou should not weep.” O that we could learn to accommodate our affections, and all that is in us, to God; to weep when He weeps, and to rejoice when He rejoices. And when our Lord is without in the fields, it is not time for us then to laugh, and to rejoice, and to be feasting. It is a time matter for mourning, now when our Lord is out into the fields, and when his armies are out and are in scarcity. And yet we trust that our Lord is keeping a day for us of this land, wherein we shall say, “This is the day that the Lord has made, let us be glad and rejoice in it.”

“Whom seekest thou?” This question is speered [asked] at her to make her hunger to be the greater, for the greatest hunger that any has for Christ they may, aye be more hungry for Him. And so learn to rap [quickly to throw out] out all your desires and affections for Christ, not only love Him, but be sick of love for Him. That is more than ordinary love, to be like to die for love of Him. And so all your desires and longing for Christ, strive to make them more, ay, till you come to that which the spouse has; “I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell Him that I am sick of love. I charge you, as ye will answer to God; that ye tell Christ I am sick of love for want of Him,” and till ye come to heaven to sing songs of Him eternally.

“They have tane away my Lord, and I wat not where they have laid Him.” This is her apology that she uses for justifying of herself in her weeping. “Why may not I weep, who once had Christ, and now I want Him?” That is a sorrow that may be avowed before God and before the world, to be sorrowful for the want of Christ. There are some who are sorrowful, and it is a shame to hear of it, the cause thereof not being good. Sorrow for want of my bairns, for want of my husband; sorrow for the loss of something of the world, or giving out something for Christ, etc., that is a shameful sorrow that cannot be avowed. But that is an honest sorrow that comes from the want of Christ. Look that ye ware [spend] all your affections that way as ye may avow them, and avow the cause of them before God and man. That is a sorrow that may be avowed that a soul has for want of Christ.

What is the matter and cause of her sorrow?

“They have taken away my Lord, and I wat not where they have laid Him.” He is out of my sight, and yet He is my Lord for all that; He is dead, and yet He is my Lord; for that she says, “They have taken Him away, and wat not where they have laid Him,” is as meikle as if she doubted yet of His resurrection. And a little after she says to Christ Himself, supposing Him to be the gardener, “Sir, if thou hast borne Him away, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” “I will think Him a sweet burden to come upon my back for all the pounds weight of spices that are about Him.”

The doctrine is clear. To the children of God, lost Christ is their Christ when all is done. In Song 5, the Lord’s party, the Kirk of Christ, is there sleeping in her bed, and Christ, her husband, standing at the outside of the door knocking, and she says, “I slept, but my heart waked; it is the voice of my beloved.” Thy beloved, and yet for all that He is out of thy sight. Let the believer’s Christ be where He will, yet He is theirs. If they were in hell and He up in heaven, the believer will say, “He is my Christ, albeit Christ should cast me off, and not count me to be His, yet He is mine.” So does David’s word as the type, and Christ’s word as the antitype testify, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” He is a forsaking Lord, and yet He is their Lord when all is done. Ay, the believer will say, “He is my Lord, albeit He forsake me, and I will come to Him.” Then true faith when it has the back at the wall will

claim to Christ, and count Him to belong to them. And that is a very good mark of faith, that when one is setting Christ a speering [asking] on all airts [quarters], and cannot get Him for no seeking [notwithstanding seeking], yet to count Him to be their Christ. This is the thing that the devil would fain be in hands with, to make you to doubt that He is your Christ or your Lord. This was the temptation wherewith he assaulted Christ our Lord. “If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple, etc. All that the devil would be at in his temptations is to make us doubt that Christ is ours. But never give it over when all is done, but evermore take Christ for thine.

And, oh, that this land would believe this now, that He is our God and the God of this land. Then suppose that our armies were put to the worst that are now out into the fields – as we trust in God it shall not be – but albeit it should be so, I say, yet seeing He is Scotland’s Lord, if so be that we will wait upon Him, and trust in Him and in His salvation, it shall be found that it is not a vain thing to do so, but that He shall grant us His salvation who trust in Him. And to this Lord, etc.

[July 1903]

## Sermon.

By JOHN LOVE, D.D.

August 2, 1790.

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” – Hebrews 1:3.

One of the primitive ministers of the Christian church denominates the Apostle Paul, “The cloud of God,” – that is, the cloud from which God darts His lightning and rolls His thunder. This appellation is peculiarly justified in this Epistle to the Hebrews, which, being designed to counteract and overpower the prejudices of that stubborn people, speaks in a more sublime and majestic tone than any other Epistle of the New Testament. In the words

which have now been read, a spiritual mind will perceive the lightning and thunder of that inimitable eloquence, which proceeds from the Spirit of inspiration, and is worthy of so sublime a subject. But who is sufficient for the illustration of such a passage? Even an archangel might tremble to attempt it. Shall we therefore retire, confounded with this blaze of celestial glory? No, my brethren: this would be to disappoint the end for which these words were written. It becomes us, indeed, to tremble with humble reverence; but the rich treasures of salvation in this passage, and the condescension of the Son of God, invite our approach, that we may glorify Him who stooped so low, from such a height, for the redemption of sinners.

Three subjects of meditation, closely connected with each other, present themselves to our minds in these words.

*First*, The personal dignity of the Son of God.

*Second*, His accomplishment of the work of redemption.

*Third*, His consequent exaltation.

Let us enlarge a little on each of these things, that, through the grace of the Spirit, our minds may be brought to that believing, holy frame, which is suitable to the solemn transactions of the Lord's table.

I. The apostle, well knowing where the grand stress of Christianity lies, breaks off – like an eagle darting upwards from a towering cliff towards the sun – with this declaration of the original greatness of the Son of God, “Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.”

There cannot be a worse preparation for an inquiry into these expressions than the vain curiosity and the presumptuous boldness of an unawakened mind – a mind which never truly felt the wound of sin. This is the proper source of a heretical spirit, which the Scripture (Galatians 5:19-21) classes with the spirit of sedition, of murder, of adultery, and of witchcraft. Animated by such a spirit, in vain should we attempt to come near this passage. As well might the glimmering owl attempt to fly with the eagle at noon-day. “The high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity, who dwelleth in the high and holy place,” will disclose the mysteries of His nature, and the secrets of His love, only “to him who is of a contrite and humble spirit.” This, I hope, is the prevailing temper of this small assembly. Happy shall we be if no remaining leaven of superfluity of naughtiness is yet allowed among us!

“Descend, thou gracious Spirit of wisdom and revelation, guide us into all truth; glorify thy beloved Christ; unfold to our minds, engrave on our hearts, those truths which sum up the whole perfection of beauty, the whole glory of God, the whole salvation of man!”

I shall lead you, my brethren, to contemplate the original glory of the second Person in the Trinity, in the three following views: –

1st. In reference to His possessing the one, indivisible, Divine Essence.

2nd. In reference to His peculiar personal distinction from the Father.

3rd. In reference to His sovereign dominion over the created universe.

1. The Son of God is infinitely glorious, because He is properly God – that is, the one, indivisible, Divine Essence subsists in His Person. To this the expressions in the text may be justly referred, “The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person.” Which may be thus interpreted; The Son is fully equal with the Father: For the same infinitely glorious Essence, which, subsisting in the Father's Person, renders Him adorably majestic, doth also, with undiminished lustre, subsist in the Person of the Son; so that, in respect of essential glory, the Son is the equal and the fellow of the Father. This magnificent truth is expressly taught in the Scripture when the Son is asserted to be God in the same supreme sense with the Father (John 1:1); and when the incommunicable name “Jehovah,” which is

expressive of the one Divine Essence, is attributed to Him (Jeremiah 23:6), and when the having life in Himself, or, which is the same thing, self-existence, is ascribed to Him, as is done (John 5:26).

Here let us pause a little, and let each one ask himself, "Have I ever obtained an inward discovery of the one true Godhead? Have I been enlightened to catch some glance of that boundless fulness of incomprehensible peculiar glory? Do I spiritually understand what I mean when I say Jesus is God, Jesus is Jehovah? If I do, how ought I to revere, to bless, and to worship the Author of my salvation!

2. The Son of God is infinitely glorious in His Personal distinction from the Father.

To this also the expressions of the text must be referred. It becomes, indeed, every speaker on this subject to stand in awe and to speak soberly lest he should be found "to darken counsel by words without knowledge." However, I may venture to say that the expressions of the text point out at once the communication of the subsistence of the Son from that of the Father, and the glorious equality of these two subsistences or Persons to each other. For the word translated "the brightness" might be fairly rendered "the effulgence" or "the beaming forth;" and seems figuratively to allude to the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. To the same mystery the other expressions seem to refer with another figurative allusion. For the word translated "express image" refers to the delineation of a figure which the seal makes upon wax. At the same time, while these expressions indicate that the subsistence of the Son proceeds in an ineffable manner from the subsistence of the Father, they also strongly intimate that between these two subsistences there is a perfect equality.

The first foundation of this equality is the sameness of that Divine Essence, which, without division or change, subsists in the Person of the Father and in the Person of the Son, so as to constitute both the one and the other properly God. In this respect, though distinct in personality, the Father and the Son are not only equal but one (John 10:30). "I and the Father are One;" or, as it might be translated, "one thing;" that is, one in Essence. It would be heresy, therefore, to say, that the Essence of the Son proceeds from the Essence of the Father. For the Father and Son are not two essences, but one and the same Essence, subsisting in two distinct ways.

But, further, the dignity of the Son is equal to that of the Father in respect of the manner of subsistence. For not only is the Essence in both Persons precisely the same, but the subsistence of the Godhead in the Person of the Son is equally necessary, equally eternal, equally independent, and equally honourable with the subsistence of the same Godhead in the Person of the Father.

For the Godhead subsists in the Person of the Son, not by a sovereign act of the Father's will, but by the same necessity of nature by which the Godhead exists at all. The necessity of nature lies as deep and as strong that the Godhead should subsist in the Person of the Son as that it should at all exist, or that it should subsist in the Person of the Father.

And hence it is impious to imagine a priority of time between the Person of the Father and that of the Son. There is here a priority of order, not of time. For this tremendous mystery is not to be measured by the rules of finite, created beings. All, in this matter, is from everlasting. The Father never could subsist by Himself or be – what He was – the Father, without the Son, any more than the Son could subsist without the Father.

And hence there is no such thing as dependence or independence on either side in reference to each other.

And hence there is an entire equality between the Infinite honourableness of the subsistence of the Father and the equally Infinite honourableness of the subsistence of the Son.

And all those expressions of Scripture which ascribe an inferiority to the Son are to be understood as pointing out the voluntary condescension of this wonderful Person for the accomplishment of redemption. Base and vile, therefore, as well as absurd, is that ingratitude which would take advantage of such expressions to derogate from that equality with the Father which the Son counts it no robbery to claim (Philippians 2:6).

But let us relieve our minds a little from the exhausting splendour of this overwhelming subject by turning to the relative view of the dignity of the Son.

On this, as being a more easy view of the subject, the Scripture expatiates more at large. This also, in the

3rd place, is introduced in the text when it describes the Son as “upholding all things by the word of his power.” Here, the eternal Son of God is held forth as continually bearing the weight of the whole creation, as supporting and governing the universe by His own power. This is to assert His proper Divinity in the plainest and most forcible manner.

Look through the Old Testament Scriptures; look through the prophecy of Isaiah. There you find two things uniformly asserted – that there is but one Godhead, and that it is the distinguishing mark between this one Godhead and all false gods that He is the Maker, Preserver, Governor, and Lord of heaven and earth. To say then, as this passage doth, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the very Creator and Preserver of the universe, is to say, in the strongest terms, that He is truly God; that He is God in a sense so high that there cannot be an higher. For these are the very eulogiums – these are the very celebrations throughout the Scripture of the one Supreme object of all worship.

