

A Sermon

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“The sword of the Lord and of Gideon” – Judges 7:20.

In this chapter we have an account of a signal victory gained by Gideon over the host of the Midianites. Gideon was a mighty man of valour, raised up to do the Lord’s work amid troublous times in Israel, and he receives honourable mention in the Epistle to the Hebrews among those who were strong and did exploits through faith in their God.

The record of his overthrow of the Midianites is very suggestive, and we shall seek to consider it as illustrative of the Christian warfare. The principles that underlie Gideon’s victory are of perpetual application. We meet with them on every side in God’s procedure.

To guide our thoughts we shall look at the narrative under the following particulars: –

1. The soldiers.
2. The equipment with which they were provided.
3. The spirit with which they were animated.
4. The victory they obtained.

1. *The soldiers.*

First of all you will notice that for this exploit Gideon had at his disposal an army of 32,000 men. This was in itself no mean force, but it was as nothing compared with the host of the Midianites. The inspired writer makes no attempt at estimating *their* numbers in figures. He simply suggests the idea of size well-nigh inconceivable. The Midianites were “like grasshoppers for multitude;” and their camels “as the sand of the sea-side.”

But the strange thing is that though to human eyes the army of Israel might appear hopelessly inadequate for the task with which it was confronted God declares it to be too great. “The people that are with thee are too many,” He said to Gideon. His design was not merely to win a victory, but to win it in a way that should subserve another end – a way that should teach a great spiritual lesson.

So Gideon’s army had to be reduced, and the method adopted for reducing it in the first instance was this. A proclamation was issued in the hearing of the people, permitting all who were “fearful and afraid” to leave the ranks and return to their home. Twenty-two thousand men availed themselves of this permission, and departed from Mount Gilead.

Notice this first test. God did not want any for His work whose heart was not in it. He wanted no spiritless soldiers. He wanted none to fight His battles who were without confidence in the might of that God in Whose name, and under Whose direction, they were to go forth. He wanted men – men of courage, men of spirit, men of faith.

The Lord wants such soldiers still. He wants, in a word, men of faith. Wherever there is faith there is also strength, and there is courage; wheresoever there is lack of faith you have weakness and fear. Who are the people who are strong and do exploits? They are the people who know their God, and, knowing Him, put their trust in Him. The Lord’s battles are never won by cowards. There is, indeed, many a Mr. Fearing among the soldiers of Jesus Christ; many a one that has sad misgivings about his own spiritual state; many a one harassed with the fear of being a castaway at last: but let us not forget concerning that same Mr. Fearing that he set a dauntless heart upon the Hill Difficulty, and went to meet the lions without flinching, and when he came to Vanity Fair he was ready to fight with almost every man he met. It was no coward’s heart that beat within the breast of Mr. Fearing. He feared no

external foe. His fears were about his own soul, lest he should come short in the end, and so “never see that face with comfort he had come so many miles to behold.”

The supreme requisite of Christian usefulness is faith in God. Where there is faith there will be courage and perseverance; where faith is not, then, whatever appearance of confidence there may be, there will be a going back in the day of battle, as was the case with the men of Ephraim. Well, the Lord wants those who will go forward in the day of battle, those who will quit them like men and be strong, who will endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Gideon was now left with ten thousand men, but the Lord said to him, “The people are yet too many.” They had to be reduced again, and the means used for sifting them on this occasion was this. They were brought down to a place where there was water to drink; all who went down on their knees and drank of the water at their leisure were put on one side, and those who lifted the water with their hand, swiftly and skilfully, to their mouth were put upon the other side. Three hundred only were found to have lapped the water in this latter fashion, and these were chosen to be Gideon’s soldiers.

At first sight this principle of selection may seem an arbitrary and meaningless distinction; in reality it was a decisive test of character. We have here the upper end of a principle whose roots go deep down and spread far and wide.

What was the real meaning of this final test? It was a proving of alacrity, of vigilance, and alertness. Those who did not wait to stoop down but scooped up the water quickly with their hand gave practical evidence of readiness. They showed that their main aim was to go forward; they did not allow even the satisfying of their bodily need to interfere with their primary duty. Even when drinking they were still watchful and prepared. On the other hand those who adopted a more leisurely and self-indulgent method showed that they did not possess these qualities at least in the same degree. The men in whom courage was joined with alacrity were the men who were selected to follow Gideon against the Midianites.

This also is a principle that is of application still. Let me illustrate the distinction from the Gospel History. One day as Christ walked by the shore of the Sea of Galilee He saw Andrew and Simon his brother casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers, and He said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And they straightway forsook their nets and followed Him. There was no questioning, no lingering, no looking back. These were men of like spirit with Gideon’s three hundred. But another day Christ said to one, “Follow me,” and the reply was, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Yet another said, “I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell who are at home at my house.” Jesus said unto him, “No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God.” These were like the men who went down on their knees to drink. What, in a word, is the quality that is here commended? You find it plainly illustrated in the words of Paul, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” It is the true pilgrim spirit. It is the heart which seeks first the Kingdom of God. It is the disposition of those who, though they are in the world, are yet not of the world; who have their loins girt, and their lamps trimmed, and, realising that here they have no continuing city, seek one to come. It is not those who stoop down, and drink long and deep at the streams of worldly pleasure that are of much service in the cause of Christ, but those who keep the world in its own place and seek only as much of it as will meet the needs of their earthly pilgrimage.

And what is the truth which this whole history illustrates? It is that the Lord delights to accomplish great ends by seemingly feeble means. You are confronted with that principle again and again throughout the range of God’s visible government.

It was illustrated in Christ’s own victory. The prophet Isaiah tells us that the deliverance the Messiah was to accomplish was to be like the day of Midian (Isaiah 9:4); that is an

unmistakable reference to the victory of Gideon. Christ overcame in the most unlikely way. He humbled Himself; He made Himself of no reputation; He became obedient unto death; He was made a curse. And through His humiliation He spoiled principalities and powers, and brought forth judgment unto victory.

It is illustrated in the work that it pleases God to accomplish through His servants in the world. You remember the stupendous task that Christ assigned to His servants in leaving the world. "Go unto all nations and make disciples of them." To whom did He say that? To a handful of men whom the world would call weak and simple and unlettered, most of them Galilean fishermen. He chose then, and He chooses still, the weak things and the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and the mighty.