And now, my brethren, have you not seen here the firm foundations of the work of redemption? Here is that Rock against which the floods of infernal spirits dash themselves, and foam in vain. Are you afraid to rest your salvation here? Are your souls too valuable – is your guilt too weighty – is your eternity too important to be secure on this foundation? Are you not rather secretly exulting, and, with a triumphant gloriation, blessing God that you may build yourselves on such a Rock? Be assured of it, that though each of you had a myriad of immortal spirits laden with inconceivable guilt here you might risk, or rather, securely settle them all.

The two other branches of the subject I must touch upon more briefly. The truths which have been already enlarged on diffuse an infinite lustre on the sacrifice and exaltation of Jesus the Saviour.

II. With one majestic touch of the inspired writer’s pen, the work of redemption is here described – “When he had, by himself, purged our sins.” Who can declare the emphasis of that word, “by himself”? Having described the Godhead of the Saviour, the apostle rests all on this one expression, “by himself.”

Let us take a short view of this comprehensive description of that work, which, if we may speak so, is the chief effort of Infinite perfection – “When he had, by himself, purged our sins.”

This implies: –

1. That the Redeemer’s human nature was taken into a personal union with His Divine Nature. On this ground the term “himself,” though immediately applied to the Eternal Person of the Son, extends its meaning to His assumed nature.

The human nature of Christ never did subsist as a separate person. It hath its subsistence in the Person of the Son of God. Therefore, though there are two natures, there is still but one Person. There is a mysterious intimacy in this union between the Divine and human natures of Christ, in consequence of which what is transacted in any one of the natures is considered as the action of the whole person. And hence –

2. Though obedience and suffering could be properly seated only in Christ’s human nature, yet, from the personal union of that nature with the Godhead, an infinite dignity was

derived, or, as it were, transfused, to the obedience and sufferings of the man Christ Jesus. To this, the expression, “by himself,” hath a principal regard. The Son of God was able “by himself, to purge away sin,” because He is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his Person.” For though in that character, He could neither properly obey nor suffer, yet He could invest Himself with a nature capable both of obedience and of suffering, and He could unite this nature so closely with Himself, as that its holy actions and sufferings should be stamped with infinite value, being considered in law as the actions and sufferings of the Son of God. This is the doctrine of the text, and of other passages, such as Acts 20:28 – “The church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.” 1 John 1:7 – “The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

3. The expression before us implies that there was a complete transference, by way of imputation, of the whole guilt to be removed from the guilty persons to the Person of the Mediator Isaiah 53:6 – “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” And –

4. That all this guilt was swallowed up, and, as it were, lost for ever in the abundance and boundless worth of His obedience unto death. And, consequently –

5. That there is an effectual application, or transference, made of this abundant merit to the persons of the guilty, issuing in their assured and joyful experience of this cleansing. They say, “having purged our sins.”

Having thus briefly opened the second branch of the subject, I should go on –

III. To consider the Redeemer’s glorious exaltation in consequence of His accomplishing the purchase of redemption. This the text magnificently describes – “He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” On this we might enlarge, as pointing out –

1. The solemn declaration of the acceptableness of His redeeming work to the Father, acting in this matter as Judge of the work.

2. A farther display of the glories of the Person of the Son.

3. A rich communication of real glory and felicity to His human nature. And –

4. The fulness of His power and authority to dispense to sinful men the precious fruits of His purchase.

But having just named these things, I proceed to the

#### APPLICATION OF THE SUBJECT.

What impressions, my brethren, what feelings, what exercises of soul, are excellent and great enough to correspond to this subject? Let me suppose for a moment you and myself brought under an enlightened sense of the glories contained in this passage, what must be our situation, our sensations, our appearance? On that supposition must not this place become glorious as the courts above? Must not our spirits be inwardly and sweetly burdened, and ready to fail and faint under the overwhelming weight of glory? Must not astonishment – astonishment mingled with humiliation and delight – thrill through our inmost powers? Must not our inward hardness be dissolved? Must not unbelief retire, as confounded? Must not groaning of inexpressible desire to grasp and take fast hold of this infinitely great and infinitely sweet object work within us as though our souls would burst through these earthly tabernacles?

But why is this only a supposition? Why do I not see a celestial lustre now spreading itself over every countenance? Why is not every head as waters and every eye as a fountain of tears? Why do I not hear the throbbing and sighing of souls sick with the love of Christ? Or rather, why do I not give you the example of these things instead of talking of them as things at a distance? Have we little need of Christ? Is there but little glory in Him? Or is there no Spirit to manifest His glory to our souls?

Let this be the first point of the application of this subject, that we humble ourselves, that we loathe and detest ourselves, that we be ready, as it were, to tear our souls in pieces, because they have so long, and so much, stood out against all the majesty, the condescension, and astonishing love of the Son of God? He hath knocked, but we have refused to open. He hath said, "Behold me, receive me;" but we have been otherwise engaged, otherwise delighted. We have seen His glory and have forgotten it. Perhaps, even now, our hearts provoke Him to His face by being almost weary of hearing of Him; and, what is still worse, we cannot repent of our stupidity.

I hear a cry! What cry? A cry of blood! What blood? The blood of God! And what is its voice? Its sound hath gone upwards to the heavenly places, addressing Him who sitteth on Throne thus – "O thou justly offended Majesty, withdraw Thy wrath, be propitious to miserable sinners!" This cry of Divine blood hath gone forth through the world, and hath sounded in the ears of mankind. And what is its language to them? "O ye miserable sinners, stand still, drop your weapons, be reconciled to God!" But I hear that voice of blood sounding again in the courts above: the Mediator's blood thus bespeaks the Eternal Sovereign – "Be thou mine avenger; let those who have despised me be damned; let them be doubly damned; let them be tormented with seven-fold pains!"

Are you listening, my brethren? Do you not hear a living voice?

"But I turn myself to thee, Jesus of Nazareth, my beloved, my sure friend! Thou living, triumphing Jesus, is it not Thy voice – 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock;' 'Open to me, for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with drops of the night?' but why, my Lord, dost Thou frown, and seem almost to weep, in the midst of Thy glory?" I think I hear this interpretation secretly whispered – "Why should I not frown, why should I not appear in sable, in bloody robes? These three years I, the Son of God, have been held standing at the door of this little sanctuary. How many repulses and insults have I received? Some have in heart spit upon Me, and said, Let Him be crucified; others have meanly betrayed and sold My interests for worldly considerations; others have stood by, neutral, or disposed to mock; only a few – a very few – have apprehended that I was coming near. But after all I am not yet gone. Who will now welcome me! If the doors are set wide open I will come in. I will bring My train with Me, a train of heavenly spirits, who shall look on while I, the Angel of the Covenant, do wondrously in the souls of saints and of sinners."

This discourse must be closed. But, my brethren, before I sit down, let me ask you, are your evidences clear that you have believed in Christ? What would you give for clear evidences of this? Are you ready to feast upon Christ – to feast with Christ? Have you laboured to bring Him with you to this place? God grant you may fairly answer these questions.

Now, to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, be the glory of Supreme Deity, and of finished salvation!

[August 1903]

## A Sermon

By the late REV. JOHN KENNEDY, D. D., Dingwall.

“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” – Ezekiel 33:11.

This message from God contains, in the form of an oath, a declaration regarding Himself, and, with earnestness most intense, conveys a call to the house of Israel. The declaration and the call are therefore the two things to which the text demands our attention.

I. In considering the declaration, we must first attend to the import and then to the form of it – to what God tells us, and to how He tells it.

1. The import of the declaration. It contains two statements. The first tells us, in what He hath not, and the second, in what He hath, pleasure. Let us consider each of these separately.

“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” And yet the wicked dies. He who saith, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked,” is He from whom came the message, “O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.” The death of the finally impenitent is taken for granted. It is the mind of God regarding that certain event which the text calls us to consider. This passage gives no countenance to the idea that the death of the wicked is inconsistent with the mercy of God; for here we have divine mercy proclaimed right over it. In full view of this awful

fact, Jehovah asserts His benevolence. Nor is it required, in order that we may reconcile it with the character of God as He is good, that we think of the death of the wicked as something less calamitous than eternal misery. Surely it is not mere temporary suffering, nor annihilation, over which Jehovah is exhibiting earnestness so intense. Only those who know not sin can be disposed to modify the retribution.

If a stranger, visiting this country, looked in on the homes made wretched by vice, some of which are not very far removed from the palace; or into the cells of our prisons, which are so prominent and so costly as government institutions, throughout our land; or on the sad scene of an execution, at which agents of the crown were present: – would he be justified in coming to the conclusion that our Sovereign was not benevolent – that such a state of things under her government was an evidence of our Queen’s lack of clemency? If the crime, on account of which the wretchedness, the bondage, and the execution were elements in the condition of the kingdom, was ignored, it would be no wonder if a conclusion, adverse to the character of our Queen, were drawn from these facts. But let the crime be taken into account – trace to crime these instances of misery, and then not a shadow of suspicion appears to rest on the throne of our kingdom, nor on the name of our Sovereign. A ruler that would forbid the exact exercise of justice in dealing with crime, would, in effect, be quite as oppressive as the most cruel of all despots. The mercy that winked at crime would produce more calamitous results than the sternest tyranny. Even goodness demands a restraint on crime, and punishment for the convicted criminal.

And let it never be forgotten that the death we are now considering, in relation to the government and character of God, is “the death of the wicked.” We must think of his crime when we think of his death – of his having resisted the will, disowned the authority, dishonoured the name, hated the being, and defied the power of God. Can we think of God as infinite in His being, glory, and goodness, without being constrained to conclude that eternal death is the wages due to all who thus sin against Him? Could we worship a God who, in the full knowledge of what He was, would award a punishment less than this? A God not necessarily to this extent just to Himself, could not be infinite, and could not be worshipped. Such awful justice as finds expression in the eternal death of the wicked, you must discover in the divine mode of government, ere you can either revere or love Him who is “over all.” If you accept in faith the truth of God’s infinity, you must accept as true the awful fact of the eternal death of all the wicked who remain unsaved.

The one pregnant difficulty is the existence of wickedness. While this fact must be assumed, it points to what must, to us, for ever remain an insoluble mystery in its relation to the will of God. But it is due to God, because of His infinite love of righteousness, that His relation to the origin of sin should be regarded without any suspicion; and it is also due to Him, as Supreme Governor, that to His mind alone the perfect rectitude of this relation should appear. It should be deemed enough by us, if to Him the existence of sin appears to be perfectly consistent with all the glory of His holiness and goodness. Into what awful darkness your mind must enter if you presume to attempt to occupy, in relation to this, any position except that of adoring silence! Do not venture, with your imperfect conceptions of the Most High, to imagine that His way of dealing with sin cannot be right, because it appears not so to you. Ignorant of God and, therefore ignorant of sin, men often venture to pass judgment on the moral government of God, as if they had before them a finite being, dealing with some trivial offence. All error has its root in ignorance of God; all ignorance of what may and should be known of God, in hatred of the light; and all painful difficulty – all feelings that interfere with our adoration of God and our admiration of His ways – in the pride which thrusts us beyond our place as creatures in considering the ways of God. At any rate, the existence of sin furnishes an occasion for the infinite display of the very attributes of God on which it seems to cast a shadow – His holiness and His goodness – and a proof that God

alone is necessarily infallible; for it appears that no creature can become so, either in heaven or on earth, except when, by a sovereign exercise of His goodness or of His grace, He involves their life in His own unchangeableness. If the existence of sin forms a dark background before which the glory of Him who alone is immutable all the more brightly appears, let our thoughts regarding its relation to Jehovah's sovereign will produce the calmness of adoring silence behind the awe which overwhelms us as we think of its moral hideousness and of its everlasting results.

There is no malevolence in God which could be gratified in the death of the creature of His hands. It is not because He delights not in mercy that sin has been permitted to exist, and death has been awarded as its wages. This is sufficiently proved by His providence and by His Gospel. Does He not cause His goodness to abound even to the evil and unthankful? Is not the earth, at any rate, a scene on which He makes manifest, in His providential dealings with sinful men, that He is "long-suffering and slow to wrath?" Each moment between birth and death is a fresh proof of this. And if, after a life made up of moments, each of them brightened by the goodness of God, the wicked dies at last, this calamity must be traced, not to lack of benevolence in God, but to impartial justice. And how ample the proof given in the cross that God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked! There, the death of wicked persons is seen dissociated from them, and endured by a person who is the only Begotten Son of God. There are the deaths of a countless multitude of wicked persons in one great retribution; and in the light of that awful fire, in which the wrath of God is exhaustively expressed, you may read the lesson of this text. They must die, but they so die in Christ that they shall surely live. Their deaths are swallowed up in the death of Him who is their Substitute; and because He alone is crucified, they all shall live. Here we see God dealing with sin apart from the person of the transgressor; and, instead of the guilty criminal, there stands at His bar a person who is His own only Begotten Son. O, how infinitely strong is the proof this affords, that it is from impartial justice, and not from malevolence towards the persons of the guilty, that the sentence comes forth which awards death to the wicked!

But there is more than this in the first statement, in God's declaration regarding Himself, which we have in the text. It tells us that such is the character of God, as revealed in the Gospel, that it is impossible for Him to find pleasure in the death of the wicked.

Now, it is not by ignoring the stern aspect of His character presented by the law that you can be enabled to have before your mind the view of His character given in the text. Whatever was, is, and must for ever be the character of God, He can never cease to be all He was revealed as being in the days of old. And by the law He reveals Himself now, just as He did then. You, as a sinner, have to do with Him under the same aspect of His character, and in the same relation, as Lawgiver and Judge, as they who were under the former dispensation. And only in a way which is quite consistent with all He was, and with all He claimed, and with all He threatened, as the God of Sinai – only when His name is so before you, that you can recognise Him by the same glory which made awful the place of His presence on "the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire" – can you possibly attain to hope in His mercy.

Nor is it by concluding that because God is love, therefore He loveth all, that you can have before you the view of His character presented in the text. Beware of being content with a hope that springs from believing in a love of God apart from His Christ, and outside of the shelter of the cross. It may relieve you of a superficial fear. It may excite a feeling of joy and gratitude in your heart. It may beget in you what you may regard as love to God. This love, too, may be the mainspring of very active movements in the bustle of external service; but it leaves you, after all, away from God, ignoring His majesty and holiness, dispensing with His Christ, and enjoying a peace that has been secured by a cheating, instead of a purging, of your conscience. The time was when men openly preached an uncovenanted mercy as the resort of

sinner, and laid the smoothness of that doctrine on the sores of the anxious. "Universal love," in these days in which evangelism is in fashion, is but another form in which the same "deceit" is presented to the awakened. This is something from which an unrenewed man can take comfort. It is a pillow on which an alien can lay his head, and be at peace far off from God. It keeps out of view the necessity of vital union to Christ, and of turning unto God; and the hope which it inspires can be attained without felt dependence on the sovereign grace, and without submitting to the renewing work of God the Holy Ghost.

"God is love;" but when you hear this you are not told what must imply the declaration that He loves all, and that, therefore, He loves you. This tells us what He is, as revealed to us in the cross, and what all who come to Him through Christ will find Him to be. It is on this that faith has to operate. You have no right to regard that love, which is commended in the death of the Son, as embracing you if you have not yet believed. It is only with the character, not at all with the purpose of God that you have in the first instance to do. What right have you to say that He loves all? Have you seen into the heart of God that you should say He loves you, until you have reached, as a sinner, through faith, the bosom of His love in Christ? "But may I not think of God loving sinners without ascribing to Him any purpose to save?" God loving a sinner without a purpose to save him! The thing is inconceivable. I would reproach a fellow-sinner if I so conceived of his love. Love to one utterly ruined, and that love commanding resources that are sufficient for salvation, and yet no purpose to use them! Let not men so blaspheme the love of God. "But may I not conceive of God as loving men to the effect of providing salvation, and to the effect of purchasing redemption for them, without this being followed out to the result of His purpose taking actual effect in their salvation?" No, verily. For the love of God is one, as the love of the Three in One. The one love of the one God is the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If that love generated in the person of the Father a purpose to provide, and in the person of the Son a purpose to redeem, it must have generated in the person of the Holy Ghost a purpose to apply. You cannot assign one set of objects to it, as the love of the Father, and a different set of objects to it, as "the love of the Spirit." And there can be no unaccomplished purpose of Jehovah. "My counsel shall stand," saith the Lord, "and I will do all my pleasure." "The world," which the Father loved and the Son redeemed, shall by the Spirit be convinced "of sin, righteousness, and judgment," and thus the Father's pleasure shall prosper, and the Son's "travail" be rewarded, through the efficient grace of God the Holy Ghost.

You have no right to attempt to look in on the relation of Divine love to individuals till first you attain, through faith, to a place among His children. "Secret things belong unto the Lord;" do not, then, try to share them with Him. In considering the doctrine of the text you have nothing to do with the question – "Does God love the wicked?" It is on the character of God that you are called to look, as He hath revealed this in the cross of His dear Son. You have no right to be influenced in judging of Divine procedure by preconceived ideas of Divine counsels, or of God Himself, but by the glory of His name, as He hath been pleased to reveal it. He does not tell me that He loves the wicked; but I am assured, when I look on Him as "He is love," that He hath no pleasure in his death. The fullest exhibition of His character, and the overwhelming proof of His having no pleasure in the death of the wicked, are given to us in the cross of Jesus Christ. "Yes," you say, "but it is in fulfilling a sovereign purpose of grace that He has revealed Himself there." True, but it is infinite love which He has revealed. It is by this display of His love that you are to judge of the way in which it shall fare with you, if you come to Him in response to His call. Faith has infinite love on which to operate, in order to your encouragement. For, whatever be His purpose, it is abundantly evident that "God is love." That is the character of Him to whom you are called to return. That is the view presented to you of Him to whom you are called to return, and it is with this that you have to do. And when you think of the special purpose in fulfilling which He has so revealed

Himself, you may be all the more encouraged to return; for it is this which assures you that a salvation both free and sure awaits you when you come. The “purpose according to election,” while casting no shade on the infinity of the love, is a guarantee for the certainty of the salvation which you are called to accept. For a people, whom, in providing salvation for them, He accounted worthy of death, He gave His only begotten Son, that, buying them by His blood, He might save them by His power. You are called to meet that love in the Son as Jesus the Christ, and to present yourself on His blood as a suppliant for all the blessings of the covenant of grace. What more can you desiderate? What element of encouragement is wanting, in this form of doctrine, which any of the systems of evangelical theology, or all of them together, can supply?

But, 2. He tells us in what He hath pleasure – “that the wicked turn from his way and live.” The repentance of the wicked is an occasion of delight to God; for it is the first acknowledgment of His being “the true God;” the first tribute to His godhead from the creature of His hand; the first movement of a lost one from “the wrath to come;” the first rupture between him and that abominable thing which God hateth; the first act of homage to His Anointed, who is also His Son; the first fruit of the Spirit’s work of grace – it is grace returning to the fountain whence it came, and bringing a “wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” sinner back to be “filled” with “all the fulness of God.”

Repentance is the turning of the wicked “from his way.” To this he was attached before, for in this he gratified the evil desires of his heart. But from “his own way,” as well as from all besides that is sinful, the true penitent turns to God. But he cannot do so without bringing the guilt and the source of his wandering with him when he comes. And he turns to God. To Him he desires to come, to be a debtor for forgiveness to His mercy, and for salvation to His grace, and to consecrate himself without reserve to His service. And he comes through Christ to God, for He is “the way, and the truth, and the life,” and “no man cometh to the Father but by” Him. He, as “the way,” is all that God, in the interest of His glory, can desiderate, and that is required to make Him perfectly suited to the sinner’s case. He who is “the way” is “the Word” “made flesh,” made sin, and made a curse. Through His flesh, rent because of sin and by the execution of the curse, “a new and living way” was opened unto “the holiest.” The entrance of this way is near to sinners in the Gospel – so near, that though the sinner can be brought nearer to it, it cannot be brought nearer to him. This way, no one but a sinner of our race may enter. It suits none else, and none besides is called. And his being a sinner is all regarding himself that is known to him who returns to God. It is not as a penitent, it is not as a loved one, it is as a “wicked” one, with all the guilt of his evil ways, and with all the corruption of the old heart, that he comes. And when, as such, he comes to God through Christ for salvation from all sin, “there is joy in heaven over” him.

And it is pleasant to God that the penitent should “live;” and He secures that live he shall, and live for ever. Finding the Son, he finds life, for he finds in Him a righteousness in which he is set free from condemnation, and has a right to all the bliss that flows from the favour of God. He has now a principle of spiritual life in him, and the Spirit of life Himself to preserve and perfect it; and even now, foretastes of life may be his through faith; while beyond, in the full view of God, and before the wistful gaze of his own dimmed eye, are the rest and bliss, and glory of the perfect life in heaven.

There are three reasons, each infinitely strong, why this should be pleasing to God. As our greatest pains and pleasures reach our hearts through their love, the measure of love must indicate the capacity for joy. But who can conceive what must be the gladness, resulting from the gratification of infinite love! And there is a threefold love of God, through the gratification of which He receives pleasure from the penitence and life of the wicked.

(1.) His infinite love to His people. He embraces one whom He infinitely loves, when the repenting sinner reaches the bosom of His mercy. The loved one was lost, and the loved

one was dead; and now the loved lost is found, and the loved dead is alive. It was only because this was ever present to His eternal mind, that Jehovah could have rested in His love to His chosen. But now the event is actual, and the divine joy is made known throughout all heaven. O, think of joy in heaven over one whose sins made the Son of God “a man of sorrows!”

(2.) His infinite love to His Anointed One. Each case of conversion is an instalment of reward to Him for doing the will, and glorifying the name, of Him who sent Him. The Father loveth Him because He laid down His life that He might take it again; and this love He expresses in fulfilling the promise, “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” This He sees when He sees “His seed” – when the Father draws sinners unto Him, and follows this up by giving them, in Him, “all spiritual blessings” according to His intercession. The bestowal of such a reward, on such a One, must, to God, be the occasion of infinite delight.

(3.) His infinite love to Himself, and to righteousness. “God is love.” He is so when contemplated in the unity of the eternal Godhead. But love requires an object; and He Himself who is love is the first object of the love He is. It is because His own infinite moral glory is ever present to His omniscience, that, through His love, it yields to Him who is “over all” such delight that He is “blessed for ever.” And “God is love” as subsisting in a Trinity of Persons. “The Father loveth the Son,” and that Son is, and ever was, “daily His delight.” “I love the Father,” saith the Son, and I was “rejoicing always before Him.” And the Holy Spirit, who “proceedeth from the Father” and from the Son, lovingly fulfils the purpose of the Father through the Son. O, infinitely holy sphere! O, sphere of infinite loving – the unapproachable sphere of the interrelations and fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! And “God is love” to righteousness in His relation to His moral government. And when He makes manifest that He is love to His people, He does so in such a way as to secure that in their salvation there shall appear to His view, to His infinite delight, all to which He is love – as to afford an opportunity of expressing what He is as love to Himself, what the mutual love of the Trinity is, and how He loveth righteousness.

How the beauty of His holiness, to which He is love, appears in its having pleased Him to bruise His well Beloved, that there might be healing to diseased, and peace to guilty sinners! How infinite must be His delight in this display of His glory, and how intent He must be on the salvation in securing which this joy was occasioned! Never did so much of His glorious character appear in any of His works as in the cross of Christ; but all this came forth in the prosecution of a scheme which bore on the salvation of sinners. True, all redemption work is before us in the cross. But the ulterior bearings of that work must be considered. Actual salvation is the terminating part of the divine scheme of grace, and each step of it must be brightened with the glory that shone forth in the course which led to it. If “truth met with mercy” in the cross, it was with a view to their coming forth together, from the presence of God on His throne, in the glad-tidings of the Gospel, to guide a sinner unto “the holiest,” where alone He can obtain the blessing. If “righteousness and peace embraced each other,” it was with a view to His being righteous to Christ, in giving peace, for His sake, to those who deserved to die. The infinite display, already given, finds its complement in a work of grace. To this new occasion of expressing Himself, He comes in all the glorious brightness of His name, as revealed in the cross. And in how many ways, in His work of grace, resulting in the penitence and life of the wicked, He manifests the glory of His power, wisdom, faithfulness, holiness, and love!