And what is the end that He has in view in adopting this method? It is the clearer manifestation of His own glory. "The men that are with thee are too many . . . lest Israel vaunt themselves against me and say, Mine own hand hath saved me." He perfects His strength in weakness. In the feebleness of the instrument there is afforded an opportunity of more unmistakably revealing the strength of the hand that wields it. There is such a tendency in men to exalt themselves. The very Israel of God are ready to forget the Rock of their strength and to fail to give Him the praise that is His due. If Gideon had gone forth with his 32,000 men and overcome the enemy Israel would have been ready to vaunt themselves on their own valour and skill, but when the Lord gave the victory to the three hundred they had of necessity to cry – "This is the doing of the Lord; it is marvellous in our eyes." If Christ had come to Bethany when Martha and Mary had first sent for Him, when Lazarus was grievously sick, but was not yet dead and buried – if Christ had come then and restored him whom He loved to health would not the sisters have been ready to take some at least of the credit to themselves? Would they not have laid some stress on their own watchful care and tenderness and skill? But when Lazarus was restored to them after he had lain four days in the grave, was it not thereby more clearly manifested than otherwise it could have been that his sickness was "for the glory of God," for the Son of God was glorified thereby? We are afraid sometimes that we are too weak to be of much service in the Lord's cause. The danger is, if only we will understand it, that we are too strong.

2. *The equipment with which they were provided.* – Two particulars call for consideration in this connection, their provisions and their weapons.

(a) *Their provisions* – They were going forth on a trying undertaking, a handful of men to face an immense army; the conflict might be long and arduous; they did not know when they might return, or what resources might be laid to their hand by the way. Did they then carry with them an abundant store of which they might avail themselves according to their need? Did each man at least carry a load of provisions on his back? No; they took "their victuals in their hand." That was all they were to have at their disposal, no more than they could carry in their hand. It was a warfare in which they were literally, as someone has well said, to live "from hand to mouth."

Is it not so also in the life of the believer in Jesus Christ? He too carries his victuals in his hand. All he has in his possession is just sufficient for his present needs. He has no rich store of grace and strength in himself. His sufficiency is of God. His fulness is not on earth but in heaven. He lives rather by faith in what God has promised than by the sight of what he already has. He has no supplies at hand to meet the necessities of to-morrow. He must go forward trusting in Him who is the God of to-morrow as well as of to-day. The Lord Himself has charge of His people's supplies; they must look to His riches, and trust to His bounty. He has promised to supply all their need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He has said, As thy day so shall thy strength be. He gives manna fresh from heaven according to their daily recurring need. He causes the Rock to follow them through the wilderness, and there He spreads a table for them in presence of their foes. And what reaches them in this

way, and in such circumstances, will be more glorifying for God to give, and sweeter for them to receive.

(b) *Their weapons* – Each man had a trumpet in one hand and a pitcher containing a lamp in the other. These were the arms with which they were equipped. Now what would have been the unanimous verdict of the world in its wisdom on this method of conducting warfare? The world would have called it foolishness. The world would have called it hopeless, supremely futile, and impotent. The world would have been ready to pour on Gideon and his soldiers the force of its ridicule and its scorn.

And is it not the same with the weapons of the Kingdom of God? The servants of the Living God, the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, go forth to conquer the world with the trumpet of the gospel call in their hand, and with the light of heaven in vessels of earth. This is God's way of obtaining the victory. When in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom – these are the weapons that would commend themselves to the judgment of men – but we preach Christ crucified; Christ crucified, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.

Are not we ourselves sometimes ready to sit down in the chair of the scorner when we consider God's way of saving the world? Are we not ready to suggest modifications and improvements? It is so plain and simple and seemingly futile. We think it not sufficiently imposing in outward appearance to attain so mighty an end. What is the meaning of all the encroachments of men on the simplicity of New Testament worship? What is the meaning of the additions that are being made to the preaching of Christ crucified? It is, in a word, the professing Church joining with the world in writing foolishness over the Gospel of God. It is an attempt of human wisdom to redeem the methods of God from the charge of hopeless folly. But the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

3. *The Spirit by which they were animated.* – You find it expressed in their battle cry – the Sword of the Lord and of Gideon. In that combination and in that order there is manifested a spirit which is the pledge of victory. The Lord's sword and Gideon's sword together, but the sword of the Lord first. This is still the battle-cry of the true servant of Jesus Christ. What does it imply?

(a) *They go forth by His authority.* – They display their banners in God's name, and this is the reason why they are terrible as an army with banners. "Go" . . . said Christ, "and lo, I am with you alway." The authority of their message does not depend on their own powers, or on the weight of their own personality. The Gospel is God's Gospel. The Cause is His Cause. The enemies of the truth are His enemies. The word they preach is His Word. He that hears it listens to the voice of God; he that rejects it rejects the counsel of God. They who deliver the message may sometimes stand before their fellow-men in weakness and fear and in much trembling. Their hearers may be able to point to shortcomings and blemishes. But if the message is the message of Divine Truth, then he to whom it comes has to reckon not with man but with God. Behind the weakness of the human agent there lies the authority of the Eternal; behind the feeble pleadings of the human voice there is the Commandment of the Everlasting God. They who hear the Word must one day give an account of the reception they accorded it; and if on that day they are found rejectors, what will be laid to their charge is not that they refused to listen to this or that other man, but "because *I* called and ye refused, because *I* stretched out my hands and no man regarded, therefore . . ."

(b) *They depend on His strength.* – What an undertaking it was that Gideon had to face. How hopeless it should be if he depended on his own resources, three hundred men to overthrow an army whose numbers well nigh baffled calculation. He had indeed his own part to perform, and he did it. He laid his plans with skill, he arranged his forces with judgment,

he proved himself a brave and resourceful leader; but when he had done all that was possible for him to do, he knew that he must depend for victory on the arm of the Lord. He knew that unless there was the Sword of the Lord, and the Sword of the Lord first, there would not be much use in the sword of Gideon.

And so it is still with the people of God. They have learned to put the Sword of the Lord first. When they have done all that is within the limits of their power, they are unprofitable servants. With regard to their own souls, they are called upon to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, but they know that the Sword of the Lord must go first: “for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” With regard to their labours in the Lord’s Cause, the same thing holds true. Paul may plant and Apollos may water – Paul with all the strength of his reasoning, and Apollos with all the grace of his eloquence; but it is God that giveth the increase. What would the servants of Christ do had they not the Sword of the Lord to look to? When they look at the strength of the world’s fortresses, when they see the forces of the Lord’s enemies, when they realise the power of sin and the resources of hell, they would altogether despair were they not assured that the Cause is the Lord’s Cause, and that His Sword is pledged to bring forth judgment unto victory. And so, when they see their labours barren of results – as, alas! is so often the case – they cry not only, “Who hath believed our report,” but also, “To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” They know that in the last resort the lack of fruit is due to the withholding of the Lord’s arm.

(c) *They seek His glory* as their supreme aim. In the matter of praise and honour and glory they have learned to put the Sword of the Lord first. They have been made willing and loyal subjects of the King of Zion, and they are joyful in their King. Their souls have been wedded to the glory of His name. They beheld His glory, and they gave themselves to Him in their persons and in their services. They desire to be used by Him and for Him. They desire that He should be glorified through their poor efforts. They desire that self should be crucified. There is that root of bitterness within them; it makes its presence felt, and seeks to regain the ascendancy; but they long for its complete extinction, that Christ may be all in all. He must increase, but I must decrease; in some measure they attain to the spirit of these beautiful words; and they are willing to be fools for Christ’s sake, and to be considered the off-scourings of all things if only Christ should be glorified.

And is there nothing at all left for them to do? Yes, there is. It is the Sword of the Lord first, but not the Sword of the Lord alone. God works through means; and He assigns to His servants an honourable and necessary part. He links His own Sword with the Sword of Gideon. O, what an honour is this for a poor worm of the dust, to be a fellow-worker with God, to be joined unto the Lord and be of one spirit with Him in service! That God’s name and your name should be joined together – is not that a high and glorious calling? That God’s Almighty Power should be wedded to your weak effort, that God’s Almighty voice should be identified with your faltering words, and should make them the vehicle of His Power – this is the transcendent glory of Service. Your sword may deal but a very feeble stroke; but God’s Hand closes over yours, and infuses through your impotence the current of His own resistless might. For this is the wonder of being a fellow-worker with God; there are not after all two swords. There is only one sword. The sword of the Lord is the sword of Gideon. The Lord makes Gideon’s weakness the channel of His own Almighty strength.

4. *The victory they obtained* – Notice two particulars concerning the victory. In one sense it was obtained at the first onset. The enemy were thrown into confusion; their ranks were broken, they were put to flight. On the other hand the victory was not complete with the first successful encounter. Gideon had to follow on to complete success. And you see him and his followers coming up to the banks of the Jordan and crossing over “faint yet pursuing.” The enemy were put to flight, but they were not yet exterminated; and Gideon pursued them till he slew their kings; then the victory was complete.

And have we not here a realistic picture of the Christian conflict? In the day when the Gospel comes into the soul with power, when God shines in the heart to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, there indeed is victory. The dominion of sin is broken, and grace comes in to reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. But the whole subsequent life of the believer in this world is a following on to know the Lord. He has to follow up his initial effort. As he received Christ Jesus the Lord, so he is called upon to walk in Him. His whole life is described as a “coming” to Christ. So in these words you have a faithful description of a believer’s life on earth – “faint yet pursuing.”

Faint, through bearing the burden and heat of the day; faint, through hunger and thirst in the land of drought; faint, because of the length and the roughness of the road; faint, because the enemy still elude their grasp, and hope deferred maketh their heart sick; faint – yet pursuing; the face still turned Zionwards; the weapons of the conflict still in their hand, the cry of battle still on their lips; the steps, however sore and weary, still pressing toward the mark for the prize; the whole soul stretched out in the trustfulness of faith, and the expectancy of hope, and the longing of desire, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Day of the Lord, that Day when they shall see Him as He is, and shall be perfectly conformed to His Blessed Image.

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Notes of a Sermon.

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“What sign shewest thou then that we may see and believe thee?
What dost thou work?” etc. – John 6: 30-32.

In the early part of this chapter we have an account of the miracle wrought in a desert place, when five thousand men that waited on the ministry of the Lord Jesus were fed with five barley loaves and two small fishes, and of the effect that this wonderful work had on the

minds of those that witnessed it. The people, under the fresh impression of what they saw and tasted, came at once to the conclusion "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." They came to a right conclusion, yet they came to it in a carnal way, and that this was how they came to it was soon made plain. Their first impulse was to take Him by force and to make Him king. This of itself showed how little they were inclined to subject themselves to the authority of Him whom they recognised to be the Prophet. They were ready to run before Him, and in false and fiery zeal to lead Him, instead of consenting or seeking to be led by Him. Such attachment as this He would have none of. He withdrew from them and went to a mountain alone.

His disciples crossed the sea, and on the way He joined them, so that by morning light He was on the other side on the sea from the multitude that had so lately decided that he was indeed the Prophet long expected by Israel. They could not find Him, sought for Him, crossed the sea, and came to Capernaum "seeking for Jesus". Were there nothing told us of them but that they followed Him so laboriously and sought for Him until they found Him we might think that something divine and spiritual led them to take the course they took. Surely there was burning, flaming zeal exhibited in such conduct. At the cost of no small personal inconvenience they had pursued their search until they found Him. Was there not devotion here shown to His person and cause? Surely one might say this at any rate is love to the Prophet. They have recognised Him, and they are prepared to follow Him. He, however, knew what was in man and needed not that any should testify. He knew what manner of people they were and what their spirit was. Their flattering attentions did not find in Him what could be deceived or puffed up. Nay, they met with a rebuff at His hand. He spoke plainly, and brought out before their eyes the secret springs of action that impelled them in the course of conduct they were now pursuing. They might say, "Surely He will be flattered with our earnest, zealous waiting on His words," and the more they thought themselves entitled to a welcome on His part that would correspond to their own enthusiasm the more were His words and the reception He gave them fitted to damp their ardour.

"Rabbi," they said when they found Him, "When camest Thou hither?" Still they give Him the place they acknowledged already to be His when they concluded Him to be the Prophet. They salute Him as master, and in so doing virtually profess themselves His scholars ready to wait on His instructions. He proceeds forthwith to instruct them, but His doctrine was rather plain than palatable. He at once told them their motives in seeking Him. They sought Him not because they saw His miracles, but because they had eaten of the loaves and were satisfied. They had not learned the lessons that His miracle was fitted to teach them; they were but grovelling earth worms; though His glory was manifested in His works they saw it not. They were not spiritual subjects of His realm prepared to submit their neck to His yoke, and He knew it. Nothing nobler than this led them on; they had eaten of the loaves and were filled. They might by engaging in their lawful callings earn their bread by the sweat of their brow and so satisfy one craving at any rate that brought them after Him. The novelty of His method of meeting their needs might, acting as an irritant of their vain curiosity, bring them with eyes not satisfied with seeing to see again what they had seen already. They had come after a search to where He was. It was not without toil that they found Him. That energy and activity might, if otherwise applied, have secured the satisfaction of their hunger in a lawful way. Now, however, while professing to recognise Him as the Prophet and as their Master, they waited on Him not to have their soul fed with spiritual food, but to have their vague thirst for the wonderful gratified and their mortal bodies strengthened with the bread that perishes. Accepting their declaration that He was their Master, He thus taught them, and in teaching made plain that he knew what was in man, and gave them additional reasons, albeit unpalatable to proud nature, to conclude that He knew heart secrets. He not only revealed what was within, but He also gave advice. When they waited on His word and

ministry they should have in view not the bread that perishes, but the bread that endures. They should, in accordance at once with what their profession involved and with the reason of the thing, seek first and foremost the food that was fitted to satisfy their soul. They should as rational accountable creatures esteem the soul more than the body, and so doing seek above everything what tended to promote its highest interests.