And how salvation furnishes an opportunity of exhibiting the mutual love of the Persons of the Godhead! The Father’s love to the Son appears in His having delivered all things into His hand; and you are called to look, in the light of the Gospel, on this demonstration of that wondrous love. And the Son desired that the world should know how He loved the Father, by

His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. O, infinite wonder, that the blood which tells you there is peace for a sinner, is the demonstration which the Son has given to the universe of His love to the Father! And the Spirit, as the Comforter, takes the things of Christ, and of the Father, and, in fulfilment of the Father's purpose, and of the design of the Son's death, shows them to the sinners who are made heirs of salvation!

And how exhaustive, even as a revelation of divine glory, is the expression of His love of righteousness given in the death of His Son! The sins of a people eternally beloved, are imputed to Him who is His only-begotten Son; and for those sins, even He dies the death of the cross! O, how could any other exercise of justice, or all acts of justice that can occur in the course of His moral government together, express His love of righteousness as the atoning death of His dear Son hath done? Only once did He, in the exercise of retributive justice, deal with one who was "His fellow," and only then could He, in one final transaction, give an exhaustive display of His righteousness. O sinner, all that God is, as He "is love," takes side with His mercy, when He receives and blesses him who, at His call, comes to Him through Christ crucified!

2. The declaration is in the form of an oath – "As I live, saith the Lord." It is meet that such a declaration should have such a form, for thus only could earnestness, springing from infinite love, express itself fitly in words. What a proof this gives you of God's intense desire that you should believe what He declares! He swears by Himself in declaring to you that He hath no pleasure in your death, but that He hath pleasure in the repentance and life of all who turn to Him. Ought you not to fear remaining an unbeliever after all? Is this divine earnestness to be met by indifference? Does this wave, coming from the divine sphere, in the eager movement of a solemn oath, strike on adamant when it reaches you? Can you dare to dash it back by presenting to it a heart of stone? Are you to be unmoved and callous before this display of divine earnestness infinitely intense? Are you to sleep on while this oath from heaven, uttered by the voice of God, strikes on your ear? For, does He not give Himself, in all the reality of His being and glory and blessedness, as security for the truth of His declaration? How real to God He Himself is! But as He consciously lives in what He is, as infinite, glorious, and blessed, so is He true in the declaration of the text. What higher, firmer ground of assurance can even God give you than this? O sinner, it is enough! You might suspend on this ten thousand times ten thousand souls, each one as lost as the one soul you have, and you would run no risk. O, yield not to the unbelief that would dare to prefer a charge of perjury against Him for whom it is impossible to lie!

And does He not give Himself, in all the infinite resources that are His as God, in pledge of action, according to the declaration of the text? Does not this suffice? Can more be asked? He shall cease to have, He shall cease to be, ere He can fail to be the God of salvation to you, if you return to Him at His call. O, what condescension is here! O, how can you be at ease while the infinite Jehovah is thus in intensest earnestness bending over you? O, lie in the dust before Him, as He approaches you in this marvellous act of condescension, and allow Him to lay the weight of His oath on your heart, to press out of it all its doubts regarding His truth and grace!

## II. The Call.

From out of the midst of divine glory, from off the divine throne of grace, and intense with divine earnestness, comes the call to the house of Israel – "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways." Whence, whither, how to turn, are the questions which these words require us to consider.

Whence? "From your evil ways." Every way in which you depart from the fellowship and service of God is "evil." Forsaking God is the great evil. It appears so to God as He looks on His own infinite glory, and on the provision of His everlasting love. How – because of His love to Himself and of His zeal for His own glory – His holy indignation must rise into

infinite flame against that sin on the part of the creature of His hand! And how wonderful it is that, in the full view of all that evil, and in His immovable resolution to deal out to all sin a full retribution according to justice, He should call the sinner from his evil ways, to be embraced on the bosom of His mercy! But the call is issued through the rent flesh of His own dear Son. The precious blood of His Lamb is before Him, as He calls the sinner from his evil ways; and to the praise of all His name, He can call the sinner to His mercy-seat. What the great High Priest presents meets all His holy indignation as it demanded expression in the infliction of the curse; and in gracious dealing for His sake with the wicked it can be brought to bear, as consuming fire, on the sin whence sprang the guilt which atoning blood removed.

“From” *all* “your evil ways” you are called to turn; for there can be no turning unto God if there is any reserve of sin. Each evil way is opposed, by an infinite contrariety, to the will of God. Sometimes the conscious reserve is reduced, under the pressure of conscience, to one evil way. What eager cries come from the flesh for that one, and only that one, reserve! And what attempts will be made to come to terms with God while still cleaving to some darling sin! But it may not be. All sin must be forsaken by the will that inclineth Godwards. How can Divine holiness admit of any reserve? To cover any sin with your embrace is to place yourself naked before the sword of God. He must strike at sin. O, beware lest He strike at sin through you! Come forth in your desire, away from, quite out of, all sin, to God. “Cut off your right hand,” “pluck out the right eye,” rather than pass on to the fire that never shall be quenched. And how can Divine grace admit of a reserve? Salvation from all sin is the boon which grace confers. Nought less than this can express its bounty, and nought less than this can suffice for you. Less than this you cannot have from the hand of God. He cannot give you salvation to the dishonour of the law of Christ, as the one authoritative rule of life. His holy grace undertakes yet to give to the law, even in that form, its claims in full; and it begins to do so by bringing a sinner, with a heart broken from all sin, under its holy yoke.

“But must I rid myself of my guilt and of my evil heart before I come back to God?” Verily not. You are called to come as you are, in the midst of your evil ways, with all the guilt that lieth on you and with all the fountain of evil in you. Burdened and filled with sin, having no righteousness to cover your persons, and no excuse to hide your guilt, and while there is nothing in all your consciousness but sin, all over and all through – with no ability yours but the fell power to transgress, – you are called to receive all the pardoning mercy and all the saving grace you need.

2. Whither? To Himself God calls you. To Himself as revealed in the declaration going before – to Himself as on His throne of grace – to Himself through Jesus Christ. Beware of a godless Christianity, as well as of a Christless religion. Souls, having only the uneasiness caused by the fear of death, are anxious only for something that will take their blind dread away. They have not known God in His awful glory as Lawgiver and Judge, and they care not to realise Him in the person of the Saviour. They feel not their need of a divine Saviour to remove the guilt, and to subdue the power, of sin. And they ask not to be admitted, under the Spirit’s teaching, into the mystery of the cross, to see a way for sinners unto God. The glory shining from the face of Jesus draws them not through the Mediator unto God. And they shrink from the pressure of Divine authority on their conscience. But “he that believeth on me,” saith Christ, “believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me.” By Christ you must “believe in God who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.” “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Believing thus, God shall be before you in such an aspect of His character and in such a relation to sinners through Christ – in such marvellous love and in such readiness to bless you when you come – that you will be sweetly subdued into compliance with His call, and you cannot choose but to come. Divine glory, shining from the face of Jesus on a quickened soul, melts the heart, and causes

it to flow down to the footstool of the throne of mercy. And the very view of God which wins his confidence secures the homage of the penitent. He must appreciate His awful righteousness, as displayed in the cross, as well as realise His majesty, ere he can have hope. And what he requires to encourage him suffices to subdue him into an unreserved surrender of his whole being to God. The life that moves towards Him in hope bows to His sovereign will and lies in adoring worship at His footstool.

How? In willingness to accept the terms proposed by God as terms of salvation and of service. Even if you feel that you cannot come back to God – that, unless He, in His almighty grace, comes for you, you cannot come to Him – yea, even if you should shrink from asking Him to come – if you only turn in the distant darkness to Him who is the way, and to God through Him, willing to owe Him the turning and drawing that you may come, as well as the blessing when you have come – He “will pour out” His “Spirit unto you, and make known” His “words unto you.” Turning thus, you will verily be debtors to His grace for all you need. And you may be hoping debtors, for He raiseth the poor from the dust, He bringeth the fallen from out of the horrible pit, and He gathereth, as He calleth, outcasts from the very ends of the earth.

Surely, then, God may ask the question, “Why will ye die?” *You* have this question to answer. The reason for your dying is not on God’s side. He has abundantly shown this. And on your side it is not found in your fall in Adam nor in the ruin resulting from that fall. It is not in your helplessness, for you are called to lie under the gracious power of God to be saved by Him. It is not in the influence of the world, insidious and mighty though that be, for it cannot constrain you to be aliens from God. It is not in the might of the great enemy, nor in the multitude of his hosts, nor in the depth of his cunning, nor in the greatness of his cruelty; for, “strong man” and “murderer” though he be, he cannot for one moment keep, you away from Him who calleth you, if you are disposed to come.

Then “why *will* ye die?” God meets you in the face, where you are, and as you are, with this question. You are bound to give an answer, for only your own unwillingness to return can slay you. And are you to remain unwilling? If so, how can you justify yourself? ‘My unwillingness,’ you say, ‘is just the lack of something which I can only have from God, and if He does not bestow it, then what can I do?’ But, friend, do not think of your unwillingness as a mere negation – a blank for God to fill up. It is positive wickedness: it is sinful madness. It is an insult to God, implying contempt of His love, of His Son’s precious blood, of His great salvation, and of His glorious name. To remain unwilling is to remain a rebel, disowning Divine authority, and bidding defiance to Divine power. And are you to choose this, rather than submit to be saved, ruled, and filled by God? ‘Oh, but my unwillingness is the result of my being in a state of death as an alien from God, under the guilt and power of sin; how, then, can I help myself?’ But, friend, the question is not, how you can help yourself, but, will you be indebted for all help to God? Will you die in your pride, even when confessedly helpless, rather than let Christ be “all in all” to you – rather than let the grace of God do all for you? To this point you are shut up, and this leaves your unwillingness exposed in all the nakedness of excuseless rebellion.

“Why will ye die?” Whatever may befall those who never heard the call to return to God, “why will ye die, O house of Israel?” “Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little,” have been given you, and is death to be your end? But the Gospel has been preached to the Gentiles, and to Gentiles also God hath granted repentance unto life. To each Gospel-hearer, therefore, this question is addressed by God. “The Son of man,” who came “to seek and to save that which is lost,” has come to you in your sinful helplessness, offering Himself to be to you all that you need, in order to your everlasting salvation; and, after all, will ye die?

And “why will ye *die*?” What is there in death that you should choose it rather than life? And yet every sinner who remains impenitent is charged with choosing death. God charges you with this when He addresses to you this question. And you are charged with choosing death because you love it, for He saith – “he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death.” Rejecting the Gospel is sinning against Christ. You cannot do so without wronging your own soul. And this you do because you hate Christ. Not because you are merely indifferent. You would not sin against Him as you do if you were merely indifferent. A consideration of your own interest would turn the scale if there was an even balance. But it is not indifference, but hatred, that is your state of feeling towards Christ. And you cannot hate Him without loving death. ‘O no,’ you say, ‘I cannot love death – I shrink from shame and agony, and both are implied in death.’ True, what you regard as death you would fain escape fromans But, in the view of Christ, it is death to be away from God. And you do love to be away from Him. And in loving this, you love death. And such is your love of this that you will not abandon it, though God tells you, and your conscience whispers to you that if you abide an alien you must perish for ever. You know that the death you love is linked to the death of woe from which your conscience makes you shrink, and that you cannot cleave to the former without holding both in your grasp. And you never have at once any portion of time but the passing moment; and on that narrow foothold you always stand at the brink of hell. What you do there is always finally done, for it is done by you on all you have of time. And there you keep fast your hold of that which must bring you down. Even now and there you do so. O “why will ye *die*?” Is there aught in “outer darkness” to commend it to you, so that you would choose to pass into the midst of it? Or is there aught in the “devouring fire,” and the “everlasting burnings,” to induce you to “dwell” with them for ever? Care ye to be in the bonds of despair and under the fang of the “worm” that “dieth not.” O, “why will ye” thus “die?” To God, who puts the question, give, if you can dare, the answer. And if you have no answer to give, fall silenced before the footstool of Him who calleth you. But break the silence of excuselessness by a prayer for mercy, and continue to cry, till an answer cometh from the mercy-seat, “Turn me, and I shall be turned.”