This was the advice He gave them. How was it taken? Do they immediately back out of their profession and, indignant at such imputations on their motives, resent the reception that their attentions met with? Or do they at once humbly submit to His authority and meekly subject themselves to His word? Were they or were they not angry at the plainness of His dealing? Let us see. He has given them advice to work for the meat that endureth to everlasting life. They still profess themselves ready to take counsel with Him, or rather from Him. Practically they say, "Thou art our Master and givest us advice; we need that Thy advice should be explained; we need to understand it. If we are to work for the enduring meat, 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?'"

They were a self-righteous generation. Their kind has not died out. Self-righteousness is as rife to-day as ever it was. They are set on *doing*; they will work out His will. "What shall we do?" Was it not right and proper that they should ask this? Undoubtedly it is the part of a rational being to put this question, and particularly so to put it when he has the opportunity of receiving instruction from above. The doing of the will of God, the doing of the work He marks out for us, the fulfilling of the end of our creation, should be a pressing question with accountable agents. That we may do the will of God we need a two-fold deliverance, and to this the Redeemer shuts in His hearers. They were ready offhand to assay the task that should be set before them, and if some great thing were asked to be done, something in the doing of which they might shine, it would be no doubt acceptable to hear of it. The Redeemer, however, brings them up with His answer, "This is the work of God that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent." Not doing great things, but submissively receiving His words was what was put before them as the doing of the work of God. Thus should they eat the living bread. They are taken now on their profession, and the heartiness of their adhesion to it is put to the test. They had but acknowledged that he was the Prophet, long expected, come at last. They still professed themselves His disciples though He had rebuffed them. Now, however, He makes in clear terms the claim to be received as the Prophet, and He challenges them as it were to make good their recent profession. The testing to which it had already been subjected showed itself now. The dissatisfaction that His rebuff of their attentions aroused was now brought to light. Brought face to face with His claims, though He claimed to be only what they had so lately recognised Him to be, they indicate plainly that they were not ready to bow their shoulder to His yoke. They evidently cast off the mask of humble disciples, satisfied with the evidence already perceived, and convinced that this was of a truth that Prophet. They turn sceptics. "Ah! that a serious matter. The claim is no small one. If thou art the Prophet expected of the Fathers we must implicitly receive Thy word; we must yield ourselves entirely to Thine authority." This they were not prepared to do. Thus the hollowness of their professions became apparent.

They understood that He spoke of Himself, and that He claimed to be the Prophet that should arise like unto Moses. The promise had long been the possession of Israel, and many prophets had been raised up, but in none of them had the word given to Moses and spoken by Him found its fulfilment. Great prophets had arisen, but in intimacy of communion with God not one of them attained to the stature of Moses. To him the Lord spoke face to face, and if thus in intimacy of communion with the fountain of light Moses surpassed his successors, the Prophet who was to be like Moses must resemble him in this distinctive feature. Moses, too, inaugurated a new dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. He was the Mediator of the Old Testament through whom the Lord spake unto Israel. In this respect also no one of the many

prophets raised up of old approached him. He who should rise like unto him must resemble him in this. A new dispensation must by him be inaugurated. The change his successor must introduce meant the upturning of the dispensation that then was. As the result of his coming what is antiquated must soon pass away. That which decayed and waxed old was now ready to vanish away.

The Messianic claim brought solemn issues before Israel. If they refused to hear the prophet so long foretold, it would be required at their hand. And these solemn issues were now before the multitude that waited on the Lord Jesus in Capernaum. Had they reason to receive him as Messiah and the Prophet, then it was something to answer for if they refused to bow their shoulder to His yoke. They had reason to ascertain how the case stood, and it was in one sense no unreasonable request that they now made when they sought for evidence. They sought a sign. That they had already concluded that this was the Prophet, and in so doing were right, is undoubted. How flimsy their conclusion was in its kind was already apparent. It was but a fleshly judgment come to under the influence of what they saw in the wilderness. The instability of flesh and blood appears in the reversal of position we now have. After vows they make inquiry. They had not dug deep and laid their foundation on the rock. Such is the case with the superficial convictions of many still. Their minds, so far as they take any side, seem to incline to the acknowledgment of the truth. This they do, however, from regard to the testimony and example of others. They have not heard and learned of the Father. They have not seen for themselves. Such convictions do not carry far. They do not count for much. They may go hand in hand with fleshly zeal, and may flash in the pan. But testing, trial, they cannot bear. What we need is what will stand testing, not what will blow away as the chaff of the threshing floor, but what will fall as good grain to be gathered into the garner. A divine faith, the product of divine teaching, the gift of God that discovers to the individual the thoughts of God in the Cross of Christ, this is what is needed, and this is the very thing that was awaiting on the part of this multitude, whose zeal had carried them so far and then left them stranded high and dry. Before the Redeemer's discourse on this occasion was over, many of His disciples were offended and left Him. He winnowed them with the fan of doctrine. The winnowing process – the testing, the trial – served only to bring out more clearly, in contrast with the apostasy of the rest, the constancy of the true disciples. "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Now they seek a sign, and they do so in significant terms. They quite appreciate the nature of the claim that has but been uttered in their hearing. He who stands before them and speaks, asks for the unconditional surrender of their whole inner man to His authority. He challenges acceptance as the Divine Messenger who should introduce the "world to come" the days of Messiah to which Israel looked forward. The parallel between Moses the Mediator of the dispensation of exclusion and the prophet like unto him is obviously before their minds. Moses surpassed all the prophets in his intimate familiarity with the Lord in the honour conferred upon him when he was set over the house of God as a servant. Ample attestation was afforded to his mission, and Israel had every reason throughout their successive generations to be convinced that God spake unto Moses. "Now," the people seem to say, "our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. He gave them bread from heaven to eat. Week in week out for forty years the many thousands of Israel were miraculously sustained in the waste and howling wilderness. Such was Moses to our fathers. Well might they and well may we, their offspring, believe in his divine mission. If thou hast come with credentials such as his were produce them. Hast thou such outstanding intimacy of intercourse with the Highest as he had, or dost thou introduce a new world, a new order, that is destined to supplant his? If so, we must be as well satisfied as to Thy credentials as we are of his. What sign shewest Thou then that we may see and believe? What dost thou work?"