[September 1903]

## A Sermon.

By the late REV. EBENEZER PORTER, D.D., Andover.

“Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord” – Isaiah 1:18.

The people of Judah, to whom this language was addressed, had become great sinners. Even their appointed feasts and solemn meetings were an abomination to Him who “looketh on the heart.” The only alternative before them was deep repentance or speedy ruin. In these circumstances God, by His prophet, called them to pause in their career of sin, and think on their own condition and prospects.

To the same duty He calls every careless sinner in this assembly to-day. Could a stranger from a distant world step into this place of worship, and be told the religious advantages which we enjoy, and the obligations which rest upon us, doubtless he would take it for granted that every individual here is a real Christian. But no one who has lived in this world, and had any just views concerning the moral state of its inhabitants, would feel authorised to take this for granted, concerning any promiscuous assembly of human beings. On the contrary, without pretending to know any heart, must I not, as a preacher of the gospel, presume that some of you, my dear hearers, are without God in the world? Are not some of you perfectly conscious that such is your present condition? You have heard perhaps hundreds of sermons, which you considered as addressed to others. I ask you now, each one individually, to listen to this sermon as addressed to you in particular. It is addressed, not to your passions at all, but to your understanding and conscience. The range of my remarks will unavoidably be more miscellaneous than is commonly proper in a sermon, but nothing will be said which you cannot easily comprehend and remember. You have hitherto neglected a serious attention to religion as the one thing needful; and you purpose at present to continue in the same neglect. Is this course justifiable? Is it safe? Is it right? “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.”

If the tomb which receives your mortal remains were to cover in oblivion your character and actions, then might you say with careless levity, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." But if a few short years, at the utmost, will usher you into the unchanging realities of eternity, can it be proper for you to pass heedlessly on without any serious reflection, and yet without any hope beyond the grave? Certainly it cannot be proper. Let us proceed then to look at some of these considerations, which demand your present and solemn attention.

1. You know that you have a rational existence. You see the glorious orbs which shine above you roll on and measure out your days. You find yourself possessed of a body, "fearfully and wonderfully made." You find a thinking existence within you; something distinct from all that appertains to matter; something that perceives, remembers, loves, and hates. You find yourself an inhabitant of this earth – for what? Is this life your all? Was your soul formed, with its noble faculties, just to wake into a momentary existence and then to be extinguished in annihilation? Do you believe that you were placed here, like the poor brutes, to eat and drink, breathe and walk, and sigh, a few days, and then sink into eternal night and nothing? No; a response comes from every bosom – no. I shall outlive time and all its changes. When "the sun is turned to darkness and the stars to dust," I shall exist still in some unknown hereafter.

2. I shall presume that you believe the existence of a God. The fool may say in his heart there is none; but certainly no serious doubt on this point can be the dictate of any man's understanding. Whence came this system of things that surrounds us! Who raised this mighty fabric of worlds? Who preserves it? Is all this the result of chance? Chance is nothing; and nothing cannot produce and govern a system of worlds. Did men or angels create the sun and moon, and stars, and earth? Men and angels cannot create a fly, nor a blade of grass. Besides, how came men and angels by their own existence? It came from the uncreated God, the former of all things.

If there is a God, He is intelligent and omnipotent. He knows all things. Those whom He has made and whom He upholds every moment, He must see every moment. He must be acquainted with all your actions and purposes. You cannot hide from His searching eye; you cannot escape out of His dominion.

3. I shall presume, too, that you believe the Bible to be of Divine authority. That it is so, is proved by a flood of evidence which cannot be even noticed in this place. Did I suppose you to entertain any doubt on this point, I would simply ask, concerning any scheme of infidelity you can name, why are its disciples generally loose in sentiments and morals? Why do they discard prayer and all other duties of practical piety? Why are they so often filled with dismay at the hour of death? Those must be bad principles which make bad men. That scheme must be fallacious which alienates a creature from his Creator, and in the very proof of his immortality furnishes a motive to take refuge in a cheerless scepticism, or in annihilation. No prudent man will risk eternal consequences on a bold presumption, which at the utmost can give but a momentary repose in sin; and then must leave the soul in anguish, without consolation, and without hope. You must therefore admit the Bible to be the Word of God, unless you close your eyes against the light; and regardless of truth and warning, regardless of all that may be joyful or terrible in eternity, resolve to rush upon the dread experiment.

4. It must be further presumed that you believe yourself and all men to be sinful. Here again, if I supposed you to have any doubts, I would ask you to look into the world around you. Read its history. Whence all the penal laws of every age and country against wickedness if men are not wicked? When men make a common bargain, why do they esteem a paper bond as better security than their neighbour's honesty? If men are not depraved beings, how comes it to pass that in every period, and on every side of the globe, they have universally acted like depraved beings; and have invariably considered each other as deserving this character? If you have any doubts concerning human depravity, after looking abroad into the world, then look into your own heart. If that is not enough, then look into the Bible. Here you will find the point settled. Here your character is drawn by the unerring spirit of inspiration. You are a sinner.

5. You know that God cannot consistently allow the transgression of His own law. The honour of His character and the good of the universe require that He should maintain this law. In the exercise of perfect and unlimited benevolence He has threatened an awful destruction to all His impenitent enemies. You know that He is in "one mind and none can turn Him." You know that He is able to execute his threatenings. Who then can hope to harden himself against such a God and prosper? The case is plain – if you die in your sins, you must lie down in sorrow.

6. The subject now assumes a character of very serious importance. In the sober conviction of your own understanding the point is settled, that you must exist for ever! exist, too, either in glory or despair. Have you ever thought on this amazing subject? Will you be persuaded to think on it now? Have you indeed a soul that must dwell in happiness or misery without end? What then is the worth of that soul? Thrones and empires are trifles in the comparison! "Earth and skies are dust upon the scale!" We dread exquisite pain, though it be of short continuance! How do the hearts of the strong and brave sink within them under the anguish of an acute fever or a broken limb! What man in his senses would deem it a light thing to endure such pain for a thousand years, for one year, or one month? Who then can dwell with devouring fire? who can inhabit everlasting burnings? Eternal misery outstretches and overwhelms human comprehension. Do you believe that there is, verily, such an allotment of suffering for all the ungodly? Can you deliberately view yourself as exposed every moment to plunge into it, and remain indifferent as an atheist or a stone? Is it possible that you should feel easy in such circumstances for one hour?

7. If you have given these considerations their due weight, we are prepared to proceed another step in our reflections. The religion of the gospel opens before us the only door for hope for perishing sinners. Have you cordially embraced this religion? Conscience perhaps stirs within you at this searching inquiry, and gives the honest answer – "In the midst of light and warnings I have neglected the great salvation." Why then do you neglect it? "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord." Will you say that the system of the gospel is dark and hard to be understood? Have you faithfully endeavoured to understand it? Have you bestowed on it one-half or one hundredth part as much attention as on other subjects comparatively unimportant? Comparatively did I say? Oh what other subject is not comparatively unimportant? To the humble Christian, whether his capacity be great or small, the Bible is a plain book. Its essential truths and duties are so plain that the "wayfaring men, though fools, 'need' not err therein." Will you say that you have carefully studied the plan of salvation as revealed in the Scriptures, and after all are not satisfied with it? Then what are its faults? Does it place God too high and sinners too low? He offers to forgive you, if you confess and forsake your sins. Are these hard conditions? Can you ask Him to come down from His Throne and save you on terms that would dishonour Himself? Can you ask Him to be at peace with you while you love and justify your sins, reject the only Saviour of men, and trample on the law which that Saviour died to honour and fulfil? No; He will not, He cannot

do this. "Till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle of His law shall fail." Not one sinner can ever be saved unless he confesses and forsakes his sins. You cannot prosper in arms against Omnipotence. The terms of the gospel are written as with a sunbeam; they admit only of submission or destruction. You are shut up to this alternative; you must bow or perish!

You see there is one, and but one, way to escape. That way is as plain and reasonable as you can desire. Indeed it is unalterably fixed, and therefore can never be plainer or easier than it is this moment. What benefit then can result from delay? Is it not wise to treat things according to their importance? Does a prudent man stand to exchange salutations with a neighbour when his house is on fire? In common concerns men act rationally. They are careful in summer to provide for winter; in health for sickness. A wine merchant watches the state of the market. A wise husbandman observes the changes of the seasons, and the proper time to sow and reap. A wise mariner does not sink himself in a storm to save his goods. There was a man among the tombs who mangled his own limbs; but he was beside himself. There was a profane Esau, who sold his birthright for a morsel of meat; and a heathen Lysimachus, who exchanged his kingdom for a draught of water; but these you say were foolish men. What then in the light of eternity must you think of yourself, who can lose your soul, and bury your immortal hopes without a sigh?

Serious as this language is, you will know hereafter that it is the language of truth and friendship. You slumber on the verge of ruin! All that the Christian minister attempts to do in this case, all that he is required to do, all that he can do, is to pray for you, and say to you, like Paul to the distracted jailer, "Do thyself no harm. "Break from this infatuation! Rouse from this fatal slumber! If you slight such warnings, given you in love and faithfulness, the day will soon come when you will be exempt from such disquieting importunities. If you should succeed in destroying yourself, you will have as little disturbance from the Bible and the pulpit, from Sabbaths, and prayers, and sermons, as you can desire. But know assuredly there will then be a reprover in your own bosom, whose admonition will be as the sting of a scorpion; and whose gentlest whisper will be thunder in your ear.

8. Your reason and conscience probably have thus far assented to the serious statements which I have made. May I now ask, what is your purpose? Here you are, an immortal being, standing on the small point of probation, betwixt the extremes of endless pain and endless joy, sustained only by the frail thread of life, which the sword of justice is ready to cut, while the voice of mercy cries – "Now is the day of salvation." Will you embrace this salvation? Two worlds wait your decision. Still, perhaps, you hesitate; still presume on the absurd patience of God for a future season of repentance; and dare to suspend your immortal welfare on the issue of that presumption. You say, "I cannot think on these serious subjects now. Religion would make me gloomy, and spoil all my happiness. "What happiness? Are you indeed happy without religion? The world may promise to make you so, but does it fulfil its promises?

Have you no disappointments from without? No moments of anguish within? No fearful forebodings about hereafter? You are not happy without religion. To prove this I need only appeal to your own bosom. Be it so that you are among the number of those who are at ease in Zion; that though now and then startled by a call from the death-bed or the pulpit, you soon dismiss these alarming subjects, and pass along very quietly, for weeks and months in sinful indifference. Is this happiness? If it is, will it last? When the rod of the Almighty touches your estate, your friends, or yourself, will it keep you tranquil? Will it stand by you in death and judgment? Will your heart remain cold when the elements shall melt? Will your heart remain firm when the heavens and the earth are shaken? – No; serious reflection may perhaps be put off to-day; it may be put off to-morrow; it may be put off a few more days; but as God is true, it cannot be put off always. In spite of your heart it will come, it must come finally; –

it may come speedily. Religion make you unhappy! That religion which sweetens prosperity, and presents a cordial even in the bitter cup? Go to the dungeon at Philippi, and ask what made Paul and Silas sing at midnight while their backs were smarting under the lash of superstition and their feet made fast in the stocks. Go and stand by the stake of the blessed martyrs, and listen to their hallelujahs while their bodies were wrapped in the consuming flame. Go to that house of mourning, and ask what it was that enabled a Christian mother to dedicate her little infant to God, reposing all her hopes for that, and for herself, on the Cross of Christ; and in the immediate prospect of death to say, "This is the happiest hour of my life." Was it a gloomy religion that could thus bear up her soul, and fill it with heavenly radiance in such a moment? Or go to the bereaved Christian husband, and he can tell you that the best consolations of philosophy are utterly cold and comfortless in scenes that wring the heart with agony; while religion can give patience, and peace, and joy; and that all the books written by men can do nothing to soothe a wounded spirit compared with one short sentence of the Bible, "Be still and know that I am God."