The Jews sought a sign; a wicked and adulterous generation sought it. We find on one occasion that the Redeemer assured them that no sign should be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonas. The burial and resurrection of Jonah were to be fulfilled in their days. The narrative of the prophet's experience adumbrated the history of a greater Prophet. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the burden of the Gospel. The stone set at nought of the builders was to become the head of the corner, and this has come to pass. The burden of prophetic testimony, as it bore on the common salvation, was the sufferings of Messiah and the glory that should follow. Not the sufferings only, and not the glory only, but both together, and together in a certain order – not a glory that should end in suffering, but suffering that should be crowned with glory. Only when the Son of Man was lifted up could Scripture find its fulfilment, and without this lifting up there should be no message of life for a sin-stricken world. The testimony of Scripture was express, and on the ground that it was clear and unmistakeable to the docile receiver of its message, the Lord Jesus proceeds in the rebuke He administered to His disciples after the resurrection – “O fools, and slow of heart to understand all that the prophets have spoken; ought not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?” If those that had enjoyed His own leading guidance and tuition for the years that His earthly ministry lasted stood in need of such a rebuke, may we not safely assert of Israel as a whole that their Messianic expectations were altogether out of joint. They had reason to expect the fulfilment of the promise, but the mere word of prophecy did not get fair treatment at their hands. Elements that entered into its description of the coming One they no doubt applied to Him. Other elements, however, that equally applied to Him they misapplied; nay, they failed to apply to Him, and thus at the best their view of Him who was their fathers' hope was a distorted one; and soon those descriptions given beforehand that they did correctly apply to Him, they degraded by carnalising them, so that if the instructed disciples, not yet free from the entanglement of prejudices and mistakes, amid which they had grown up, and which had infected the very air they breathed, were open to the rebuke of “Fools and slow of heart,” this rebuke, in a more intense form, applied to the nation at large.

How then does the Lord deal with the request that is made for a sign? He practically threw His hearers back on the divinity that shone in His every word – Let them there recognise who He was. Never man spake like Him – Let them come to realise this, and give it the place due to it. Then they should no longer as children crave for signs and wonders, without which they would not believe. We have seen how Messiah referred those that asked a sign to the sign of the prophet Jonas. This sign that generation should have, and the record of its fulfilment all generations have to the end of time. The Stone must be rejected of the builders. This must be so that the signs of Messiah might attest the genuineness of His claims. This gives us a glimpse of what Messianic pretenders had to pass through. It was a crucial test indeed. Their claims they could make good only by being rejected, and, as we now see, rejected unto the death, and once this rejection came about, their Messianic claims came to nought. There was no rising again for them. There was no broad seal of heaven's acceptance to be stamped on their impious pretensions. The fulfilment of the conditions that marked out Him of whom Moses in the law and the Prophets did write involved something that secured for His claims nothing less than divine attestation.

The Gospel of God, now that the kingdom of God has come, concerns His Son, who is defined by the resurrection to be what He claimed to be, in the testimony borne by the apostles – competent witnesses – to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the wicked and adulterous generation had the sign of the prophet Jonas brought before their eyes. A sign has been given, and it is a sign pregnant with meaning. The whole Gospel is in it. In its interpreted form it is the setting forth of the propitiation – the revelation of the righteousness – He who was delivered for our offences has been raised for our justification. Messiah the

Prince has been cut off, to bring in everlasting righteousness. The resurrection is involved in the sign as surely as the death.

Many impostors died, and that was an end of their imposture. Their influence did not, for it could not, outlive themselves. Their views were absorbed with what was between them and death – how best they could delude the people, how best they could aggrandise themselves, and they had no wish to submit to the ordeal of death. The Lord Jesus, however, came with death in full view; the prospect of it was not sprung upon Him as a surprise. From the outset of His course in public He contemplated the goal. The Brazen Serpent must have its Antitype. The temple must be destroyed to be built again. Calmly He looked forward to what He must pass through, and the one sign He gives is His own sacrificial death with its triumphant and blessed results. If the burden of the prophets was a suffering Messiah, the burden of the Gospel is Jesus the Christ and the Christ crucified. When the message of eternal life as God's free gift to a sin-blighted race is proclaimed, the whole setting of Divine truth, when seen with open eyes, is a proclamation of the divinity of the Word.

Law and gospel, ruin and remedy, curse and blessing, when set beside each other show the profound need, suitableness, and excellency of the Gospel. There are truths that do not belong to the Gospel that are essential to a satisfactory acquaintance with its nature and its purpose. For an unfallen world the message of reconciliation might be pronounced to be an impertinence. "What," it might be asked, "is the need or call for reconciliation?" For a world suffering from some malady that involved it in no such dire results as await our world under the wrath revealed from heaven, such a wonderful provision as the Gospel brings before us would seem to be uncalled for. One might ask in view of it "Why this profusion, this prodigality of grace?" For a world able to help itself and to win the favour of the Highest by its deserving and well-directed struggles, even though surrounded with mist and darkness, the very doctrine of gratuitous salvation would be an insult. But law and gospel so fit into each other that the very situation of affairs that the law describes is the very case for which the gospel provides. The very provision made in the gospel, and nothing less will meet the deep need and the hopeless ruin that the law reveals.

Grace revealed, as reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, is the message of hope to the hopeless. Nothing less than eternal life will do for creatures endowed with a being destined to last for ever, and under the tyranny of a principle that like an undying worm gnaws at their heart and feeds on the exercise of God-given faculties when they are prostituted to the service of the adversary. The salvation of the gospel is through righteousness and in the Son. His is the righteousness that entitles to eternal life. Nay, He in His obedience is that righteousness – the righteousness for sinners, the righteousness of God. He is made of the Father righteousness to as many as receive Him. He bore their guilt that He might bear it away. He bore it away, and now lives to conduct within the vail a more excellent ministry. A Saviour raised in Israel to gather unto the God of Israel all the spiritual progeny of Abraham is now proclaimed, and salvation is of the Jews. The economy of preparation was crowned by the advent of the Seed of the woman. He has bruised the serpent's head, and in Him and through Him there is the warrantable hope of eternal blessedness for as many as are content to accept Him in His saving offices. Here is glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

The Apostle Paul refers us to the things that are made as sufficient to leave us excuseless if, when we know God in His eternal power and Godhead, we glorify Him not as God, nor are thankful. There is such manifest glory in the works of creation as to call for the acknowledgment from every beholder that they owe their origin to a Being infinite in being, wisdom, power, and goodness. The handwriting of the Creator is so legible that all are without excuse if they read it not and lay not to heart the demands His existence makes upon them. In mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissing each other, in a just

God revealed as just, when He justifies the ungodly, there is such a revelation of this glorious Being as to leave those to whom the record of it comes without excuse if, when it comes, they fail to recognise herein the marvellous glory of the divine perfections shining forth with meridian splendour; and this is the condemnation that the light hath come into the world, yet men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. The Lamb is the light of the Holy City. In Him is the revelation vouchsafed that instructs cherubim and seraphim in the manifold wisdom of God. Thus the Gospel is its own witness. It contains the thoughts that are as a great deep and that are not recognised to be such, only on account of the brutishness of those to whom they are made known. The Gospel contains within itself an evidence that is fitted to satisfy the judgment and conscience that it is indeed of God. Only let the truth of man's original glory and dignity, of his apostacy and his now helpless plight, his wretchedness and his guilt, be deeply impressed on the conscience, the cry will come forth "What shall I do to be saved?" When thus a personal interest is awakened in our highest concerns, and the sinner casts about for some means of pacifying the offended and dishonoured law, then, and not till then, is he in a position to discover the inexpressible suitableness of God's righteousness to meet his case. When, receiving the unspeakable gift, he rests in the satisfaction Immanuel gave to Justice on behalf of as many as believe, his conscience knows the blessedness of a peace that the Supreme Judge proclaims; and the "living bread" manifests its glory, not in the same way as the manna of old, not by satiating the hunger and renewing the strength of the body, but by satisfying the hunger and renewing the strength of the living soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness. In the adaptation of law and gospel to each other, realised by the broken-hearted penitent, there is such a sign as satisfies him that he follows no cunningly-devised fable when he commits his eternal all to Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God.

This is the sign He gives them. Moses was attested as the Lord's prophet by the manner wherewith Israel were fed. The Lord Jesus with His words of eternal life feeds not the body but the soul; and as soul surpasses body, even so does the marvellous provision, that the words of eternal life containing the message of His person, work, and salvation, feed and satisfy the immortal spirit. For forty years the manna was given. It could not last unless miraculously preserved. But the words of eternal life, from the beginning and since the fulfilment of the promise, have an unfading freshness. The more they are eaten the more are their qualities discovered. He who eats them does not destroy them. After they are eaten they are still whole and unimpaired. As spiritual food they contain an evidence that can appeal only to spiritual men, but that evidence fails to get justice at the hands of those that reject the Gospel, simply because they are carnal and not spiritual. Thus it is their sinfulness that brings it about, that they cannot appreciate the thoughts of God, cannot discover their glory, cannot profit by the message that conveys them.

In giving this sign the Redeemer brought before the men of that generation, that had well-nigh a surfeit of signs, the evidence that suffices to the end of time for those to whom the immediate advantage of seeing signs and marvels is denied; who, having not seen, yet do believe. If that evidence that shone out in His words and in His deeds was withheld from their eyes, they would not submit to Him, however many portents were brought before their notice. It was not want of signs that they laboured under. These signs were a showing forth of His glory. They were blinded by the god of this world, and until He who commanded light to shine out of darkness should shine in their hearts there was no power adequate to subdue their pride and stubborn unbelief and impenitence. The glory shining forth in His marvellous deeds convinced His disciples, and the Apostles as faithful witnesses transmitted to succeeding generations the words of eternal life. This presentation of the Lord Jesus in His person, word, and works is the ground we have to build upon. The scheme of redemption is crowned. The way of life is opened, and though no attendant miracles of healing accompany the word now

in the physical sphere, yet it is the healer of the bitter waters still, and there are many whose souls have discovered its efficacy as quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword. They are in their own experience so many blind whose eyes have been opened, so many dead that have been raised, and what they are thus to themselves they are in a measure to their brethren too, and what they are recognised to be by their brethren they should be recognised to be by the world, so many epistles of Christ, so many in whom the life of Jesus is manifested. The sign the Redeemer gave is a sign that is still present with us. If forty years of manna testified to Moses, this was but a shadow to the abounding evidence that accompanies the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, whensoever it comes and whensoever it is declared. It is the true manna – all ages and men in every land and of every family under heaven partake of it – and as it satisfies the soul below, in a more glorious manner it shall secure that result above. Here we see but through a glass darkly, then face to face, and then in the full harmony of our restored powers, we shall be enabled to acquaint ourselves with the Living God in His Beloved Son, and to enjoy perfect blessedness in the full enjoying of His communion unto all eternity.

The word of God carries with it the hall-mark of its own authenticity. What is required to recognise this is not special natural equipment, not high thinking and profound learning, but a meek and teachable spirit, so that we may receive as little children the thoughts of God, and respond to them as they variously call for response at our hands. The unction of the Holy One makes the simple wise, and however simple and unlearned they may be, however unable either to answer or to comprehend many of the objections of the sceptic, they know whom they have believed, and they can say, “We have seen for ourselves and heard for ourselves, and know of a truth that this is indeed the Christ that should come into the world, that this is the true God and the Eternal Life.”

This being so, the way is clear for the herald of salvation to declare the message fearlessly. Unto as many as are set apart unto eternal life, it shall doubtless prove the savour of life unto life. He is not to depend on receptivity of nature for the reception of the message, but to look rather to the fulfilment of the word. “The hour cometh, yea already is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” This aspect of things is fitted to strengthen his hands in the Lord and to lead him to make the Lord his confidence. At the same time this aspect of truth shows how, though the noontide sunshine is spread abroad, how unresponsive sinners are to it, how impervious to the light they are, how unable to appreciate the truth. This inability to appreciate the truth but proves the truthfulness of the descriptions the Word gives of our ungodly world, and in so doing is fitted to impress sinners of the instancy and urgency of their need (seeing such spiritual death is theirs) of deliverance from the condemnation that hands them over to it, in order to deliverance from itself. Not only is the abject wretchedness of fallen men thus solemnly brought before us, but when divine truth in its spiritual glory and beauty is presented and fails to elicit a response suited to its character, the enormity of the guilt that filthiness of spirit involves the impenitent sinner in is impressively exhibited.

The whole narrative is fitted to make us pause and examine to what extent we as individuals have come to discern the excellency of the prophet like unto Moses, and to what extent we have subjected ourselves to the authority of His word. Fleshly zeal and human testimony may impel us to do many things, but nothing less is requisite in order to membership of the kingdom of God than that we be born from above – that, receiving in implicit simplicity the testimony that bears on our case and our ruin, we receive likewise the testimony that bears on God’s gift of love, and venture our interests in the hands of Him who is an advocate with the Father, and ever liveth to make intercession.

The sign of the Prophet Jonah has been given. The claims of Jesus of Nazareth have been confirmed, and we have to declare not a Messiah whose course ended in darkness, a stone set

at nought and nothing more, but a Messiah who has risen in triumph, because the stone, set at nought of the builder, God has made head of the corner. His claims are still what they were of old – that we receive His word and believe in Him, that we receive the truth in the love of it and live under its influence, looking not on the things that are seen but on the things that are unseen. In order to this the Spirit of faith is needed – the evidence of things not seen that removes the films and veils that prevent us from seeing their glory and rejoicing in them. Wherefore we should pray:

“Open mine eyes that of Thy law
The wonders I may see;
I am a stranger on this earth,
Hide not Thy laws from me.”
Psalm 119:18,19.

[January 1905]

Notes of a Sermon.