No, my dear hearers, religion is not a gloomy thing. Angels are not gloomy; men would never be gloomy if it were not for want of religion. Every step you take towards your last hour you are liable to be smitten through with some barbed arrow, from which nothing but religion can shield your bosom. And when you come to that last hour, let me tell you now, that without religion it will be cheerless and awful. No light from heaven will radiate its gloom. Perhaps a circle of weeping relatives may stand around your bed. Perhaps the gentle, trembling hand of a mother, or sister, may wipe away the cold sweat from your face. But what will this avail if you have no inward peace, no interceding Saviour, no reconciled God, no hope nor home beyond the grave?

You say, these are solemn truths, I admit; but still I cannot think of becoming truly religious to-day. I must defer this subject for the present. Then, how long? Shall it be one year, or ten years? Weigh this matter well. There are two serious considerations here.

The first is – what if you should live to the time proposed, and then find within you a heart more stubborn than ever? What if that time when it comes should find you frantic or senseless with disease, or bereft of all your faculties by some special stroke of Providence? What if, before then, God should utterly withdraw His Spirit and leave you in judicial blindness under the curse of a reprobate mind? Your damnation would then be as certain as though you were this moment in hell. "So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust;" is the most awful language that has ever yet been spoken by Jehovah concerning any of the human race.

But there is a second very serious consideration to come into account. What reason have you to presume that your term of probation will last ten years or one year longer! Who has given you a guarantee that it will last another hour? "What is your life? – it is even a vapour that appeareth for a little season, and then vanisheth away." You see that men do actually die in every possible variety of circumstances; at home, in the field, on journeys, in bed, at table. From the common scene of amusement, of business, and of idleness, how many are unexpectedly summoned into eternity? And are you proof against the shafts of death? Be not deceived. The hour may be at hand when some fierce disease shall thrill through your frame and choke the fountain of life. To-day you may be strong in the enjoyment of health, to-morrow the colour of your cheek may be exchanged for a mortal paleness, and your body clothed in the attire of the grave.

I know it is painful to think on these serious subjects, but they must be thought of. What will it avail to shut your eyes now? the light of eternity will force them open; what will it avail to keep these things out of mind a few days? they must come home to your bosom shortly. What if you can slumber now in sinful security; the day is coming when you cannot slumber. You cannot slumber amidst the confusion of dissolving worlds. You cannot refuse

to hear that voice which will rend the tombs and summon the dead to stand before the Son of Man. Harken, then, even now, to the admonition of heaven – “If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.”

[October 1903]

## Christ and Him Crucified.

Notes of a Farewell Sermon by the late REV. LACHLAN M'PERSON,  
East Williams, Ontario, Canada. Preached Aug. 5, 1883.

Rev. Mr. M'Person was one of the two ministers who protested against the Union of the Churches in Canada in 1875. See Magazine, December, 1902, p. 294, etc. - Ed,

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified” – 1 Corinthians 2:1-2.

It was a difficult task the Apostle had to perform when he was sent among the wise men of Greece and Corinth, men whose fame had spread over the whole world, and whose writings have come down to the present day, with such a kind of message he had to bring – a message that would awaken their surprise and contempt, a message, too, that would be beyond their comprehension. Now, if he were a weak-minded man and tried to gain their esteem – for it was counted an honour in their estimation to any man who gained their favour and approbation – he would likely try to mould his speech and doctrine, too, to their taste. But oh! the Apostle knew the unspeakable and matchless excellency of the message he had to proclaim. He knew, too, the value of immortal souls and the treacherous part he would be acting by trying to make his speech look like theirs. He knew also the tremendous consequences both to his own soul and to the souls of those who heard him, and so strong was he in the love of Jesus Christ that neither sufferings on the one hand nor honour to be expected on the other hand could make him deviate from the only line of conduct he had marked out by which he could be faithful to his trust. He knew well the nature of his mission, and he says – “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” This was no hasty resolution on the part of the Apostle, no rash, unwise purpose. He knew well what he was saying, for he had made up his mind that he would not come unto them with excellency of speech declaring the testimony of God. But he would speak unto

them in the customary way without any attempt at flowery eloquence or graceful oratory, which often draws the mind away from the truth to the person who is speaking. So he was determined not to come with excellency of speech. But he would declare his message in the simplest and most easily understood way that he could. This is the right way to deliver the Gospel message, and people do wrong in laying a stumbling block in the way of their ministers by expecting any style of eloquence that would draw attention away from the object in view, for it will do harm to them and bring guilt upon the minister's soul. To care for nothing, to follow nothing, to aim at nothing, to preach nothing but Christ and Him crucified, to accept on my own part the persons of none, however great, nor to ask for myself any place of honour among you, has ever been my purpose since I came among you. I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Let us now proceed to look into the subject a little and examine or inquire into the thing that is here brought before us as the only thing the Apostle purposes to know.

1. In the first place, what is that thing?
2. In the second place, what is implied in our knowing that? And,
3. In the third place, we may, as time permits, bring forward reasons why it is to be regarded of such importance as to become the study of one's whole lifetime.

"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." You see it was one object or thing he had to mind, and that was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. *First* of all, let us notice the person of Christ Jesus; *next*, the relation in which He stands to us and the offices He performs; and *thirdly*, His death. You see that is specified here – "Him crucified."

Let us then look at Christ's person. Who is he? What saith the Scriptures? How is he described in the Word of God? He has two names there – the Son of God and the Son of Man. Son of God! That declaration is specially glorious. As to His being God, I suppose you all remember it was because of that He was crucified. They passed sentence of death upon Him because He claimed to be the Son of God – that is to say, making Himself equal with God. You will find that name meeting you very often in the Word of God. When the man who was cast out met Him Christ said – "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?" "Who is he, Lord?" said the man. Jesus answered – "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he worshipped him." Ah, friends, keep that truth out of your creed and heart and you will keep the Christ of God out of your hearts altogether! You will have no Saviour. No matter what Christ you make to yourselves, you cannot make a Christ that will save you. So Paul determined not to come down from the determination he had formed when he went there. Many would laugh at him. But, friends, it were well that none who profess Christ would come down from that determination. Yet there are thousands who bear the Christian name who will not admit him into their hearts except in an inferior subordinate sense – a sense that raises Him no higher than any saint. That is one way of putting Christ out of the scheme of salvation. And, oh! friends, if you take Him in this sense, such a Christ never could satisfy Divine Justice – unless He were God as well as man, and His death no matter how glorious, if it were the death of a mere creature, could have no virtue in it to save souls. Yes, friends, we must take care not to welcome wrong ideas about Christ. He is the Son of Man as well as the Son of God. This is the name Jesus Christ delights to take. He often speaks of Himself by that name, for His delights were with the sons of men, and so much was this so, that He did not think it too much to die for them. He is God-man and died as God-man. "Thou hast prepared a body for me." He *was* before that body was made at all. He was the Son of God, and He came down and united Himself with that body which came not by ordinary generation, but by the power of the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Ghost had to do with

the formation of the body of Christ, and He holds an important place in connection with the redemption of men. So, Christ is God-man, or Immanuel – God with us. Thus it was God, it may be said, that died. Not the Godhead but a Divine Person in human nature. We shall not wait now to speak of the glory, excellency, and power of that Person. No person who knows Him will have any hesitation in saying “I determine not to know anything save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

It is written – “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The disciples had a view of it. It was revealed unto them by the Father. Every renewed soul has such a view of it as makes all other things insignificant and unworthy to be compared with it. Is that the view you have of Christ? My hearers, that is the view you must have of Him if you are to be saved by Him. For, naturally to us, “he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him.” The men of the world plainly manifest that by the way they treat Him. They regard Him as if He were of no consequence at all, and their minds run after the merest trifles as if these were their all in all.

But Jesus Christ stands in certain relations to His people as Mediator – a most essential capacity if men are to be saved. There is but one Mediator. Some would have more than one, but the Scriptures say there is but one – “the Man Christ Jesus.” He sustains certain offices. They are very clearly set forth in our Shorter Catechism, but the Catechism gets its authority from the Bible. He performs three offices – Prophet, Priest, and King, and you cannot separate them from Christ. If you do you have no Christ at all. They are essential to a Christ for you and for me.

The office of a prophet is essential, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord?” Who could ever know that which ear hath not heard? Who could ever reveal that mystery? When the world was made every thing was there visible to the eye, but who could ever search it out to the full? So if God had not made known the plan of Salvation man would never have known anything about it. God was manifest in the flesh. There would be no way of finding it out, no matter how long or how seriously men would engage in the pursuit of it. He that dwells in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. Man or angels could never find out the plan of salvation. It was therefore necessary that one should be appointed for the purpose of revealing it, and God appointed Christ Jesus, and He came down and revealed the purposes of love which were in the Divine mind. And all the things that He revealed were secrets which the world never knew except by hints or intimations that were given before He appeared in the flesh. He was the Prophet who appeared in the Garden of Eden. It was He that gave revelations to Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, and all the Prophets. He was the Prince of the Prophets. He endowed them with the Holy Spirit and sent them forth, and what was said was not said by themselves, but they spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. He handed it over to those lower Prophets, and they declared His will. We must shut our ears to any one that would take that office from Him. Moses foreseeing His day said unto ancient Israel that God would raise up a Prophet like unto Him. That prophet is Jesus Christ. The passage is quoted in the New Testament and applied to Him.

He is also a Priest to atone for the sins of His people – to answer to God for us, to offer a sacrifice and obtain favour for us, and you know how He executed that office by making a sacrifice of Himself. So that He is our sacrifice, and all other sacrifices were put out of the way. He is this day looking down from heaven, the Great High priest who is entered into the presence of God for us. Now, we need a Priest or we can never be saved, and there is but one that will do – that is Jesus Christ, who is a Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

He also performs the office of a King. We need a King to deliver us from our enemies; we need a King, too, strong enough to make us willing to become his subjects. We are never willing until Christ puts forth His power to make us willing, and to subdue us. We need a

King to govern us, to make laws for us, and to keep us in order, as well as a King to rule over our souls. The Scripture saith – “The Lord hath anointed Him King of kings and Lord of lords.” He is King of the nations of the earth, although that is disputed by some. But the time is coming when it will go hard with those who dispute this truth. He is King, and reigns in glory. He has all the affairs of this world in His own hands, whether we acknowledge it or not. He reigns over us, and will not ask whether we are willing or not to accept of His reign. He has the distribution of the kingdoms of this world, and He raises up one and puts another down. He is also King of His Church. Alas, that the Church has no time to think of this! He is King of the Church, and our minds should ever be alive to His rights, as He is ever alive to His own rights. Nothing short of the determination of the Apostle will be of any avail – “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” The Apostle insisted upon Christ being all and in all. He is the Head, Prophet, King, and Priest of His people. It is important that we should be clear on this matter.