By the late REV. CHRISTOPHER MUNRO, Strathy.
Preached at Kilmuir, Skye, on February 22nd, 1867.

“Thus said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breath upon these slain that they may live. So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came unto them, and they lived and stood upon their feet an exceeding great army” – Ezekiel 37:9,10.

In the last discourse [See Magazine of June, 1904] on this passage are made some observations on the command given to Ezekiel to prophesy upon the dry, dry bones, and on the message given him to declare unto them, and the effects produced, which were that each bone came to its bone, that sinews were laid on them, that flesh came upon them, and they were covered with skin. But still there was no life in them. It is evident that, unless the work had gone on further, and if it had come to a stand at this stage, that they would soon fall back into their former condition, or be reduced to bones again. The only thing that could prevent this was the

communication of *life*. This life is from the Lord God, for He is the living One, the fountain, the author of life. But, though this be true, He employs Ezekiel in performing this part of His work also, and gives him particular instructions concerning it. His former instructions were to address the bones, to declare their character and the Lord's purpose concerning them; but now he is commanded to direct his words to a different object, namely, to *the wind*. In doing it, he was not to use his own words, but, as in the former case, he was confined to those put into his mouth by the Lord. "Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath," etc.

Considering this literally, it is a well-known fact that no man can live without air, as also that wind is air in motion. Sometimes it is at rest, and when that is the case nothing stirs, and no sound is made by it. The lightest body is not stirred, and the waters of the sea and of lakes are at perfect rest and smooth like a mirror. But when the air moves, all this is reversed. Man, however, can live in it in either state. In order to this, it must enter his lungs and be respired, and this respiration of the air is what is called *breath*, and in common language is taken for life. But though it is essential to life, it is not life itself; for air may be blown into a dead man's lungs, but this will not restore life. These two things, however, must go together, the principle of life and respiration. "Come, O breath, from the four winds, and breathe upon these slain," were the words which he was commanded to address the wind; and they may be considered as a prayer to God for life. And as he prophesied breath came into them. It did not only breathe upon them, but entered them. The Spirit entered into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army; not a multitude of people, but men prepared for battle.

The Jews on their return from Babylon had to meet enemies, some perhaps on the way, and others, as we know to have been the case, in the land of Judea, who attempted to put a stop to the work they had to carry on in building Jerusalem and the temple. Thus they required courage, prudence, steadfastness and armour, all of which they wanted during their bondage, for they looked upon themselves as dead men, for whom there was no hope. Now, however, they were revived or begotten to a lively hope, and stood up like men upon their feet, and were ready to undertake their journey to Jerusalem, not daunted by the dangers of the way, nor by the difficulties that they might meet on their arrival. They had men of God among them, godly priests and inspired prophets, who trusted in their God and encouraged the people to trust in Him too. And we know that their hope was not disappointed.

In applying these observations in the same manner as we did on the former occasions, we shall find some important doctrines of the gospel illustrated by them.

1. It is the Spirit's work to quicken or impart life to the dead. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." The Spirit, you know, is the third person of the Trinity, and in all God's works He has His proper part to perform. This, we are told, He had in the work of erection. The material of earth and of the heavens was produced or created by the Son in accordance with the will and instructions of the Father. And when the mass of these things was made, then, we are told, the Spirit of God moved or brooded on the face of the waters, by which we are taught that He was the Author of that life which pervades all creation. He had His share of the work of preparing a body for the Son, as you all may know. In applying the redemption purchased by Christ, His part is to render the gospel call effectual, and to sanctify and comfort believers. In doing this work He comes forth from the Father and the Son. That this is so may be seen here. "I will put breath into you, I will give you the Spirit, pour him forth unto you, and put him within you." The Spirit is omnipresent; but it does not follow from this that He quickens all, or that He enters into all as the Spirit of life. The prophet was commanded to call, as if it were, on the four winds to blow, in order to put breath into the dead bodies that now were lying around, which intimates that a particular

effort of divine power or of the Spirit's power must be put forth in order to quicken any sinner.

There are some who maintain that the Spirit has been given to all men in the same sense, and that it depends on themselves whether they profit by it or not. This is contrary to Scripture and to experience. "The wind bloweth where it listeth." So comes the Spirit, according to the Saviour's teaching. He is said to be poured, and He is said to come and to work. And whatever He resolves to do cannot be frustrated; His power is omnipotent; nothing is too hard for Him. When He comes to one who is to be quickened, nothing can resist His power. His coming after this manner is of His sovereign will; He is free, unrestrained. "The Spirit of grace and supplication" is one of the titles given Him in Scripture. That means that, as salvation is of grace, so the Spirit's coming is of grace. And yet men are commanded to pray for His coming, as Ezekiel was commanded here to prophesy unto the wind or the breath. It is His command and must be obeyed.

2. All things are of God, but His will is that man should ask them in prayer. It is His will that man should thus believe and realise his need of them – understand their value to some extent and who it is that can bestow them, and the manner in which He gives them – so that when man receives them, or any of them, he may give the whole glory to God, the author of every good and perfect gift. The duty of all, and especially of the Church, is to pray for the Spirit of promise. This was what Ezekiel did on the occasion mentioned here. It was not a command of his own to the wind he uttered, but the Lord's. It is therefore the Lord's purpose and promise to send the Spirit that the Church has to plead, which surely forms a sufficient ground of hope and expectation. "Thy dead men shall live; with my dead body shall they arise." All His people shall live. There is no period of time during which some of them are not found alive, and others are to be quickened. The living are called upon to pray for the Spirit's coming to quicken the dead; and their prayers shall not be disregarded. When He comes, then they live and rise up like an army. Formerly they were dead, doing no good, but living in trespasses and sins. They came to know this; they felt their deadness, felt their sinful and miserable condition, felt their bondage to the law, to sin and Satan. They received the Spirit as the Spirit of bondage, that is, to show them and let them feel that they were really in a state of bondage, which filled them with fear, a fear of God, in which love and confidence had no part – fear of death, of hell, and of wrath. They were brought low and felt themselves dead. When the Spirit breathes in them to give life, they are begotten to a lively hope that relieves them from despair, that enables them to trust in God or rest on Christ Jesus as freely offered in the gospel.