You and I must have a whole Christ if we are to be saved at all. Some, yea, not a few, say they believe in the Bible, in conversion, in Christ, and many such things, but they will not go the next step with you – “Christ and Him crucified.” He will be of no use to you unless He be to you “Christ and Him crucified.” This and this only is the conclusion of the Apostle. Christ crucified is the only Christ that will do you or me any good. His blood alone can atone for sins. Oh, it is a terrible blow that is aimed at Christ to say His death happened by chance and from which a certain kind of benefit comes although not necessary to salvation. Ah, shut your ears to such doctrine. Though we or an angel from Heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed. Oh, friends, it is no light offence. Christ’s death involves the salvation of the elect and God’s glory. You and I would be lost only for that death. “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” Christ is my Saviour by dying for me, by standing in my stead and becoming my surety. That is the only way by which we can hope to be saved, and such must be the language of every soul that knows his own state as a lost sinner and the preciousness of a Saviour suitable for him. “Christ and him crucified.” Such is an epitome of the Gospel, for it is all about Him and Him only. But, dear friends, we must pass from this point, although it is so important. It would not be too much to spend months on it, for it is that which gladdens the hearts of the elect, and gladdens them, too, throughout eternity.

(2) What is implied in knowing it? I notice first we must have an intelligent view of the letter of the law of God. We must make ourselves acquainted with what the great Apostle delivered unto us. Oh, what a shame that this Book should not be read in every house; although the knowledge of the letter of the law will not change our hearts. We must have that knowledge, for faith comes by hearing. Oh, how necessary that people should attend to it, and, oh, how many inducements for that! Oh, the greatness and excellency of that Word! being the excellency of Divine wisdom sent down from heaven to us. Oh let me impress upon you, my hearers, the importance of being acquainted with the Word of God, for if you neglect that there can be no hope for you at your death. How often in my experience did I meet with persons of the greatest ignorance that could not but end in eternal ruin. If God does not put His Word into your hearts the Devil will put something else there. For there can be no empty space there, and your hearts will be full of darkness, and that means simply that you will be lost for ever. Let me repeat. The certainty of your salvation depends upon your knowledge of the Word of God. Any one who has a Bible – a book more precious than silver or gold – is shamefully to blame if he be without a knowledge of that book, the highest of all learning. Again, there must not only be that literal knowledge of the Word of God, but we must go far higher than that. You and I must, if we be saved, say Amen to all that is in the Word. Our hearts must go out after it. We must give it that approval that will forever after make it our all in all – our lamp from which we expect light. We may know the letter of the Scripture and be

called quite learned in it, and yet our hearts not in sympathy with Christ, the object presented in the Gospel. There must then be an approval in a far higher sense. Everything in our nature and mind would quarrel with the Gospel, unless the Spirit of God bring our hearts to an approval of the Gospel. There must then be a knowledge and approval of heart and mind before we can truly say "I determine not to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified." You must believe that He is such a one as the Gospel says of Him before it can be said of you – You know Him and have faith in Him. What is the use of what you know unless you embrace Him and place your hopes in Him for salvation and repudiate every thing else and say – None but Christ, none but Christ. Ah, that would be the way of knowing Him! Do you know Him in that way? Your conscience may approve of Him, and you may be lost after all. Flee then to the hope set before you in the Gospel. That hope is Christ and Him crucified.

I don't know but that I should stop, but I said at the beginning there were reasons why this matter should be regarded of such importance as to become the study of our whole life. Well, I will mention these reasons –

(1) In the first place then, it is the one thing needful. This is one reason why you should study it all your lifetime. You cannot be saved without it. There is no other way of escape from the wrath of God. O sinner, if you have not Christ, you must perish. He is the only way by which you can be saved. That is a reason why other things should hold but a very low place. Christ meant Himself when he said to Martha that Mary had chosen the one thing needful.

(2) Again, it is the only thing that will ever awaken a sinner and comfort him. You can try everything else in the world and find no safety in it. You can never be awakened but by the power of Christ. It is not only the wisdom of God but the power of God, by which the sinner is put in possession of the new birth, and that is a good reason why the truth of Christ should be regarded of such importance as to become the study of our whole life.

(3) Another reason: Did you ever see a poor soul that had come to a full sense of his own condition, but was in deepest distress and was like one ready to die with fear and distress about his soul? He sees God, but He is a consuming fire and himself as stubble before the fire. God is holy and himself impure, a transgressor and justly condemned. Did you ever see a sinner in that condition? Were you ever in that condition? Let me put it home to you. Would you quiet him down? What balm would you put to his wounds? In what way would you cheer him? Ah! you must go to the gospel of Christ Jesus. In other words, to Christ and Him crucified. There is no other comfort in such a state as that. That is the only thing for that poor creature. It is only when he gets a look at that, that the first dawn of light enters his soul. Is that not a good reason why the apostle and every one should say, "I determine to know nothing but Christ."

(4) Oh! there is one thing without which we shall never see the Lord, and that is holiness. No man can make himself holy. Every one will find this out sooner or later. It is well it should be found out in time to have it rectified. How did Luther find it out? Oh, what despair seized upon his soul. He had recourse to many ways for finding it out. This is what made him enter a convent, and he is only one of tens of thousands who try to find it out in this way. But there is only one way of finding how to be made holy, and that is by faith in Christ and Him crucified, and by making Him the great study and aim of life. Would it not be a blessed thing to be free from that law that will curse you and send you to hell?" Unless you flee to the Saviour, that is your doom. Satan has a hold on many, and is determined to let none go so long as he can detain them. How are we going to become conquerors? Only by faith in the gospel.

But I must stop, my own strength is expended, and I must not dwell on the text any longer.

Now, friends, this is the last time I am likely to meet you in this way, and, as we have to part to-day, there should be some remarks suitable to the occasion. I thought of no better way than to preach the gospel to you, the way I attempted to begin with you. I have come here today to bid you farewell. Oh! it is a long time since we met, and since I received your welcome as your pastor. Where is my congregation? There is one here in this corner, and one there, and another there. There is only a few of my first congregation that remain. It is the children of my congregation that are now before me. Some of them were not born when I came here, and others were quite young at that time. But, oh, we come to the point at which we must part, and I would, without any formal method, lay before you a few thoughts.

First, the gospel I preached before you is that upon which I depend for my own safety. I wish upon that to lay down my own head on my death bed. This is the mind in which I leave you, and I wish you to know it. Another thing I must mention, and I hope no one will think anything improper in it. You know my position in the Church of God. For a great many years my duty pressed me into a position that was in opposition to many others; that happened more than once. Well, it would be not at all like a faithful witness for Christ, if I left without saying a word about it. I am not going to discuss the matter, but simply say "I am just where I was, and I leave you in that mind." I press upon you all not to make light of the matter. You know the position you took up with me on the last occasion. We went forth as a body in that attitude. And my own wish is that no mind should change, but that you retain the same views you now hold. And in whatever circumstances the Lord may place you, let your minds be ever the same. Let you all hold the same views twenty years from this as you now hold. And, whatever circumstances may compel you to do, it is not necessary that you should then approve of what you now disapprove. This is the last time I will speak to you, and I wish you to be faithful to the Master. And whatever you may feel yourselves compelled to do, let not that affect your principles. Always carry about with you a clear conscience, in a way in which it would be safe to meet Christ. I was going to state my position, not to discuss it. It is advisable to leave nobody in doubt about my position. I would lift up a word of warning to my congregation, but there is more than my own congregation here – I have no congregation, the tie is dissolved – yet, you will allow me to use the term while I am with you. I wish to warn my congregation not to meddle with those given to change.

There is a great revolution going on in the church and I warn you not to meddle with it, but just keep away from it. And let me warn you against those things that are established in the house of God as if they were ordinances. By this I mean all and sundry things that come under the head of soirees and merry-making parties, that turn religion into jest, and bring sacred things down to the level of the world, and in that way destroy all reverence for divine things. I warn you against ever bringing such things into the house of God. I would lock my pulpit against any man who would pervert or defile the house of God with things that have no authority in the word of God. How has my heart bled to think of the minds of young people being turned away from reverence for the house of God, by laughing at the antics even of ministers at these meetings! Oh, what will God think of it? And what will souls think of it when they come to die? It is the duty of ministers to awaken people and make them flee from the wrath to come; not to make them think there is no danger, which helps them on in the way to destruction.

Again, do not substitute hymns for the psalms. The difference in the effect will be just the difference between things human and things divine. They will just make you like man. And what is of God will make you like God. How the church should throw out the psalms to make room for trash of hymns made by man, for what is the work of man but trash compared with the work of God. In any church in which they are in use, they will put the psalms out. I

witnessed it myself along with others. When we entered the house of God every desk was full of hymn books and not a psalm book to be seen. God's book was put out, and man's book taken in. Then I warn you against letting these in, for so sure as they come in, God's book will go out. A little time will be given, and, for decency's sake, one of the psalms will be used once in a while, but by and by none of them will be used at all. I lift up my voice to warn you against using that carnal thing called an organ, or any musical instrument in the worship of God. God has given us the best kind of organ, our lips, and it is a shame we do not use them more in singing his praises. It is to sing God's praise we come to church, not to hear a fine tune. It should ever be in your mind that God is the object of your song, the instrument your mouth and heart. "Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." I know for certain that you will have to face such things, and that you will have to do with such things. Oh, I entreat you to stand upon safe ground. Do not make a choice of such things simply as a matter of taste. There are many who have an itching for change, and for getting into any new fashion. Oh, I beseech you to beware of them.

Now, in conclusion, I have been long with you, trying to lead you to Christ. That has been my object. Alas, it has been done but feebly; and now, how am I to leave you? Oh, my young friends, will you not this day give yourselves to Christ? Will you not put your hand into His hand and say, "I have been too long in the hands of the Devil, and now I'll surrender myself to Christ." The devil will soon have you for ever unless you give yourself to Christ. "Now is the accepted time." My young friends, let me impress upon you the necessity of reading the Word of God privately and prayerfully. Now that I am going to be with you no longer, I may tell you it was by the secret reading of the Word of God that my own mind was awakened to a sense of the danger of a sinful life. It was by an incident in our Bible lessons in school that I was induced to read it privately, and the Lord brought home to my soul the truth from that secret reading. This should be a warning to all not to vote for putting the Bible out of the schools. Parents who vote for putting the Bible out of school are just giving their vote to the devil. There is nothing he would like better than to have the Bible banished out of the schools and other places. Parents, think of the responsibility that lies upon you in reference to your children.

Let me entreat you to set a good example in your homes. Do not neglect family worship morning and evening. If any neglect this duty let me affectionately beg of you to begin this very day. How can any one who neglects to worship God in his house call himself a Christian?

Oh, friends, where do you stand? Are you on safe ground? Have you accepted Christ or have you not? Have you fled for salvation to the hope set before you in the Gospel or have you not? Oh, how can I think of leaving you out of Christ, the very condition in which I got you! Are there not some persons halting and never getting the length of coming to a decision? Your case is a dangerous one. And are there not some backsliders – some who went a certain length but are now turned back the world, and are not so likely to be saved as they once were. Will you not this day stop and turn back? It is a serious thing when one has been awakened to some sense of danger and has made something like an attempt to get away from sin, to stop and turn further back than ever. And are there some careless ones here – some who have never thought anything at all about their condition? Oh, careless sinner, I warn you, God's patience will run out, and that perhaps sooner than you think. Oh, may the Lord turn your attention to your danger and bring home to your hearts the truth as it is in Jesus, for His own name sake. Amen.

[November 1903]

## A Sermon

By REV. JOHN ROBERTSON, Assistant, St. Jude's,  
Preached as Retiring Moderator of Synod, at St. Jude's Hall, on October 10th, 1703.

“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” – Matthew 9:33.

The immediate context gives us an account of the circumstances in which these words were spoken. The Lord had gone forth about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. While thus engaged He was moved with compassion when He saw the multitudes who were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. This led Him to remark to His disciples that the harvest truly was plenteous but the labourers few. He saw multitudes living without the means of becoming acquainted with the way of salvation, and as that could only be attained through the instrumentality of divinely appointed agents, He exhorts His disciples to intercede with the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest. From this counsel we may learn that there is nothing that should so deeply engage our thoughts and occupy our time as the extension of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world. Ministers, especially to whose trust the glorious Gospel of the blessed God is committed, should give themselves much to prayer that Christ may be formed in men the hope of glory. In endeavouring to speak briefly from these words let me call your attention to the following points:

- I. The persons to whom the words were addressed.
- II. The charge itself which was given to them.
- III. Two or three inferences to be drawn from it.