3. Those spoken of here are represented, after being quickened, as a great army, which teaches us, like many other passages of Scripture, that believers have to fight in this life. This implies that there are enemies to fight. Enemies are those who are near them and hate them, and have power to annoy and hurt them. These are the devil, the world, and the flesh which compose a numerous and powerful host that have taken up their position in proximity to them. *Satan* goes about seeking whom he may devour; he is never at rest, and has a numerous army at his command. He is the god of this world, and all the evil principles at work among men are under his command. There never was a more formidable enemy, and none who has had a greater army. There have been some generals among men who have made war and conquest their chief business, and who have been looked upon by whole nations as objects of fear and terror. At the beginning of the present age there was a general who struck all the nations of Europe with terror at one period or another of his extraordinary career. I remember people speaking of the state of alarm in which our own country was when it became known that he had intentions of invading our shores. But he was little or insignificant in comparison to the enemy that marches up and down through the whole earth seeking whom he may

devour. He is not seen, and therefore he is not dreaded by the most. Yea, the most of men are in his camp, and fight with him against the Lord and His anointed. *The world* is another enemy – things seen and temporal – and from the hold that these things have on the mind and heart of man, it is called an enemy and acts the part of one in withdrawing the heart from allegiance to God and in keeping man so occupied that he finds no time to seek or serve the Lord. *The flesh* is another enemy, and is so because of its sinful desires and inclinations, its love of sensible things, its blindness, its unbelief, its indolence, its selfishness, its self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-confidence, in one word, its rebellion against the divine will as revealed in the law and the gospel. It is the nearest enemy, and so the most dangerous.

4. The battle is the Lord's. He is the King of the army consisting of living souls. They receive Him as such: they enlist under His banner: they follow Him and endeavour to act under His instructions. His first instruction to them is that they put on armour both for defence and offence. Where are they to get armour? They are poor and cannot procure any. God has an armoury, and being their King, He provides them with a complete panoply. You know what those weapons are – that they are not carnal but spiritual, and must be used by all, both by men and women, for parties of either sex are taken for soldiers in this warfare. They must not then enter the army without weapons, for their enemies are provided with weapons also; they have arrows which are sharp, and bows that can shoot to a great distance. Satan has fiery darts for souls, by which he can wound and cast down if he cannot kill. The tongues of evil men are sharp swords; their teeth are spears, and they too have arms for defence. Their power, their craft, and want of all godly fear may be considered defensive weapons. They use gins and snares; and dig pits for taking those who are off their guard. The protection of living souls against these is to put on their armour and make use of it, and to follow and keep near the general, who is Christ, their king and captain. And as the warfare may be protracted, they need support, which again must come from the King. "My grace is sufficient for thee; my strength is made perfect in weakness." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The promises of the covenant, together with the Holy Ghost and the fulness of Christ, constitute the provision made for them, and are such as shall never be exhausted, but shall keep up their life and vigour and hearts till the conflict is terminated. There are times of respite and days of battle, of hard-contested fields in this warfare; some of a more manifest, others of a more hidden nature; and the latter may prove more dangerous and terrible than the former.

5. There is a reward appointed by the King for each warrior, which is an inheritance in the heavenly Canaan. Each tribe and each family in Israel had an inheritance allotted for them in the land promised to Abraham. They had all to fight for the country, and when it was subdued they received their inheritance by lot. Each was satisfied with his own, for there was no quarrel among them with regard to any of their lots. So here each shall receive what the Lord will appoint him, and with that he shall be satisfied for ever, and in enjoying it, shall serve and praise God as the God of his salvation.

We have now gone over the principal points in this passage, namely, man's original state, his state as a sinner, the means employed for bringing him to life, and the manner in which that life manifests itself, namely, by knowing God and engaging in the spiritual warfare.

We all have come into the world spiritually dead, and there is no way of deliverance from it and from eternal death, but one way, even through Christ and by being made partakers of the redemption purchased by Him. God's way of applying this redemption is by certain appointed means, which he has made known in His Word. Some of these are external, such as the Word read and preached, the sacraments and prayer; the other is spiritual and unseen, the Holy Spirit. He commands the Word to be read and preached, and at the same time commands men to hear it. He promises the Spirit, and exhorts all to seek the Spirit.

This then is our duty. Do *you* desire *life*? Use the means in dependence on the Spirit. Give the Spirit no rest. Beware of resisting Him, lest He cease striving with you. Rest not in the means, for of themselves they cannot quicken you, and therefore cannot save you. Do you ask the Spirit? Those, who never pray, do not ask Him. And there is none here to whose ear this command of God has not come, and why do you refuse it [there seems to be a bit missing here] obedience? "I cannot pray" you may perhaps reply. Why not? "O, I do not know how to pray." Well, this would be a very good errand for you to God, namely, to beg of Him to teach you. Cannot you tell Him your ignorance, your inability, aye, and your unwillingness to pray? Tell Him your carelessness, your folly, and beg of Him to teach you and make you wise. And let me tell you this, that if you do not begin till you first know how to pray you will never pray. "The living" pray, and must not faint, and yet they never think that they can pray as they ought. "But if I should begin to pray I would then be looked upon as a hypocrite, unless I gave up my folly and vanity, and many things in which I delight." And what is the meaning of this saying or sentiment? It is plainly that you are too fond of sin, and will be by no arguments persuaded to turn from it unto God. Will you say then that you make choice of it for ever, that you choose the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment, along with everlasting torment, in preference to life and eternal happiness with Christ? You will not allow the case to be so; but it is nothing less; and God grant that you may not be convinced of the truth of it at last by actual experience.

If you have been quickened by the Spirit, you are a soldier in God's army, and here you must fight. Some, when they begin to think of religion, are ready to imagine that, were they to get faith, to get the Spirit and Christ, then they would have a life of peace and joy, ease and comfort here. No doubt this is partly true, but their life of faith is on the whole a life of conflict. They are called unto this; there is provision made for them, there is armour and a Captain; and there are enemies in abundance to beset their path. They who are called then must know this, must understand their position. Do you clearly understand, do you know your enemies? Do you know how they carry on their warfare, do you resist them by the armour of God? If so, then you must be a living soul. Let not such expect anything here but fighting, watching and praying, and in doing this let them remember who is their strength, their shield, who can teach their hands to fight and their fingers to conflict. Look unto Jesus, your Captain, and when overwhelmed by numbers cry for help, and He will always prove a ready help in time of need. Faint not, yield not; but resist steadfastly. And to encourage you, look forward to the prize of the calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The time is short in which you have to fight, and the hotter it may be, the shorter most likely its duration is to be. And if you are faithful unto death, you shall be made more than conqueror, and then you shall have peace, rest and enjoyment at home, where no enemy shall ever appear to threaten, annoy or wound you. Then you shall stand in Mount Zion above with the Lamb, and sing a new song, which none but the redeemed shall know. You shall stand on the sea of glass which is before the Throne with harps in your hands and walk the streets paved with gold in white robes, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

Where then shall His enemies appear? Where can appear the unbeliever, the impure, the unrighteous the unholy? Shall they be in existence? Yes; for none shall ever be reduced to nothing. It is fearful to think of their condition then. Is it not high time for us all to ask with all earnestness, "Where then shall we be?" for each to ask, "Where shall I be?" If you die Christless, you must perish; you must be shut out of heaven, and never see life there, never sing nor be joyful and happy, but be filled with woe for ever.

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