I. The persons addressed. The slightest consideration shows that the Lord did not speak these words indiscriminately to all, for it is obvious that those who have no concern about their own eternal welfare cannot feel any interest in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ and the welfare of the souls of others. It was to His disciples that the Lord spoke – those whom He had chosen and ordained that they should go and bring forth fruit, and who, under the guidance of the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, are to “bear witness because they had been with Him from the beginning.” Preparation was needed by those to whom this command was given, and this is pointed out in the words just quoted as a being with Christ. This intercourse with Him is of such a nature that it manifests itself. Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles that “when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they took knowledge of those that they had been with Jesus” – Acts 4:13. It thus appears that there are distinguishing features of character in those who have been permitted to be with Him. An entire change must have passed over them and marked them out as different from others. Intercourse with Him cannot

but be followed by likeness to Him, and the closer the intercourse the greater the likeness. This will appear in all parts of their walk and conversation; but not to dwell at length on this, notice two features in which this likeness is manifested. One prominent characteristic of the Lord Jesus was His deep humility. Though He was the creator of all things and “without Him was not anything made that was made,” yet we read that “He humbled Himself, and made Himself of no reputation,” on which account it is said that “God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above every name.” This very marked feature of character may well be expected to appear in those who hold fellowship with Him, and, indeed, He requires it of all His followers in the command He gives. “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls.” None can be with Him then who do not more or less possess this qualification.

Another feature of character in the Saviour was His zeal for God. This was predicted of Him in the Psalm – “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” – and fulfilled, as the Evangelist shows, when He made a scourge of small cords and drove the money changers and those that sold doves out of the Temple. This zeal will appear in some degree in His own people, and many instances are recorded in Scripture, as in the case of Elijah when he fled from Jezebel; “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword.” From which we learn that where grace is there is a disposition to grieve for the wickedness that is done in the land and to be greatly concerned to see the cause of God advanced. Thus, then, those whom the Lord called to this duty were in some measure fitted to discharge it, having “received out of His fulness even grace for grace.” Like Jacob they had some qualification for wrestling with God in prayer.

II. In the second place, let us look at the nature of the charge the Lord laid on His disciples. This may be viewed both generally and particularly.

1. Generally as a call to prayer. This is a duty that is very frequently enforced in Scripture, and one which believers in all ages have prized and found essential to a life of faith in the Son of God. The moment the Holy Spirit convinced them of sin and showed them their exposure to the wrath of the Most High, they betook themselves to this duty and will never cease to engage in it as long as they live, unless it is for a time under some strong temptation. It is a gift bestowed upon them, and, like all their graces, they must trade with it that their stock may be increased. Every one has received some talents, some more, some less; but whatever the measure bestowed they must take care not to lay it up in a napkin, but give their “Lord’s money to the exchanges, that at his coming he may receive his own with usury.” The way to increase grace is to employ it and lay it out for God. Now, as all grace comes from God, His own require to entreat Him that He would grant them more according to His own promise – “Ask and ye shall receive.” Thus they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the great storehouse and out of His fulness they must receive, else they will be poor indeed. Oh what a sad spectacle is a prayerless person, and yet it is to be feared that there are a vast number of prayerless persons in this great city and throughout the land. This is but too evident from the open disregard of the Sabbath day which one witnesses on all hands and the denial of the authority of God that is so often expressed. All this may well call forth our deepest compassion for poor perishing souls, and stir up all who love the Lord to do what they can for their salvation. But what is to be thought of those who, set apart to the office of the ministry, seldom or never are found on their knees interceding with God on behalf of their fallen fellow-creatures? Their hypocrisy may not be detected in this world but assuredly it will not pass the day of judgment, and sad indeed will be the eternity of all such. As the work in which they are engaged is God’s, it is manifest that the true messengers of Christ must seek their directions from Him; they must wait upon Him for His guidance and seek the message that they should deliver. They are not to run at their

own charges, but to perform the work given them in the strength received from Him. They may expect to meet with many difficulties – with much that will discourage them and occasion many fears at times that failure may attend all they do. They may be defamed, their motives questioned, and the greater their faithfulness to the truth of God, the greater will be the obliquity cast upon them. Now their only recourse is to betake themselves to Him who hath sent them on this warfare, and seek from Him grace to endure reproach and shame for His sake. “He is a very present help in time of trouble” to all who wait upon Him.

2. Particularly. – The charge is definite. A particular subject of prayer is given them. They are to “pray the Lord of the heavens that he would send forth labourers into his harvest,” and that on the ground that the harvest is plenteous but the labourers few. We ought ever to have a distinct object in our approaches to the throne of grace, else our prayers will be vague. In the charge which the Lord has given to His disciples He calls them to be specially concerned about the interests of His kingdom on earth. While His people are to be much occupied about their own state, they are at the same time to manifest an unselfish concern for the Lord’s cause.

Let me notice two things in connection with this command.

(1) It teaches that God has reserved in His own hands the right of sending forth labourers into His harvest – those who are to be instrumental in advancing His cause in the world. But His people are to be co-workers with Him, so that while the Church is to exercise the utmost care in preparing and qualifying, so far as that lies in her power, those she sets apart to this work, she must at the same time use all diligence in seeking the guidance of the Lord Himself, and thus express her consciousness of her inability of herself to discriminate with certainty those who are called of God. From this we may see the pride of those churches which arrogate to themselves the sole right and power of setting apart men to this work by the laying on of the hands of their Bishops. When we find the Lord charging His own disciples in this way, and never giving them the slightest hint that they should rely on their own judgment, it surely manifests much pride on the part of those who claim this right. Nor does the Lord here teach that there is such a thing as apostolical succession; indeed His language rather implies the reverse. If His words mean anything they mean that God alone holds in His own power the raising up and fitting of those who are to be engaged in this great work apart from any connection with others.

(2) We may notice further here that there is danger of neglecting this duty. The purest churches are apt to grow remiss. The natural carnality of the heart is prone to assert itself, and hence the necessity of being called to this duty again and again. Were there no danger of this, the Lord had not needed to exhort His disciples and through them the Church in all ages to bestir themselves in this exercise. Faithfulness, then, to Him demands this, the interests of his cause in the world require it, and the welfare of our own souls calls for it. If the kingdom of Christ is to be advanced it must surely be by the faithful adherence to the rules laid down in His Word. The more closely these are followed the more likely is He to give His blessing, which alone can give the increase. With what care the Lord scrutinises the conduct of His Church we learn from the epistles addressed to the seven churches of Asia. In many of them He had a few things against them, and His words to them may well lead all churches that value the presence and favour of the Lord to deep searchings of heart. Our safety lies in walking humbly with God, ever bearing in mind that His eye is upon us and that He is much displeased when there is the least departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. When the Church begins to grow remiss in regard to this duty, and indifferent or at least not much concerned about the character of those who are sent forth by her on this important work, she gives evidence of degeneracy, and her usefulness in the cause of God is no longer to be looked for.

3. Another point taught by this command of the Saviour is that this work does not consist in the mere gathering together of large numbers into a church organisation. Something far higher and more important than that is manifestly intended by the Saviour. Were that all it would not be necessary to refer the work entirely into the hands of God. There is no difficulty in attracting multitudes to whatever professes to be a religious order, no matter how far it may deviate from the rule of God's Word. Our own day is witness of the facility with which many persons follow the most extravagant pretensions of bold and arrogant leaders. What Christ requires and exhorts His disciples to pray for is the spiritual progress of His Church in this world. It was for this He died, and for the carrying on of this work He is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens and for which He ever liveth to make intercession. All else He severely condemns, as in case of the Church of Sardis: "These things saith he that hath the seven spirits of God, I know thy work that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent."

Still further this exhortation teaches us that a peculiar emphasis is laid on this duty and that His servants are to give themselves to it with the utmost devotedness. No less a matter is involved in it than the spreading abroad of the knowledge of that great and glorious work of redemption wrought out by the Lord Jesus in His adorable person as God and man in two distinct natures. The mind of the Holy One had been set upon this great work from all eternity. For four thousand years the world was being gradually instructed in its nature and design to prepare it for the coming of the Son of Man, and was shown thereby the estimation in which the Father regarded it. It was the undoing of the wrong done to God by the fatal apostacy of our first parents, wonderfully manifesting the glory of His grace and the bringing in of a better hope to guilty creatures that they might be saved with an everlasting salvation.

The bodily presence of their Lord was soon to be taken from them, and the hearts of the disciples might be ready to sink into despair; the Lord therefore by the call encouraged them to persevere in the work, since their Heavenly Father was so concerned in it that He would take care that suitable men would be sent forth. I have not selected this passage from the slightest hope of setting before you, brethren, any fresh views upon it, but simply because we are instructed to provoke unto love and to good works, and it seemed a suitable subject for stirring us all up to renewed diligence, at a time when true religion is obviously at so low an ebb, to plead with Him who alone can advance His own cause, without the forth putting of whose power all effort must be in vain.

III. In the last place let me notice two things that may be fairly deduced from this call of the Saviour.

(1) Since we have seen that God highly values this work, then surely he puts a high honour upon all those whom He calls to engage in it. They become fellow-workers with Him, for while the whole power is His, He greatly honours His servants by employing them as instruments for the carrying on of the work. Have we not cause then to lament the coldness of our endeavours to advance His cause? Where are the zeal and diligence that were seen in former days in this land? The general indifference that prevails so largely in the present day is apt to have a depressing and weakening effect on even those who are truly concerned to advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Oh, let us be bold in His cause, and strive more and more to obtain of His infinite mercy clearer views of His excellency, so that it may be sweet to us to do His will. The words of the Lord to His disciples form a rebuke to all indifference. It is an earnest, self-denying ministry that may be expected to receive the blessing from on high. "Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." In order to this how earnestly ought we to seek after much nearness to God. It is thus we shall be lifted up in His ways. No difficulties shall then be allowed to stand in our way. Our one

concern will be that we might finish our course with joy and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus.

(2) Another thing I notice is the force of the word here used and translated “send forth.” It is very emphatic in the original and signifies to send out with force. It is thus rendered in Luke 4:29, where it is said that all they in the synagogue were filled with wrath and rose up and *thrust* Him out of the city. This expression therefore implies that they who are called of God to this work have much fear in entering upon it. It was thus with Moses when God sent him to deliver the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt. It was so in the case of Jeremiah when sent to be a prophet to the people. Those therefore who enter upon this work in a right spirit feel how solemn a matter it is to go forth as an ambassador for Christ beseeching men to be reconciled to God. And as those two eminent saints to whom I have just referred manifested so diffident a spirit, we may say that those who can enter upon this work without fear are not called of God to it. Nor is it surprising that any should fear to enter upon this work, for it is for God, and therefore great. This was the feeling of Nehemiah when building the wall of Jerusalem, for what was his answer to Sanballat and Geshem when they wanted him to meet with them? “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down.”

Lastly. This command of Christ seems fitted to encourage the Church when in a low and depressed condition. At such a time it is ready to say with Amos, “O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?” Fears may then be entertained that God has withdrawn Himself and that no success can attend her efforts. She may be few in number and weak in other ways; there may be very few boldly standing forth in defence of the Truth, so that in the estimation of her members she may seem exceedingly weak. My text, however, shows us that the Lord of the harvest has His eye upon her, and as He rules in heaven and in earth surely greater must He be that is for her than all that can be against her. She has no ground therefore for despair, and instead of desponding she is called upon to betake herself with the greater diligence to Him who is the Lord of the harvest that in His own time and way He would send forth labourers into His harvest.

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